2004D W593c

CULTURAL RESILIENCE: FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE GRADUATION OF NATIVE AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

by
VIRGINIA WHITEKILLER

Bachelor of Social Work
Northeastern State University
Tahlequah, Oklahoma
1987

Master of Social Work
Washington University
St. Louis, Missouri
1995

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
May, 2004

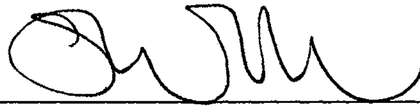
CULTURAL RESILIENCE: FACTORS THAT

INFLUENCE THE GRADUATION

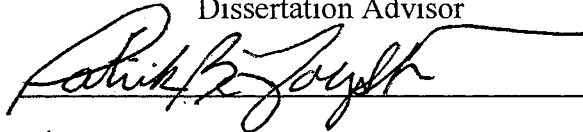
OF NATIVE AMERICAN

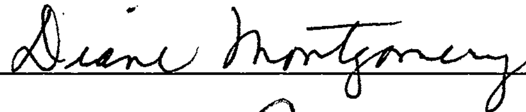
COLLEGE STUDENTS

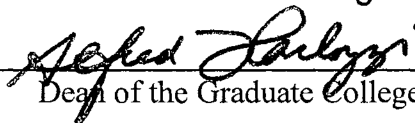
Dissertation Approved:



Dissertation Advisor







Dean of the Graduate College

© 2004

Virginia Whitekiller

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

PREFACE

The purpose of this study is to promote social justice and self-determination through the lens of critical theory by empowering 19 Native American students to speak with their own voices, concerning their direct lived experience in higher education and the cultural strengths they utilize in persistence. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to those who have provided enormous support and contributions in making this study possible. Dr. Stacy Otto whose sound direction and sage advice made this project take form and truly blossom to its fullest potential. My heartfelt gratitude and appreciation also goes out to the Native student participants in the study who kindly took the time to sit down and tell me their heartfelt stories, hoping to make a difference. Many thanks are further attributed to Northeastern State University's Faculty Research Grant in providing the travel allowance to three university campuses and Northeastern State University's Department of Social Work and Director Dr. Rebecca Smith, who never failed to provide relentless encouragement. I would also like to acknowledge my husband, Ted, without his patient and gentle support this enormous undertaking would not have been possible; a very special key informant who has persevered with me through three college degrees, my daughter, Jamie. Lastly, I would like to thank my Creator, who is the wind beneath my wings through this journey called Life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	4
Purpose of the Study	6
Research Objectives/Questions	8
Significance of the Study	9
Limitations of the Study	10
II. A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	12
Historic Overview	12
Retention Challenges	14
Cultural Diversity	17
Common Cultural Values	24
Persistence: Oppression and Power	25
Indigenous Epistemology	29
Theory and Practice Models Utilizing Cultural Protective Factors	32
Conclusion	34
III. METHODS	37
Pilot Study	38
Research Methodology	42
Population	42
Sampling Procedure	43
Methods of Data Collection	44
Methods of Analysis	46
Validity	52
IV. RESULTS	55
Tribal Identity	56
Difference as Viewed by Self, Majority Society, and Other Native Americans	68
Elders	91
Family Support	96

Ceremonial Rituals and Sacred Ceremonies 100
Oral Traditions 103
Support Networks 106
Spirituality 109

V. DISCUSSION 125

Analysis of HeavyRunner and Marshall's Theory 125
Implications for Educational Institutions and Tribes 132
Directions for Future Research 142

REFERENCES 149

APPENDICES 163

APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM 164

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 166

APPENDIX C: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD LETTER 167

TABLES 168

TABLE 3.1: PARTICIPANTS 169

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

> A traditional hero fights for honor and to make his people live; a physician and writer is not a mythic hero; yet a traditional hero transforms into physician, advocate, and writer and strives with healing art in medicine, law, and text to make his people live anew and to uphold their honor in a degrading world which proclaims a vanishing race into the vanishing guilt of the nightmare of history, because, as Ohiyesa [Charles Eastman] writes, 'my desire [is] to use all that I had learned for [my people's] benefit' (Eastman, 1936, p. 74), and the traditional hero is reborn with all the underlying comic transcendence of tragic processes, and the myth lives in ordinary dress (Faulds, 2003, p. 6).

Since early colonization, Native American peoples have been known to be shape shifters in the sense that their life journey entails a continuous transforming evolution of bridging their traditional cultures to that of mainstream society. This bridging is not due to a particular preference for what came to be the dominant culture, but it is utilized as means to invoke and uphold collective survival for Native American populations. The Native American students' stories in my research study reflect their imaginative efforts to survive by holding up higher education as a means to empower their families and communities. In this way, their individual and collective experiences are repeated with

variation, discernable as a circular, spiraling movement through which can be glimpsed the transformation of individual lives and of the life of a people. Each of them manifests the "transcendence of tragic processes" in the stories they spin of their physiological, cultural, and spiritual lives, emerging with their core identity as Native Americans intact, strong, determined.

The purpose of this study is to promote social justice and self-determination by empowering Native Americans from diverse tribes who are attending four universities to speak with their own voices concerning their direct lived experience in higher education and the cultural strengths they utilize in persistence. The term culture in this study is defined as "lifestyle practices of a particular group of people who are influenced by a learned pattern of values, beliefs, and behavioral modalities" (Lum, 1996, p. 72). Native Americans or American Indians are used as interchangeable terms defined as a group of people claiming ancestry to the first indigenous peoples of what is now known as the United States (Thomas et al., 1993). Students in this study self-identified as being a part of this group of peoples. The term tribe is used to describe a group of indigenous people who share common customs, language, culture, and ancestry and a common geographic location (Stein, 1992).

Critical theory is used to approach this study since European colonization forced Native American tribes into assimilation, cultural conflict, and discrimination, often through mainstream educational institutions. Despite these consequences, the number of Native American students who enter and graduate from mainstream universities in the past twenty-five years has increased. Although minority student support programs have been developed in many mainstream institutions, Native Americans consistently rank

lowest in college retention in the United States. For those who do graduate from college, little is known about the Native students' perception of these cultural factors and how they specifically utilize them as a means to persist in college (HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003).

My work here has been informed by three pilot interviews and an extensive review of the literature. These strongly suggest that some Native American students persist in completing undergraduate education in mainstream institutions by employing pre-entry Native cultural factors that serve as coping mechanisms for navigating institutions of higher education (Bowker, 1993; Garcia, 2000; HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003). This study springs from the theory that some Native American college students utilize cultural resilience to navigate through mainstream higher education institutions (HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003). The theory of cultural resilience stems from a strengths-based approach that all populations have positive attributes (Lum, 1996) and this correlates with resilience studies (Bernard, 1997; Masten, 2001; Rutter, 1997) that have measured why some people did well and others did not in adapting to negative environments. Cultural resilience is not exclusive to Native Americans but is also found in studies of other racial minority populations such as African Americans and Mexican Americans (Haight, 1998; Wong, 2001).

In social work and related human behavior fields, a strengths-based perspective is used in building upon the cultural assets and coping mechanisms of minority populations which are also found in cultural resilience. The strengths perspective endorses a positive approach, by claiming that all populations have positive assets and abilities, rather than taking a pathological or deficit approach (Lum, 1996). Pathological approaches in regard

to racial minority populations expound upon weaknesses, leaving the impression that these groups have no strengths or assets. HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003) expound upon previous resilience studies that have measured why some people did well and others did not in adapting to negative environmental influences (Bernard, 1997; Masten, 2001; Rutter, 1997) and apply this concept to cultural aspects of Native American populations.

I will test the theory of HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003), who refer to Native American cultural factors as cultural resilience and define those as factors that support, nurture, and encourage Native students, families, and communities. In essence, they explain how Native Americans use this mechanism not only in dealing with stress and trauma, but also in maintaining wellness and pursuing higher education. They categorize and name these indigenous factors as: spirituality, family strengths, elders, ceremonial rituals, oral traditions, tribal identity, and support networks that serve as effective coping mechanisms. The theory of HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003) will be tested in the course of this study and, too, will act as the theoretical lens through which I interpret the resulting data.

Statement of the Problem

Native Americans have historically been reported as having the lowest college retention of all United States racial minority populations. When studying this population, the majority of research studies primarily highlight the deficits of the Native American student and/or the higher education institutions they attend as contributors to low entry and retention (Boyer, 1997a; Brown & Robinson-Kurpious, 1997; Fugate, 1996; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Lintner, 1999; Nichols & Nichols, 1998; Pavel et al., 1998; Tierney, 1992a). It is not uncommon for higher education retention quantitative studies to be poor

predictors of academic success for this population (Anderson, Bowman, & Tinto, 1972; Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman, 1993; Marguia, Padilla, & Pavel, 1991; Pacarella & Chapman, 1983; Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1988). Reasons noted for this entail small sample sizes, racial and ethnic identification inaccuracies, and the limitations of quantitative research in describing the educational *experiences* of the participants that can shed insight into retention (Pavel et al., 1998). Furthermore, Native American populations commonly are included in mainstream groups or clumped into the category of "other," negating rich, diverse cultures that can constitute a different way of knowing outside of majority societal structure (Carney, 1999; Tierney, 1992a). As a result, few research findings are available that focus upon Native students who succeed in college (Pavel et al., 1998). Furthermore, limited studies (HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003, Montgomery et al., 2000) are available that address the influence of Native American culture for Native American students persisting in higher education, and how indigenous culture and values can be instrumental in completing higher education degree programs.

This study is the result of an effort to uncover different ways of knowing through the voices of Native participants that have previously been overlooked as a phenomenon in the majority of social science studies (Tierney, 1992a). Hayden White (1985) posits that the delineation of Native Americans' different ways of knowing in social science is a result of the early Europeans' practice of polarizing normal humanity (gentle, intelligent, decorous, and white) to that of an abnormal one (obstinate, gay, free, and red). He refers to the academic debate over essences or qualities, which are considered spiritual, and not able to be determined by empirical evidence alone. As in the case of Native Americans, White remarks, "From the standpoint of a truly objective social science, no belief is

inherently absurd if it provides a basis for an adequate functioning of the practices based on it within the total economy of the culture in which it is held" (p. 185). My study utilizes an emancipatory theoretical perspective in an effort to expose and refute the language and practices so often utilized in the study of Native Americans, and to illuminate and celebrate Natives' different ways of knowing.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to promote social justice and self-determination through the lens of critical theory by empowering Native American students to speak with their own voices, concerning their direct, lived, experience in higher education and the cultural strengths they utilize in persistence. Along this vein, Guba and Lincoln (1998) propose that qualitative data can provide contextual information by seeking the informants' direct, lived experience. This method is especially important when studying Native populations, as Native populations are not totalistic and one-dimensional (i.e., one way of administering the world) as is found in colonial societies (Elsass, 1992). To exemplify, "Reality becomes narrowed down and monopolized, containing only the visions of those who are colonizers. There is only room for one discourse, one consciousness, one ideology, and one science" (Elsass, 1992, p. 96). Empowerment as an essential demand is a part of self-determination to indigenous populations, which is defined as the right to be different and to decide for oneself "what substance to put into the rhetorical phrases on collective consciousness" (Elsass, 1992, p. 103). Empowerment in this way entails a collective notion, which differs from the notion of individualistic (post-enlightenment) perceptions (in modern common parlance).

From the standpoint of social justice, I will employ narrative analysis of interview data to examine how pre-entry cultural factors, and through those, different ways of knowing, are instrumental in the persistence of some Native American students while attending mainstream higher education institutions. From a cultural perspective, the interview method was selected because it so closely resembles that of storytelling, a form of oral tradition that encompasses the transfer of information from one Native generation to another (Red Shirt, 1996).

In researching Native American populations, Tierney (1992a) reports it is especially important to incorporate the many voices of Native's participation in academe while providing enough thick description to enable the reader to form an opinion on the data analysis. Incorporating different ways of knowing are especially critical for Native American tribes due to their unique historical and contemporary subjection to many Federal educational and institutional polices that have not incorporated Native culture and beliefs (DeJong, 1993; Fuchs & Havighurst, 1997; Wright & Tierney, 1991). For example, the provision of education for Native Americans by the federal government is a direct result of historic treaty obligations that addressed the exchange of Native American occupied land bases and accompanying natural resources for education and health care (Pevar, 1992). As Native Americans possessed no colonial institutional educational structures of their own, historical mainstream education was used as a means to assimilate Native Americans into majority society (Bower, 1993; Boyer, 1997a; Carney, 1999; Wright, 1997).

Throughout history, federal polices have primarily been inconsistent and disruptive to Native people, largely lacking the voice of the population for whom they

were designed. Moreover, "The Indian was being asked to sacrifice the best parts of his culture for the worst parts of White culture" (Strickland, 1997, p. 110). The aftermath of such policymaking has resulted in Native American tribes experiencing extreme poverty, low educational attainment, and a continual dependency upon the economic support of the Federal government (Pevar, 1992). The provision within educational studies that incorporates the different ways of knowing of Native populations is essential to reverse a system of knowledge that has been repressed for five centuries. Deloria and Wildcat (2001) sum this up best in their succinct statement, "In short, we do fit comfortably or conveniently within Western civilization. This is not a regret. It is an affirmation—a living testimony to the resilience of American Indian cultures" (p. vii).

Research Objectives/Questions

Some Native American college students who persist in higher education maintain a strong sense of Native identity prior to and during their educational process is well documented (Bowker, 1993; HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003; Huffman, 2001; Rodriquez, 1997). However, limited research (Garrod & Larimore, 1997) is available that focuses upon Native American students who persist in college and the multiple cultural perspectives they bring to their experience of higher education. Utilizing the framework of HeavyRunner and Marshall's (2003) theory of cultural resilience, the objective of this research study is to explore what cultural factors are perceived as effective in assisting Native American students in graduating from college. How do the Native American student participants speak to and demonstrate the cultural resilient factors named by HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003)? In what ways does Native Americans' cultural resilience contribute to their persistence in college?

Significance of the Study

In keeping with the need for critical change, as we approach a more multicultural society in the 21st century, it is important to consider social justice for all populations. With regard to Native populations, there exists both a historical and particular present-day relationship with the federal government that addresses the provision of education via historic treaty-making with many Native American tribes. Although enrollment and retention rates for this population have increased in higher education in the past twenty-five years, centuries of educational policy making by the federal government and mainstream institutional student support programs of higher education institutions have not yet reaped substantial entry and retention rates for this population. Based upon this information this study has the potential to bring about change, as is noted in critical change theory which connects action as a "change-oriented form of engagement" (Patton, 2002, p. 549). In other words, this "different way of knowing" has the potential to invoke social change regarding mainstream societal views that pathologize the culture differences of those perceived as the "other."

Recognizing multiple perspectives via the voices of Native Americans students can illuminate different ways of knowing and result in the design and implementation of educational programs that are directed at better understanding Native American students. Furthermore, enhanced understanding of these students' lived accounts of cultural resilience can assist Native American communities in collective cultural empowerment by supporting and reinforcing tribal community cultural practices that have previously been considered pathological by majority society.

Limitations of the Study

In promoting social justice and self-determination for Native peoples, it is important for them to speak to their own lived experience. In this study, Native students speak concerning their direct, lived experience in higher education regarding the pre-entry cultural strengths that they employ to assist them in persistence. Although Native Americans have a unique historical and current relationship with the Federal government, many Federal and institutional policies and practices commonly do not incorporate Native beliefs. Therefore, speaking to their own lived experience is especially important for Native American peoples.

This study takes on the central concern that pre-entry cultural factors have assisted 19 Native American students who are completing their undergraduate studies in three mainstream educational institutions and one federally funded Native American university. These students were diverse in gender, age, academic majors, tribal and geographic backgrounds. Although many commonalties are noted in the findings concerning tribal cultures, this study does not imply that all Native tribes should be generalized, possessing no distinct or separate cultural entities. Respect for the diversity of tribal entities is vital because the efforts to homogenize them—to negate their rich and diverse cultures—has been ongoing since European arrival. Moreover, "It is through building a foundation of diversity and respect for native languages and cultures that empowerment of both the individual and community can be actualized" (Benham & Mann, 2003, p. 170).

Generalizability in qualitative research can be noted as transferability based upon "a case-to-case translation" or an "analytic generalization, based upon the researcher's

generalizing from a particular set of results to a broader theory" (Mertens, 1998, p. 355). Generalization of this study may be limited to the following factors: The study encompassed loosely structured interviews composed of open-ended questions. The sample was comprised of students who were in their last year of undergraduate studies, a factor that presumably may have resulted in different responses than those who were in the early stages of their studies. The interviews were conducted on the four university campuses in settings that were not always considered private which may have affected the participants' full disclosure in discussing personal accounts.

Students in the study had a specific interest in Native studies, were involved with tribal community service, and/or had affiliation with campus Native student organizations. As a result, these participants not only met the specified criteria of being in their last year of undergraduate studies, but they also possessed strong tribal community ties and a personal interest in acquiring more knowledge of indigenous issues. As a result, some of their responses may not be typical of a more generalized Native student population completing undergraduate studies that do not possess strong community ties or tribal affiliation.

CHAPTER II: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This literature review encompasses several topical areas that relate to Native Americans and higher education. Originating with an historic overview of the population's affiliation with mainstream education, it further delves into the past and current retention challenges that address cultural diversity and dissonance. Common cultural values among tribal populations are also included along with factors in educational persistence for Native Americans. In conjunction, Native epistemological perspectives and related theoretical models are also examined, including the theoretical cultural resilience framework of HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003). Regarding this particular study, HeavyRunner and Marshall name and discuss cultural factors that assist Native Americans in completing higher education. There are a limited number of qualitative studies (HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003; Montgomery et al., 2000) that have explored with complexity the lived lives of Native American college students and the nature of cultural resilience. That said, my work here will focus on the development of rich explanations of how Native American students view and employ these mechanisms in higher education persistence.

Historic Overview

Native Americans have the longest history of exposure to Western education of any racial and ethnic minority group in this country. Upon European arrival to what is now known as the United States, Western education was introduced to Native Americans

as a means to assimilate Native Americans into colonial mainstream society. These attempts encompassed promoting colonial male, rather than female, leadership (Jaimes, 1992), coercing Christian conversion (Carney, 1999; Prucha, 1985), and creating culture conflict by not incorporating Native culture and beliefs in educational curriculums (Fuchs & Havighurst, 1997). With such inside goals, most of the attempts at educational acculturation for the indigenous Americans resulted in but a few Native Americans entering and completing formal education (DeJong, 1993).

Historic psychosocial factors are noted in the literature as a basis for Native Americans' unwillingness to pursue higher education. These entailed Native Americans' reluctance to give up their traditional lifestyles and their pronounced and apparent physical inability to survive the alien physical environments. Additionally, mainstream education was not providing real world practical skills that were culturally appropriate and useful to Natives within their indigenous culture (Wright & Tierney, 1991). When few Native Americans entered socially, economically, or politically into mainstream society via Western education, the church and the government became discouraged, lessening their interest in using education as a means to enculturate and assimilate American indigenous peoples (Carney, 1999). This resistance on the part of Natives has also led researchers to pathologize Native American ways of knowing, when compared with Western thinking and societal norms.

The overall perception of higher education by Native Americans would not fully change until the 1960s; this time it would be a result of the Natives' choosing as it became viewed as a source of political and economic empowerment for many tribes (Benham & Mann, 2003; Carney, 1999). In the 1970s, education would be seen as a tool

to accommodate the renewed interest in tribal culture, language, and ceremonies (Hoxie, 1984). Education was then proposed to add to, not take away from Native diversity, enhancing the political concept of self-determination and tribal sovereignty. As societal shifts occurred, and as tribal identities were renewed, the tribes endorsed the need for preservation and resurgence of their traditional culture and languages. This, along with the development of business enterprise and economic independence, caused the perception of higher education to change for many indigenous peoples as obtaining a college education became viewed as a means to tribal empowerment, emancipation, self-determination, and sovereignty. Although more Native Americans began entering institutions of higher education for these reasons, college completion continued to be viewed as a challenge.

Retention Challenges

The 1990s were indeed a time of increased Native American enrollment, but that increase was accompanied by low graduation rates. In 1994, Native American college enrollment rates exceeded representation in the total U.S. population, a remarkable figure considering historical under-representation in enrollment figures (Pavel et al., 1998). Even with such incentives as self-determination to obtain higher education, only 17 percent who entered college would actually graduate during this decade, as compared to 38 percent of the general population (Fixico, 2000). Some studies indicate college drop-out rates for Native Americans can be generalized as high as 85% (Tierney, 1992a), while others report figures reveal over half (54%) of Native freshman remain in college after the first year, as compared to 68% of all other students (Pavel et al., 1998). However, it is difficult to ascertain an accurate depiction of graduate rates for this population as studies

have indicted it is not uncommon for Native Americans to leave college, only to return to complete their degrees at a later time (Tierney, 1992a).

Many studies address various student-related factors as barriers in retention of higher education for Native American students. Some barriers noted in the literature are inadequate academic preparation, lack of motivation, poor family support and encouragement, lack of financial aid (Bowker, 1993; Tierney, 1992a; Wells, 1997), single parenting, part-time enrollment (Pavel et al., 1998), and the fear of losing their Native identity and assimilating into mainstream society (Fixico, 2000). Other reported student factors entail childcare, transportation, alcoholism, drug abuse, domestic violence, employment concerns (Boyer, 1997b) and cultural dissonance in traditional higher education systems by feeling alienated and invisible (Eshelman, 1997; Garrod & Larimore, 1997; Lin, Lacounte, & Eder, 1998). Many Native students contend with academic barriers that are also found in mainstream populations that contend with high rates of poverty, such as poor academic and family support and financial aid. However, the challenge of cultural dissonance is particular to the Native American population

Institutionalized discrimination regarding Native Americans pursuing higher education is not limited to the colonial era. One contemporary study finds Native students can be deterred from completing college due to both racial overt and covert institutional racial discrimination reflected in the stereotyping of Native students as remedial, creating lowered teacher expectations and increasing the risk of academic failure (Huffman, 1991; Minner, 1995; Ray, 2001). The low entry and retention rates of Native Americans in higher education have been attributed to the non-indigenous nature of the educational curriculum, the lack of student support services, and the college faculty not being

representative of Native American populations and/or the lack of faculty multi-cultural knowledge (Tierney, 1992a). It is also reported that instructor/faculty ethnocentrism is a significant challenge for Native students (Thurston, 1998).

There are several solutions suggested by researchers as potentially instrumental in overcoming the various reported barriers to Native American students entering and completing degrees in higher education. One solution might be to create college support programs specifically designed to address the special needs of Native students, faculty training and orientation, student orientation and transition, and the creation of new higher education institutions to serve Native students (Tierney, 1992a). Further, the inclusion of respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility is recommended to better serve this population in higher education and may help to avoid campus alienation (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). Native American students commonly report feelings of alienation and isolation, especially during their first year of studies. In a similar vein, establishing faculty mentor programs is suggested (Lintner, 1999), along with increasing student support programs (Nichols & Nichols, 1999), and improving college curriculums to meet Native American family and community needs (Fugate, 1996).

As a result of considering the implications, suggested by research on the subject, tribal colleges and some mainstream universities have enacted culturally-sensitive institutional frameworks and programs designed to support Native students. Such programs have reported varying success. These programs may be a possible factor in the increase in college enrollment for Native Americans. Although designing better access to programs in higher education to Native American students is beneficial, more consideration should be given toward enabling these students to take responsibility for

their own academic progress. Academic disciplines should be pushed to consider new approaches and ideas; institutions should be mandated to embrace the changes (Bobiwash, 1999).

There are many institutional factors as well as student psychosocial factors found in the literature that address why Native American students continue to have poor entry and retention rates in college (Brown & Robinson-Kurpious, 1997). Many Native American students have also reported that they continue to struggle with the cultural discontinuity between the culture of the higher education institutions they attend and their own tribal cultures. Although some higher education institutions have enacted student support programs for such high risk populations as Native Americans, an additional need is reflected in empowering Native American students to take responsibility for their academic progress, and for institutions to support the changes that can result in empowerment.

Cultural Diversity

Although many studies address the various deterrents that contribute to college departure rates for this population, less information is available concerning the Native American students who persist in mainstream educational institutions that are primarily designed to reflect the values of the majority culture. These majority values are often in contrast to the perceptions, views, and personal belief systems which encompass the different ways of knowing of Native Americans. Diversity exists across the different Native populations, as compared to the majority society in the areas of time management, goal orientation, sharing versus materialism, being versus doing, humility versus arrogance, harmony with nature, the importance of tradition, and reverence for elders

(Wetsit, 1999). As Native Americans can possess differing cultural values from mainstream society, personal challenges can arise for them when they attend mainstream institutions that do not incorporate values outside of those found in majority society.

Owing to this tremendous diversity, although notable efforts have been made to determine predictors of Native students' success in higher education, quantitative studies are not always accurate predictors of Native students' persistence (Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman, 1993). Quantitative study differences were found when comparing the competencies and persistence of Native and non-Native student groups. The non-Native predictors of college success (high school grade point averages, high school class rankings, and college admission standardized test scores) were found to be non-determinates of whether or not Native American students persist in college. A varying view is offered by research on Native American students conducted at the University of Oklahoma that revealed those who did well in high school and performed well on college admission tests were more likely to experience success in college (Feagin & Feagin, 1996).

Difference can be found across research findings regarding what effect Native identity has on Native students pursuing college degrees. Some studies indicate the stronger the cultural identity for a Native college student, the better the chance the student will graduate (Bowker, 1993; Huffman, 2001; Rodriquez, 1997). For example, Native students with pronounced identities are found to reflect strong familial ties and grounded image, allowing them to focus better on academics (Jenkins, 1999). Other research reveals academic achievement factors, such as higher grade point averages and more time spent doing homework, is more prevalent with Native American college

students who have traditional Native American families than with those who do not (Lin, 1990; Rindone, 1988).

Other results (Feagin & Feagin, 1996) concluded that a strong Native identity was more likely to correlate with dropping out, regardless of the student's academic strengths. The study's results were attributed to a power-conflict that occurs through a unidirectional change: the student is expected to conform to the college environment, versus the college environment changing to reflect the culture of the student. Diverse findings were uncovered in a study of Navajo high school students at 11 reservation high schools, whereas no relationship between academic achievement and cultural relations was discovered. In this study, family influence was only a modest indicator for academic success, with being female as a stronger indicator (Willeto, 1999).

In contrast, a study comparing Sioux college students to their White counterparts found cultural identity and the retention of Native cultural traditions are more important to the Native students than grade point averages and parental encouragement, which was named by the White students (Huffman, 1986). Among middle school Native students, a positive relationship was found among children with strong traditional culture and academic performance (Whitbeck et al., 2001). Native culture is reported as important to some Native students and a correlation has been found among Native students with strong traditional identities performing well academically.

Other studies indicate the influence of poor socioeconomic factors may be stronger predictors of dropping out than cultural diversity, in a study of high school dropout rates, similar experiences of institutional isolation (i.e., lower track courses, differential treatment) were found between non-Native and Native Canadian students

who share lower socioeconomic status (Brady, 1996). Comparison findings were found among Native high school students which conclude too much emphasis may be placed upon the cultural discontinuity between home and school as a factor for Native American students dropping out, suggesting economics and social structure may have a stronger correlation to high dropout rates (Ledlow, 1992).

As is found in the correlation between socioeconomic factors and dropping out for both Native and non-Native students, studies designed to reflect the majority population do not always provide an accurate depiction of those outside society's mainstream. For example, Anderson, Bowman, and Tinto (1972), pioneers in higher education retention studies, dispute the assumption that college students are more likely to attend institutions that are closer to their families. Instead, their findings indicate cost and/or quality of education are more important determinates in where to college.

However, more recent studies geared toward Native students find that members of this group are more likely to live close to their families, reflecting the important cultural role of family in the academic process (Ortiz & HeavyRunner, 2003). As a consequence, the geographical locations of Native population concentrations are found to be near the public institutions graduating the largest numbers of Native students. The concentration of degree conferrals are found in the states with the largest American Indian populations (respectively): Oklahoma, Arizona, California, New Mexico and Washington (Pavel et al., 1998). Consequently, 30 two-year and four-year major Native degree producers were located within 50 miles of a rural or urban Native American community. These colleges also produced 75 percent of the degrees awarded to Native students (Wells, 1997).

The usual close proximity of Native students' residence and the educational institutions they attend may be further culturally attributed as Native American students are found to go home more frequently than their non-Native counterparts (Cibik & Chambers, 1991). For some Native American students attending institutions that are geographically distant from their homes, the act of going home presents formidable challenges due to such issues as poverty and lack of transportation. This can result in their subsequent departure from geographically distant colleges that are not located near their home base.

Native students bring to university their own personal values, beliefs, and behaviors. Upon entry they become acclimated to the Native community within the educational institution, and hopefully to the wider culture of the institution (Bobiwash, 1999). An example of this is found in a study that reports the Native students interviewed approached going home from a different cultural perspective than did their Caucasian counterparts. Although they were fully aware that the personnel at their institutions viewed frequent visits home as negative or immature, they believed going home to "help their families" held more priority than the consequences of missing class (Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman, 1993).

Many quantitative models have been applied to the retention and persistence of American college students that are designed as a "one size fits all" (Munro, 1981; Pascarella & Chapman, 1983; Spady, 1970; Tinto 1975, 1987, 1988). A specific example of a model designed for all college students is Tinto's (1987) classic model of institutional departure that remains in current use today for college departure/retention studies. This model focuses upon the need for students to claim membership that is

central to the college they attend as a means to persist in higher education. If minority students encompass a smaller subculture on the campus, causing marginality in the intra-institutional experience, they are more likely depart from college without completing, which limits persistence or departure to the educational institution.

Native American scholars have used Tinto's (1987) model as a conceptual framework to explore ethnicity and institutional departure/persistence from a qualitative approach (Marguia, Padilla, & Pavel, 1991) and a quantitative approach with Native American students in higher education (Pavel, 1991). Using a qualitative approach and applying it to Tinto's model, one study found these students attempted to "scale down" (p. 436) the social, physical, and academic environment as means to make it more manageable (Marguia, Padilla, & Pavel, 1991). In lieu of integrating fully into the institution's infrastructure, the Native students chose instead to form smaller, ethnic enclaves on the campus as a means to persist. Although the theoretical aspects of Tinto's model were found to be applicable, suggestions were made for refinement to include well-calibrated measurements of ethnicity and enclave efficacy as part of the socialization process.

Tinto's (1987) model was analyzed with longitudinal data of Native American students from the High School and Beyond (HS & B) 1980-1986, using structural equation modeling (Pavel, 1991). The findings indicated prior schooling of highest values (i.e., high grade point average and pursued an academic program of study in high school) for this population had significant negative effects, based upon what was hypothesized for White students. Only 26 percent of the participants (9 of 34 respondents) with these high values received a postsecondary degree; students with low values (i.e., low grade

point averages and a vocational program of study in high school) graduated 42 percent (17 of 40 respondents) (p. 18). Similar to non-Native students, other findings indicated family background, postsecondary intentions (before and during college) and formal and informal academic integration are important in Native American students' persistence (p. 21).

Despite the effects of acculturation and assimilation into majority society, many Native Americans continue to practice and embrace their own distinct tribal diversities, characteristics and values. Some of these differences are manifested in their experience in college by choosing to live closer to and/or visiting their "home" more often. These students also differ from mainstream society in what they consider to be priorities while attending college. These "different ways of knowing" are typically not reflected in quantitative retention studies as Native students are often categorized into "one size fits all," lumped together in spite of tribal cultural differences or grouped together with "other" minority populations. Moreover, several studies (Feagin & Feagin, 1996; Huffman, 2001; Rodriquez, 1997) have indicated conflicting results on whether or not Native American cultural identity and values function as strengths or as disabilities for Native students attending mainstream educational institutions. This seems to indicate a need for the dominant culture to dichotomize "othered" cultures, of which Native American is one example, into opposing categories of "normal" and therefore mainstream, on the one hand, or with pathological, on the other, when an "othered" culture represents a way of knowing that differs from that of the majority culture.

Common Cultural Values

Native American populations are known to be diverse while, simultaneously, adhering to common culture values. Culture is defined from a cultural sociological and anthropological perspective as, "…the shared values, understandings, symbols, and practices of a group of people" (Feagin & Feagin, 1996, p. 14). Native American culture is transmitted through enculturation defined as "the process by which individuals learn about and identity with their traditional ethnic culture" (Little Soldier, 1985, p. 186). Enculturation as a process predominately begins in the family, tribe, and community as a means to establish Native identity unto its members. Coincidentally, it is also the goal of the colonizer over the colonized.

The process of enculturation has assisted in maintaining strong native identity in past and current generations of Native Americans despite existing diversity and generalities within and outside of diverse tribal populations. For example, there are 554 federally-recognized Native American tribes in the United States (Pevar, 1992). Each tribe is unique in culture and language, while sharing many general cultural core values, beliefs, and behaviors.

Within this larger population, cultural practices begin with the family, tribe, and community as a means to establish Native American identity into its tribal members. General values include non-interference, which emphasizes observing, as opposed to acting, and respecting the rights of others (Sue & Sue, 1990). Seven values/teachings that are basic to most Indian tribes: wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility, and truth (Bobiwash, 1999). These noted traditional generalities and tribal values and

teachings are important to my study. Although each tribe possesses its own distinct languages and cultures, many cultural values are crossed over into all tribal populations.

Persistence: Oppression and Power

Native American culture is not stagnant, but ever-evolving, adapting to the indigenous needs for building stronger Native American communities in a Western world (Boyer, 1997b). Referred to as ethnic reorganization, this concept is defined as a means to facilitate group survival to cope with external forces of change while maintaining a strong sense of cultural identity (Nagel & Snipp, 1993). An example of this can be found in Native American higher education as the past twenty-five years have shown an upward trend in the number of Native Americans pursuing higher education due to social, economic, and political factors. However, higher education obtainment is not necessarily indicative that Native Americans will totally assimilate into mainstream society (Garcia, 2000).

Although such concepts as ethnic reorganization reflect the versatility of this population to external forces while maintaining a sense Native identity, some scholars report majority society is unaware of the cultural survival mechanisms employed by Native American populations. This may be due in part to what White (1985) refers to as the manner in which early European settlers of the New World choose to conceptualize the indigenous inhabitants as “wild man” and “noble savage” (p. 184). He notes that metaphors used by the early immigrants were ambiguous perceptions, subject to change depending upon their need to define their own humanity and establish and maintain social hierarchy.

In contemporary American society, majority culture remains predominately ignorant regarding Native American cultural values and their persistence in adhering to particular diversity and values. When Native American diversity is acknowledged by majority society, the perspective of Indian history, tribal communities, and diversity is simplified to support various forms of social, political, and economic domination which denies these groups distinct delineation. This ignorance breeds denial of culturally-active Native American communities and serves to create a power-conflict perspective designed to keep Native American tribes subordinate (Feagin & Feagin, 1996). This power-conflict is questioned by First Nations scholar Bobiwash (1999), "Why is tribal knowledge described as striving on an ad hoc basis to rival the information obtained by Western science?" (p.1). In other words, this described power-conflict is not about self-determination and sovereignty, as is the plight of Native Americans, but instead focuses upon the political dominiation of knowledge by majority culture.

In the past, and in contemporary society, indigenous peoples have used their culture as survival mechanisms to meet basic and social needs. One example is found in the Nee Mee Poo (Nez Perce) continuing to use historic cultural protective factors in familial relationships, the role given to elders in rearing children, and interdependence of the tribal members that were ingrained in the traditional way of life (Harris & McFarland, 2000). These are cultural factors that have been institutionally suppressed due to "forced assimilation through exile, boarding schools, and immersion into the white majority culture" (McFardland, 2000, p. 3). In turn, risk factors threaten Native populations through various domains such as: society (oppression), neighborhood/community (lack of successful role models, employment opportunities and failure to teach positive values);

school (discrimination, cultural discontinuity, lack of bonding activities); individual (poor academic performance, lack of bicultural competence, spiritual values, poor self-image, etc.); family (abuse and neglect) and peer groups (pressure, rejection, and antisocial norms). These risk factors are very important to note when considering the institutional factors that continue to threaten and subjugate Native American populations and cultures. Equally important are the "suppressed" cultural interventions that can be effective in combating these threatening situations.

To date, little research has been conducted concerning the influence of spiritual protective factors when pursuing higher education. This may be due in part, to there being no authoritative view nor theory that can shape a dialogue of Native spirituality (HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003) because "getting it right" must come from a community of willing informants (Irwin, 1996, p. 3). Although the definition of spirituality can vary from tribe to tribe, the following summary of its generalized meaning is applicable to most Native Americans:

> Spirituality is giving credit and honor to the Great Spirit, the Creator, Grandfather of all Indian people. Spirituality means living the life that the Great Spirit has blessed people with. It means being respectful of all things, especially the elders and the children. It means taking care of the Mother Earth and not abusing the gifts She has provided. It means acknowledging the Creator in every aspect of one's life. Spirituality is sometimes demonstrated through prayer (Garcia, 2000, p. 47).

Spirituality for Native Americans represents the social fabric that holds together the family, community, and individual person, and bonds the people while establishing a

cultural identity of who they are (Fixico, 2000). With Native populations, it is difficult to separate spirituality and identity, since, "For many Native Americans personal and cultural identity, as well as spirituality are inextricably intertwined with connectedness to family, community, tribe and homeland" (Garrod & Larimore, 1997, p. 3). This interconnectedness of family, kin (extended family), clan, tribe, intertribal bonds, and external allies of Native communities, is found in Native life and represents a unity of spirit (Benham & Stein, 2003; HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003). Most Native American societies do not approach life in a linear fashion, but instead adhere to circular thinking as is defined by the medicine wheel which encompasses four areas aimed at balance: physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual (Harris & McFarland, 2000).

For Native American students, cultural protective factors such as spirituality, are instilled prior to experiencing higher education, and are usually not something that is obtained or fostered in mainstream higher education institutions. Western institutions offer little in the way of spirituality and emotional development of individuals, but instead are focused upon the "training of professionals" (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001, p. 32). However, research has indicated such cultural factors can be useful to Native students who are learning to navigate the culture of mainstream higher education. In a qualitative study of factors affecting the educational success or failure of Native American women, success was associated with a mentor, a strong sense of spirituality, and low family stress (Bowker, 1993). Somewhat similar findings were noted in a study of Native American doctoral recipients who reported three common characteristics that assisted them in persisting in higher education (Garica, 2000): 1) an ability to function biculturally, 2) spirituality, and 3) a traditional understanding of reciprocity.

To adapt to the effects of majority culture, Native American culture is ever evolving as a means to facilitate group survival, of coping with external forces of change while maintaining a strong sense of cultural identity. This is referred to in the literature as ethnic reorganization (Nagel & Snipp, 1993). Some scholars (Bobiwash, 1999; Harris & McFarland, 2000; HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003) have reported the majority society and most researchers are unaware of the cultural survival mechanisms that are employed by indigenous peoples to navigate into and out of such mainstream institutions as higher education. Some common characteristics that are found in a few of the qualitative studies (Bowker, 1993; Garcia, 2000) of Native American college student persistence are: Native identity, spirituality, the ability to function biculturally, and a traditional understanding of reciprocity.

Indigenous Epistemology

According to Crotty (1998), epistemology is defined as a philosophical inquiry into the nature of knowledge, examining truth and reality. The theoretical analysis that supports the experience of Native Americans in racial and ethnic relations have long been overlooked, in part because it introduces a different way of knowing (Feagin & Feagin, 1996). In an epistemological sense, Native Americans acquire knowledge from a holistic concept, meaning no knowledge is irrelevant or unimportant. Rather than resorting to the reduction of knowledge or portraying knowledge in a hierarchical format, meaning is found in "suspended judgment" (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001, p. 6). Tribal knowledge consists of individual experiences, generations of community wisdom, dreams, visions, prophecies, and the plant and animal kingdoms (Bobiwash, 1999). This indigenous way of knowing differentiates from Western science as Western science seeks to find common

denominators from large amounts of data to generalize, discarding anomalies (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). Further, a different way of knowing is sharply illustrated by comparing indigenous philosophy (circular thinking) to that of Western society (linear thinking).

Hayden White (1985) states the delineation of a Native American's different way of knowing in social science is due to the early European pathological practice of polarizing normal humanity (gentle, intelligent, decorous, and white) to that of abnormal one (obstinate, gay, free, and red). He refers to the debate over essences or qualities, considered as spiritual and not able to be determined by empirical evidence alone as is insisted upon by classic scientific method or positivism. As in the case of Native Americans, White (1985) remarks, "From the standpoint of a truly objective social science, no belief is inherently absurd if it provides a basis for an adequate functioning of the practices based on it within the total economy of the culture in which it is held" (p. 185). In other words, if cultural factors are found to be effective in sustaining the group that adheres to them, what component of science is truly qualified to sit in judgment of their philosophy?

An example of such different ways of knowing is addressed in cultural difference theory, which is rooted in anthropological and sociological studies of American Indians (Swisher, 1997). Cultural difference theory does not take a deficit approach in regards to students who seek education and maintain their cultural values. Instead, these values can be viewed as strengths when both the family/community and the educational system work together to enhance student education. This theory can be applied to the education of Native Americans as its base looks both within and outside of the educational structure (Swisher, 1997). In essence it emanates from the classroom to the community, and on to

the broader society, serving to identify the roots of failure or success for this population. As noted, "Cultural and critical research grounded in self-determination and a belief in cultural integrity takes research to the local level to find answers regarding Indian education" (p. 5). In other words, successful Native student education becomes a two-way process, as opposed to placing blame on either the educational institution or the culture.

Cultural hegemony can produce intellectual frameworks, claiming the disempowerment and disenfranchisement of Native Americans is inevitable. In this view, Native Americans are incapable of finding their own solutions because they have been colonized. Therefore, it is yet again the responsibility of majority society to find answers and resolutions for them. More reasonable and useful models could focus upon the cultural persistence of Native Americans, and the cultural interactions between indigenous and mainstream institutions (Bobiwash, 1999). Native scholars are attempting to develop new research models that fit a non-Western framework that will incorporate such Native American values as oral transmission of Native information, spirituality, and community control (Boyer, 1997a).

Champagne (1997) suggests changing the language of subjugation into an alternative language of science or liberation as a means to produce more fruitful research and theory. He writes:

> To build our theories and research on such culturally specific understandings of social organization restricts our ideas and empirical results to limited place, times and cultural contexts. If one reward of theory and research is to liberate us from complacent understandings, then

we are not served well by ready acceptance of socially given understandings of social organization and social relations. More universal social categories, universal theoretical languages, and clear recognition of the limitations of contemporary social categories are needed. (p. 31)

Theory and Practice Models Utilizing Cultural Protective Factors

In keeping with the need for self-determination and sovereignty for Native American populations, further inquiry is necessary to uncover theoretical frameworks that directly address this particular population. An appropriate appeal in this manner is found in the strengths perspective which focuses upon the assets, as opposed to the deficits of subordinate cultures. This is a particularly appropriate choice for Native American populations as they have employed and utilized cultural protective factors for centuries as a means to survive (Harris & McFarland, 2000; Nagel & Snipp, 1993).

With Native American populations, commonly shared indigenous values are effective in developing a strengths perspective that is helpful in substance abuse treatment (Canda & Yellow Bird, 1997). This relates to college persistence in the sense that for many Native American students, the journey into higher education can create cultural dissonance between their tribal culture and the values held by educational institutional culture. Furthermore, substance abuse prevention programs for Native America youth are designed to build strong identities and self-esteem by incorporating traditional ceremonies and rituals into substance abuse education curriculums (Sanchez-Way & Johnson, 2000; Sue & Sue, 1990). A survey was administered to Nee Mee Poo (Nez Perce Indians) to examine the effects of Native American cultural protective factors as a deterrent to substance abuse. The findings support for the theory that cultural

protective factors, especially spirituality, are effective in reducing substance use in this population (Harris & McFarland, 2000).

Some indigenous scholars have designed research models that are based upon Native cultural strengths to address such issues as health and well-being, education, and language and culture. Walters and Simoni (2002) use an indigenous strength perspective in developing a stress-coping model to address Native American women's health issues. They have designed a theoretical indigenous stress coping model as a means to reconceptualize Native women's health that is theoretically situated within the work of Dinges and Joos (1988) and Kreiger (1999). This model incorporates cultural buffers such as identity attitudes, enculturation, and spiritual coping mechanisms and traditional health practices as promoters of positive health and well being. Dinges and Joos' (1988) model indicates traumatic life events or stressors (found applicable to Native populations) are moderated or mediated by environmental contexts and person factors that affect wellness outcomes. These outcomes are seen as dependent upon the interaction of the person's internal process with the traumatic events or stressors.

Other indigenous models follow a similar path in using cultural factors to assist Native Americans in mainstream education and indigenous epistemology. From a higher education institutional perspective Ortiz and HeavyRunner (2003) have created the Family Education Model, used to expound upon family and student strengths through various on-campus cultural activities to improve retention rates among Native students attending tribal colleges and universities (TCUs). The Native epistemological model addresses indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing from a language and cultural perspective (Benham & Mann, 2003). This model endorses key principles of learning that

tie the individuals' spiritual and cultural, emotional, physical, and cognitive strength and self-esteem to sovereignty, engagement, and empowerment.

Conclusion

This review of the literature presents competing views of what factors affect the persistence of Native Americans in higher education. These views are diverse in terms of the tribal populations studied, the type of research employed, and the historical and current perception of Native Americans by majority society. Although institutional assimilation into mainstream society through education for Native Americans has not historically been well received, today there are some Native Americans who have a strong sense of their Native American identity and are able to draw upon this identity to persist in college.

This review of the literature supports the assertions of Hayden White (1985), who posits that as a result of early and post-colonial suppression and subjugation of Native American values by conceptualizing the indigenous inhabitants as "wild men" and "noble savages," depending upon European society's need to define its own humanity and social hierarchy, Native Americans have struggled to maintain their distinct, cultural values, and customs. Although typically not acknowledged by majority society, Native Americans have different ways of knowing that can be identified in an indigenous epistemology of acquiring knowledge holistically, and discarding no anomalies. This is in contrast to Western science and with that classic scientific method, which seeks common dominators from large amounts of data in order to generalize. As opposed to the early European pathologies of polarizing and placing value on what constitutes right or wrong beliefs and culture, White (1985) finds that a truly objective social science does not consider any

belief absurd if it is based upon the functioning of the culture in which it is held. Moreover, indigenous scholars have called upon researchers to change the language of subjugation in regard to ways of knowing that differentiates from mainstream society. In doing so this will liberate, not disempower or disenfranchise subordinate groups, and can result in the production of more fruitful and genuine research and theory.

From the perspective of self-determination, Native Americans are currently heeding the call to develop practice and research models that are effective in meeting their needs in terms of education, health, culture, and language, based upon the utilization of existing cultural strengths that are common to most tribal populations. Native American scholars have designed various models for health and educational purposes that incorporate Native American culture or "different ways of knowing" from mainstream society. Many of these models combine the unique history of this population with their diverse strengths and attributes as a means to deal with contemporary Native American issues and to empower indigenous communities. The message presented is simple: Solutions to Native American issues must come from the communities themselves, through Native participants' engagement and the utilization of the unique strengths that have been maintained and altered through colonization and post-colonization as a means to survive.

Limited studies are available concerning how Native American college students define the concept of cultural resilience and how they utilize cultural protective factors in persisting in higher education. It is vital to define and understand the nuances of cultural resilience for Native American populations. By addressing this phenomenon, there is potential to assist in the economic and cultural survival of a group of people that has been

suppressed for several hundred years. HeavyRunner & Marshall (2003) have offered a frame from which to work with concerning indigenous cultural factors; this frame will be tested via the voice and lived lives of Native American participants.

One of the reasons governing this lack of information concerning different ways of knowing may be due to the traditional "one way of knowing" that is endorsed by many mainstream higher education institutions. This traditional view of one way of knowing can complicate the critical component of how to conduct research (Trower, 2002) that may not be applicable to special populations such as Native Americans (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001).

Although Native Americans are no longer forced to attend school based upon federal educational policies and overt assimilation practices, participants in this study found a more subtle form of discrimination continues to exist in higher education. This was seen to occur when Native Americans and other minority populations were negated in the course readings and lectures, along with some instructors' discouragement of their differing viewpoints in class discussion. Delving further into the lived lives of Native American students will serve to address the limited number of studies that exists in the theory and practice of higher education.

CHAPTER III: METHODS

This study springs from the theory that some Native American college students utilize cultural resilience to navigate through mainstream higher education institutions. Cultural resilience stems from a strengths-based approach that all populations have positive attributes (Lum, 1996) and resilience studies (Bernard, 1997; Masten, 2001; Rutter, 1997) that have measured why some people did well and others did not in adapting to negative environmental influences. Cultural resilience is not exclusive to Native Americans, but is also found in studies of other racial minority populations such as African Americans and Mexican Americans (Haight, 1998; Wong, 2001).

In social work and related human behavior fields, a strengths-based perspective is used in building upon the cultural assets and coping mechanisms of minority populations. The strengths perspective endorses a positive approach, by claiming all populations have positive assets and abilities, rather than taking a pathological or deficit approach that can be found in some theoretical writing (Lum, 1996). HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003) have expounded upon previous resilience studies that have measured why some people did well and others did not in adapting to negative environmental influences (Bernard, 1997; Masten, 2001; Rutter, 1997) and have applied this concept to cultural aspects of Native American populations.

HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003) refer to Native American cultural factors as cultural resilience and define them as factors that support, nurture, and encourage Native

student, families, and communities. In essence they explain how Native Americans use these mechanisms to assist them not only in dealing with stress and trauma, but also in maintaining wellness and in pursuing higher education. They categorize and name these indigenous factors as: spirituality, family strengths, elders, ceremonial rituals, oral traditions, tribal identity, and support networks that serve as effective coping mechanisms.

Pilot Study

I arrived at deciding to employ this particular theory (HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003) to frame my research study only after I had conducted three qualitative pilot interviews with Native American students. The purpose for the pilot study was to gain additional information and feedback regarding my original proposed study and its preliminary interview protocol. Initially, I was interested in learning more about what effect higher education institutions with large Native American populations had upon the graduation rates of these particular students. Consequently, my interview questions were primarily framed around institutional support services and informal networks.

Interviewees were Native American students attending the same public university and who were in their last year of undergraduate studies. They were diverse in gender (two female; one male), age (ages 23, 42, and 50), and tribal membership (Yuchi, Creek/Seminole, and Cherokee/Osage). Each student volunteered to be interviewed and written questions were presented to them prior to the interview with each interview lasting approximately one hour.

With each interview question, I probed by asking further questions to clarify their responses and to gain the richest, most descriptive data possible in the time frame

allotted. When the interviews were completed, I transcribed them and spent time with the data coding the data into preliminary yet distinct categories. In this manner, I followed the methodological direction of Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995) who remark upon the importance of stepping back from the field to narrow down broad ideas, linkages, and connections, gained through in-field insights and analysis as a means to select initial themes for further exploration. Consequently, core themes could be selected by giving consideration to what members think is significant and those themes can be linked to other issues (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995).

Patton (2002) states that consideration of the initial feedback of participants creates the potential to move away from "a purely naturalistic" (p. 67) approach or discovery mode into a verification mode. Participant feedback was solicited with each of the three interviewees by presenting them with the full transcription of their interviews for member-checking. I then continued with the process by moving into inductive analysis by providing an analytic memo of my findings to the Yuchi student regarding her specific interview. After she reviewed the memo, we met in person for a feedback session for the purpose of determining if my report on findings correlated with her inside perspective.

In the initial part of the feedback session, the interviewee began by telling me she had read the transcription and my summary. Her response was immediate with little pre-thought. She quickly remarked it made her feel good that someone actually took the time to ask what her perspective is regarding the educational process as no one had ever asked for her "different perspective" regarding pursuing an undergraduate degree. She then expounded upon how she felt invisible and alienated on the college campus, almost like a

number, a person that is “non-recognizable.” She ends by remarking it felt empowering just to have someone listen to what she had to say.

Regarding the importance of spirituality as related to completing college, she went on to say this is something she would not normally share with others because “they would not understand.” As a result, this feedback session reinforced the need placed upon the preliminary study of presenting a different way of knowing that is typically not found in the higher education persistence studies of mainstream society.

By participating in the process of interviewing, transcribing, coding, selecting core themes, and participant feedback, I uncovered three common themes that were common to the responses of all three participants that were significant in helping them to complete college: Native identity, family, and spirituality. These three common themes support HeavyRunner and Marshall’s (2003) theory of the relationship between cultural resilience and cultural protective factors concerning Native Americans in higher education.

For example, with regard to Native identity all three were quick to respond to the question of what being Native American meant to them and commented on the personal pride they felt at being a part of this particular group. Interestingly, defining their own personal cultural identities were followed by their “difference” as viewed by majority culture and themselves (Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman, 1993; Bobiwash, 1999; Ortiz & HeavyRunner, 2003; Wetsit, 1999). As a Creek and Seminole student responded:

> Yea, I know where I came from it did lead me to who I am now. But it did set me back, as far as socially and just the fact that a lot of people I come in contact with want to know more about Native American culture. It

> pumps you up more to just to know more about who you are and where you came from. You can compare, you know, your friends who are not Native American, their families to your families. It's a pretty big difference. (Creek and Seminole, p. 10, line 24)

The importance of strong familial support toward the educational retention for Native American students has been noted in some studies (Cibik & Chambers, 1991; Jenkins, 1999; Ortiz & HeavyRunner, 2003) as well as the core value of collectiveness over individuality (HeavyRunner & Morris, 1997; Sue & Sue, 1990). The influence that strong family support had upon graduating from college was also an integral theme uncovered in the three pilot interviews. All verbally contemplated their abilities to persist had they not shared a sense of collective support and ownership with their families as associated with completing college. As stated by a Cherokee and Osage respondent:

> So I owe a lot to my family. They're the main reason that I did this and they're the main reason that I've been able to make it through. They're just as excited as I am about May 10th [graduation], and I told them, I'm not going through the commencement part and they say, 'Yes you are. We earned that, too (laughing).' (Cherokee and Osage, p. 6, line 2)

In Native American traditions, it is not uncommon for one to experience spiritual encounters through dreams, visions, and auditory experiences (Ball, 2002). Along this vein, the Yuchi respondent's rich and vivid account of a spiritual revelation she received in a dream that resulted in her returning back to college after two decades was particularly thick in description. "A man came and stood beside me and talked to me. He said, 'I've got two gifts for you and I want to know if you want these two gifts?'" When

she responded she did, he asked her to hold out her hand to receive them he told her these are *hers* and remarked, "Now take a look at them." She went on to share the dream's conclusion and its meaning to her:

> And when I looked at them I saw a bachelor's degree and a master's degree. And he said '…if you want that, you can go get that.' So when I woke up I had my hand closed, and you know there was nothing there, but in that dream it was. So it's like it was meant for me to go back to school. (Yuchi, p. 1, line 36)

My preliminary data via the three pilot studies led me to examine the importance of learning more about the effects that pre-entry cultural factors or "different ways of knowing" have upon Native students persisting to college graduation. In this way, my study took a new direction that was based upon the preliminary derived data and the theory of HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003) as a preliminary theory with which to frame it.

Research Methodology

Population

Thirty to fifty interviews are recommended as a rule of thumb for ethnographic studies, but adequate numbers are also reported as being dependent upon time in the field and the consistent repeating of themes by the interviewees (Mertens, 1998). Patton (2002) reports there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry, instead the research must focus on depth as opposed to breadth; the researcher should consider the richness of the cases and the analytical capabilities of the research study.

To detail the scope of this study, a total of nineteen Native American students were interviewed in their last year of undergraduate studies in three public higher education institutions (two state and one regional) and one private, federally-funded, university whose student body consist exclusively of Native Americans. The universities are located in three different states: two in Oklahoma, one in New Mexico, and one in Kansas. Three to six students were interviewed from each institution. Each of these universities was selected due to its top rankings as a national leader in conferring undergraduate degrees for Native populations, creating a larger pool of students who meet the specific criteria (*Black Issues in Higher Education,* 2002; Pavel et al., 1998). These institutions were also selected based upon their diversity in geographic location and tribal representation. The tribal, institutional, and geographic diversity served to provide breadth across students' diverse cultural experiences resulting in participants who were diverse in age, gender, tribal affiliation, and areas of academic and career interest as indicated in Table 3.1 (please see Appendix).

Sampling Procedure

The sampling procedure for the students in this study was criterion-based sampling as I selected students who met specific criteria, namely Native Americans in their last year of undergraduate studies (Mertens, 1998). I focused upon students in their last year because they had the most extensive higher education experience, thus having the most to share concerning their lived experience in college. Snowball sampling (Mertens, 1998) was also utilized as I often depended upon the interviewees and other key informants to direct me to others whom met the participant criterion for the study.

To collect the data, I relied heavily upon the guidance of diverse key informants in the three institutions that I was most unfamiliar with. Two of the key informants at two different institutions were individuals that I knew from previous contacts, one personally and one professionally. After receiving permission from potential interviewees, the professional contact provided me with a list of names and contact information of Native American students who met the specified criteria. In turn, I worked from the provided list via email and telephone contacts to recruit interviewees for the study. The personal key informant, a student at one of the universities, directly approached student acquaintances meeting the criteria for the study and assisted in setting up interview times prior to my arrival.

Two other professional key informants from two separate universities were involved with tribal studies programs. I approached these individuals directly, in person and by email, concerning the study and my need for interviewees who met the specified criteria. For the purpose of recruiting, when I arrived on one campus one key informant took me directly to a tribal studies class that was preparing to meet. The other key informant directly recruited from her tribal studies classes, and provided me with the volunteers' contact information to set up interview appointments. Based upon my prior knowledge of one particular student population, I possessed an advantage and was able to approach students directly concerning their willingness to volunteer.

Methods of Data Collection

The methods of data collection included primary data collection (Mertens, 1998) in the form of one-on-one extended, structured interviews comprised of open-ended questions, each lasting from forty-five minutes to one hour. This type of interviewing

allows the entire sample population to respond to a specific set of general interview questions while allowing the opportunity for the interviewer to probe more as needed (Tierney, 1992b). The participants were provided a brief verbal and written description of the research project via the consent form (see Appendix A). Prior to the actual interview, all students were presented a list of the following preliminary protocol questions either in person or via email (Appendix B).

The data collection was conducted over the course of three months, beginning in October and ending in the following January. All interview data were collected on the university campuses in a variety of settings that were dependent upon the students' schedules, availability, and personal preference. Two interviews occurred at weekend university-sponsored pow-wow, one was conducted in a student's private dorm room, five were held at a tribal studies library, one was at the university library, four were at a university center, five were held in my personal faculty office, one in a dorm study hall, and two were in an empty classroom.

Approximately five to ten minutes before each interview, I shared some professional and personal information about me and also told them I would give them the opportunity to ask me any questions about myself at the interviews' conclusion. Lincoln (1995) and others (Mertens, 1998; Patton, 2002) discuss the importance of reciprocity as a means for mutual exchange to assist the researcher in gaining mutual trust, respect, and cooperation of participants. Reciprocity is also a common Native cultural value (Garcia, 2000; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991), whereas it is considered rude to take from others and not offer anything back in exchange. As a result, each time when the tape recorder was shut off, I presented the opportunity for the participants to ask me any questions they may

have of me as a means of reciprocation. If this seemed awkward to the participant, I would ask them permission to begin by telling them some of my personal experiences as a Native American college student.

Methods of Analysis

I employed a narrative analysis because it offers me the greatest means to allow the Native students to tell their own stories. Patton (2002) writes, "Stories are the center of narrative analysis.... How to interpret stories and, more specifically, the text that tell the stories, is at the heart of narrative analysis" (p. 118). Mishler (1995) describes narrative analysis in this way, "we do not *find* stories; we *make* stories." She goes on to state:

> We retell our respondents' accounts through our analytic redescriptions. We, too, are storytellers and through our concepts and methods—our research strategies, data samples, transcription procedures, specifications of narrative units and structures, and interpretive perspectives—we construct story and its meaning. In this sense *the* story is always coauthored, either directly in the process of an interviewer eliciting an account or indirectly through our representing and thus transforming others' text and discourses. (p. 117)

With regard to Native American populations, who have consistently been the subject of various stories told by outsiders since European colonization, it is a potentially emancipatory experience for them to have the opportunity to tell their own stories concerning their direct, lived experience. Furthermore, the relationship of reciprocity in qualitative inquiry correlates with Native American culture as it involves "mutual trust,

respect, and cooperation...dependent upon the emergence of an exchange relationship" (Patton, 2002, p. 312).

In qualitative research, analysis is reported as an ongoing process which begins with data collection and fieldwork (Patton, 2002). After the interviews were completed, I transcribed each verbatim from the audiotape recordings. After transcribing, I read through the transcripts repeatedly, making notes and pulling out key words and phrases used by the interviewees in the margins. While engaged in this activity, I looked for recurring patterns from the data, known as convergence. This is referred to as analyzing the core content of interviews to determine what is considered significant (Patton, 2002).

I employed an emancipatory theoretical perspective—that is, I viewed the data based upon an agenda of social justice for the population I studied—and as a result I used the theory of cultural resilience to induce themes from the data. I used the cultural factors of spirituality, family strengths, elders, ceremonial rituals, oral traditions, tribal identity, and support networks that are described by HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003) as preliminary coding themes through which I framed my analysis of the data. I then conducted a cross-interview analysis (Patton, 2002) by pulling chunks of data from each question in the interview based upon these coding themes.

Finally, I "fleshed out" the patterns by "extension (building on items of information already known), bridging (making connections among different items), and surfacing (proposing new information that ought to fit and then verifying its existence)" (Patton, 2002, p. 466). In this way, I looked to deduce other themes that might emerge from the data. This analysis was the source of the emergence of new themes and potentially new theory as a product of this study.

I am employing critical theory based upon the noted work of Hayden White (1985) to illuminate the ideology of early European colonial practices of subjugation by pathologizing "difference" as abnormal. Patton (2002) explains critical theory as focusing "on how injustice and subjugation shape people's experiences and understandings of the world" (p. 130) by providing a framework of both philosophy and methods "for approaching research as fundamentally and explicitly political, and as change-oriented forms of engagement" (p. 131).

Even though I am conducting the study, I, too, have a personal stake in its outcome and hold hope that it will be instrumental in producing practical change of tribal self-determination. I define myself as a stakeholder because my ancestry stems from past and contemporary injustices that have resulted in my being a member of the poorest and most uneducated minority group in the United States. Utilizing this theoretical perspective for my study is based upon the inequities of power and injustices that have occurred with Native American populations through governmental policies and mainstream institutions. These institutions have been driving forces in attempting to assimilate Native Americans into mainstream society, typically negating the rich, unique, diverse culture that is historically and currently an integral part of Native American culture (Wright & Tierney, 1991). Acknowledging the rich, unique, diverse culture of Native Americans can constitute empowerment and true sovereignty for tribal communities. Benham and Mann (2003) describe Native empowerment and engagement as, "powerful concepts that press individuals and communities to define their own direction and use of resources (e.g., land, human, and cultural)" (p. 171).

Similar to this definition, Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce tribe in 1879 eloquently made this plea before the United States cabinet, Congress and diplomats regarding the need for Native American equality and sovereignty (Thomas et al., 1993):

> We ask to be treated as men. We ask that the same law work alike on all men. Let me be a free man—free to travel, free to stop, free to work, free to trade, free to choose my own teachers, free to follow the religion of my fathers, free to think and talk and act for myself. (p. 119)

I approached this study from a methodological standpoint by employing and making use of critical ethnography, which is described as an orientation working in combination with a focus on culture and a commitment to use the findings to support change (Patton, 2002). To better understand the concept and utilization of cultural resilience in college persistence for Native American students, I employed an emic perspective based upon my own subjectivity and theoretical perspective and by focusing on understanding the Native American students' culture (Patton, 2002).

Native Americans and their communities are better understood when using their own cultural conceptualizations and terms (Champagne, 1997). As a result, my research questions focused upon the students' direct, lived experience (person-centered) and on an indirect broader scale, the communities and cultures from which they come based upon the exploration of their pre-entry cultural experiences and beliefs (community-centered). I anticipated that the students would offer multiple perspectives regarding the influence of various cultural resilience factors that have assisted them in persisting in higher education.

As is required of an ethnographic researcher, I am disclosing my own subjectivity concerning the reasons why I have chosen to conduct this particular emancipatory study with Native American students. My primary interest in this study stems from the fact that I have personal and professional experience as a Native American student, instructor, and administrator in public and private mainstream institutions of higher education. But first, I am a Native American woman who was brought up with an understanding of the traditional Cherokee culture. As a Native American student, I have first-hand experience in utilizing cultural factors as a motivation to complete higher education. One such cultural factor is the directive given to me to use my formal education to assist other Natives—something that my Cherokee grandmother endorsed. This personal experience has caused me to become more interested in and more committed to delving further into the relationships of Native American culture and higher education.

As the students allowed me to momentarily enter into their worlds, I was caught up in their pain of struggling with oppression along with their triumphs of determination to persist. In my quest to be empathetic and understanding as a fellow Native American who is also conducting research, I accept that how I was seen by the interviewees affected what they had to say (Patton, 2002). First of all, I am physically identifiable as being Native American by other Native American students and I carry maiden (Drywater) and married (Whitekiller) Native American surnames.

Trust is a major issue for Native Americans who are asked to share personal information with non-Natives (Wing, Crow & Thompson, 1995). In this capacity, the information they students provided to me was very much affected by their feelings of trust toward me personally. This was quite evident when I posed the question of what

does it mean to you to be interviewed by another Native American? In their responses they expressed that my heritage was very important to them and held much influence in the type and amount of information they were willing to share. Common concerns that were presented by the interviewees regarding the sharing their stories with non-Natives involved the possible exploitation of the researcher for her own personal gain and the lack of understanding concerning their Native culture.

Although the majority of the students did not know me, as a fellow Native American, they were all willing to entrust me with their stories. Perhaps part of this was what we had in common as students working toward degrees. Although most of the interviewees did not know me previously, many verbalized how proud they were of me that I was pursuing a doctoral degree. Furthermore, they verbalized their belief in the importance of the study's purpose and viewed this as a contribution to Indian people. In this way, we were all Native Americans hoping to make a difference of lessening the pain, and increasing the resilience and improving the experiences of future Native generations.

I am also aware that conducting Native American research entails a great deal of moral and cultural responsibility and reciprocity to those from whom the information is taken (Fixico, 1997). As I reviewed each of their stories, I was reminded that I held in my hands something very personal that belonged to them and it again took me to the humbleness I felt as the interviews were being conducted. Perhaps I had some preconceived insight concerning the enormous responsibility that I was undertaking, because at the conclusion of each preliminary interview I promised the participants that I

would approach the writing and the retelling of their stories with utmost seriousness in an effort to do them (their stories) justice.

As I wrote up this study, I felt conflicted and asked myself if I should be doing more research interpretation as opposed to including large sections of rich data that my participants provided? If I condensed their stories via my interpretation, would I miss something critical that they felt needed to be heard, something that would open up a new revelation to the reader? Will my committee think I have not included enough of *me* and instead included too much of my participants? Will this affect their perception of me as a capable researcher in the field of mainstream educational research? Such doubt-raising is noted as a common dilemma in qualitative research, creating a subjective call on the part of the researcher of when they should get out of the way of the research and allow the "voices" to speak for themselves (Wolcott, 2001). The latter is what I have chosen to do as in qualitative research there is a "long-standing preference for having informants render the *narrative* part of their account in their own words, particularly in life history" (Wolcott, 2001, p. 20). As a Native American conducting research with other Native Americans, I, along with the participants, am of the belief we share a common bond and common experiences. However, despite all of the commonalities, the crux of this study is to provide the opportunity for their *voices* and their direct, lived experiences to be heard and therefore experienced by others in an effort to raise empathy for their predicament.

Validity

In qualitative research, the following standards are utilized to examine validity (Mertens, 1998): credibility (parallels internal validity), transferability (parallels external validity), dependability (parallels reliability), confirmability (parallels objectivity),

authenticity and emancipatory. To address credibility in this study, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, member checks and triangulation were used. For peer debriefing, I shared the results of the data transcripts and my field notes with a colleague who is a social science researcher. She provided an audience in which I could "think aloud" through each step of the research process and provided constructive feedback concerning my subjectivity, findings, conclusions, analysis and interpretive theme.

Negative case analysis was also used to assess for credibility. This is basically referred to as leaving in the cases that do not fit which "may be exceptions that prove the 'rule.'" These cases may also, "broaden the 'rule,' change the 'rule,' or cast doubt on the 'rule' altogether" (Patton, 2002, p. 554). The negative cases in this study refer to those that address internalized and externalized oppression of Native American, causing the rule to broaden as they added depth and complexity to Native American identity.

Member checks were conducted during the interview process by summarizing what the respondent said as a means to receive feedback for accuracy and clarification of their perceptions. A member check was held at the conclusion of the pilot study when a participant reviewed and provided verbal feedback regarding the written interview transcript and the summary/conclusion. An additional member check was held with two participants near the end of the study in respect to the draft research report.

As a means to increase the validity of my evaluation and findings, I triangulated the interview data with my field observations notes to provide more in-depth clarification across my findings (Mathison, 1988). This is appropriate to the methodological choice for my study, since triangulation is meant to complicate, rather than simplify data by providing more breadth and depth to the analysis (Mathison, 1988), and by using a

variety of data sources and analysis techniques my line of inquiry was more clearly illuminated (Patton, 2002).

As a form of triangulation concerning feedback (Patton, 2002) I forwarded transcription copies to each of the interviewees (with the exception of one whose contact information I did not have access to). Accompanying each transcript was a memo requesting that the participants review the document and notify me if there needed to be corrections. As a result, three interviewees responded by providing feedback. One pointed out a misspelled word, another corrected an erroneous depiction of a sentence that was barely audible on the tape, and one wanted to express her gratitude that I carried through with my promise to provide a copy of the transcription.

Transferability in qualitative research refers to the amount of thick description used by the researcher to sufficiently allow the reader to make his or her own judgment concerning external applicability. Further, transferability is strengthened when multiple cases are presented (Mertens, 1999). In my analysis, I addressed transferability by incorporating chunks of data that came directly from my participants' voice along with thick description. I also included a total of 22 interviews of diverse participants as a means to provide an ample number of cases for transferability purposes.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

In the beginning of my interview data analysis, I used the cultural factors described by HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003) that assisted students in persisting in higher education as preliminary coding themes through which to frame the analysis of my data. These categories included tribal identity, spirituality, family strengths, elders, ceremonial rituals, oral traditions, and support networks. However, I did not ask the students preliminary interview questions regarding the named categories, but instead I began the protocol by asking them what being Native American meant to them. This is in keeping with "sound ethnographic research" when "both questions and answers must be discovered from informants" (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995, p. 112). As a result, the participants reflected upon the factors that fit into the preliminary categories and named some categories that were outside of those named by HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003).

Native Americans acquire understanding from a holistic conceptual framework, meaning no knowledge is irrelevant or unimportant, resulting in the indigenous philosophy of circular thinking (Bobiwash, 1999). Accordingly, the participants described their tribal identity components as interconnected with spirituality, family support, elders, ceremonial rituals, and oral traditions. The manner in which they used these components in pursuit of higher education and other life experiences encompassed the coping mechanisms of cultural resilience. This interconnected circular thinking of family, kin, and tribal bonds represents a unity of spirit in Native cultures (Benham &

Stein, 2003) with an aim at balance (Harris & McFarland, 2000). I will initially begin by using the data to respond to my preliminary research question of how do the Native American student speak to and demonstrate their experiences of spirituality and tribal identity? This will be followed by in what way does Native American cultural resilience contribute to their persistence in college?

Tribal Identity

Pride

To the participants in this study being Native American meant being proud of their tribal heritage. For some their pride reflected their ties to their geographical land bases, families, tribes, or other forms of culture and heritage. Research indicates that strong cultural identification causes Native students to become less vulnerable toward negative social and academic risk factors than those who lack identification (Sanchez-Way & Johnson, 2000; Whitbeck, Hoyt & LaFromboise, 2001). From an institutional perspective, tribal colleges have historically included curriculums and academic support programs that have encouraged Native identification and pride among their students (Ambler et al., 2003). Further, in a study of Native doctoral recipients, identity pride in their heritage was named as a contributing factor of academic success as this gave them confidence in their abilities (Garcia, 2000).

Concerning pride in his Native identity, one Umatilla student desired to have pride as the initial concept noted in his interview. He spoke to the utmost importance this personally holds for him:

> What it means to me is I am very proud of what I am, and that is the first thing I want to say is I'm very proud of being Native. In simple sense, it's

> just like I said it's just being proud of your culture and heritage and knowing we were the first people here. (Umatilla, p. 1, line 27)

Other students shared similar remarks of being proud of their tribal representation and indigenous affiliations. A San Carlos Apache student expressed his pride as tied to the historical geographic origin of this people in spite of the hardships they have endured:

> But it makes me proud, you know, to know that our people, my ancestors were actually the first ones here to occupy, what is now known as the continent of North America. I'm happy about that, basically, well, according, and despite what happened, what has happened in the past. We do have that aboriginal title to the land, we have the right to the land, and I'm proud to be Native American. (San Carlos, p. 2, line 1)

A young Ojibway and Lakota woman describes her pride in identity as connected to her personal representation of her family and ancestors along with an emphasis on respecting others:

> You know I am Native American and I speak what I talk, I always feel I'm representing my family. And, and I feel like I need to be careful about what I say because to be representing a lot of people, you know a lot of ancestors, all my ancestors on this day in history and the result of that. And so it's pride and being tied to being respectful with others on campus, in school, and in life. (Ojibway and Lakota, p. 9, line 28)

Other students directly spoke of their identity pride as something that was instilled in them directly by their families. A Muscogee Creek and Seminole tribal participant shared the influence his Creek mother had upon him about being proud of his tribal affiliation,

"I've learned as growing up, I've learned to be proud that I'm Native American: Creek. And I should be happy for who I am" (Muscogee Creek/Seminole, p. 4, line 2). A Keetoowah Cherokee student shared the pride in her heritage as something that she is willing to stand up for, "I think it's to me it's being proud of being Native American. I don't mind telling anybody, anywhere. I've always been taught that, to be proud of your heritage and who you are" (Keetoowah Cherokee, p. 2, line 5).

Despite their diverse tribal affiliations, all the participants mentioned pride as an integral part of their Native identity. Pride was portrayed as an individual aspect as it reported in the first person, but it was also connected to family and community in a collective sense as it encompassed the heritage of their indigenous family and ancestors. Connected to their pride, many of the students expressed a personal responsibility in being Native American.

Responsibility

All of the participants referred back to what they were taught while growing up in their families and communities as their identification to being Native American. Moreover, Native American identity is succinctly explained as, "...not only a concern of the individual, but owned in a sense, by his family and close community as well" (Elsass, 1992, p. 181). My data indicated that each student, as a part of their identity, assumed personal responsibility for the traditions and basic continuance of their families and communities.

For Native American individuals the desire to preserve the indigenous culture is viewed, as part of maintaining a sense of one's self by creating a sense of belonging (Kawulich & Curlette, 1998). Increased psychic stress is noted when "The less tradition

spares us from responsibility, perspectives, and decision-making, the more our own identity conflicts and feelings of insufficiency impose themselves" (Elsass, 1992, p. 182). The findings of my study indicated each student as part of their identity, assumed personal responsibility for the traditions and basic continuance of their families and communities. This responsibility is to not only learn and pass on their traditional cultural and values, but to also use their academic degrees to benefit their family and tribes, and future generations.

Speaking to her holistic responsibility for self, family, and her future unborn children a young Kickapoo woman succinctly states:

> [Being Native American] gives me greater responsibility with what I do with my actions. It gives me a viewpoint that what I do not as an individual, but as a whole. It involves my family and eventually my children. (Kickapoo, p. 1, line 30)

Another student shares her plan to return home to her reservation upon college graduation to learn more about her culture, most notably her family's legacy of rug weaving. She expresses her sentiment regarding the importance of learning and passing on her tribal culture to her siblings' children:

> For me, being Navajo I do have a lot of responsibilities, otherwise it [the culture] will die out. Everyone says it's dying out. Those things are pretty important to me and after I finish [college] one of my big projects is to go home and learn all of those things. It's important to me and you know some people do not understand it. And to me that's a part of our culture

and I can't imagine my nieces and nephews not to know that. (Navajo, p. 1, line 24)

A Muscogee Creek and Seminole male student further exemplifies his personal view concerning responsibility to pass on the culture and traditions to future generations:

> My family comes from a Native American background like the heritage and customs they've been taught and they're trying to pass that down. I want to learn all about the language. And I feel like I should pick up those customs and pass it on not only to myself, but to my future family and to next generations to keep this alive or all these customs and traditions would be lost. (Muscogee Creek, p. 2, line 4)

The assumed personal responsibility of using their degrees to benefit their families and communities is found in the stories of other participants. For example, to assist in preserving her tribal culture, an Ojibway female desires to use her degree in American Indian Studies as a tool to bring back to her reservation. In this way, she looks onward to the personal responsibility of helping her tribe establish museums that depict the true history of her tribe, "And now I've come to the point where everything I learn in school is a responsibility for me. It's a responsibility to pass on that information and it's huge!" (Ojibway, p. 3, line 9).

Having attended a reservation high school near her home, a biology major spoke to her academic disadvantage upon entering a major state university:

> I felt like I knew nothing. I mean even though I graduated first in my class in high school, people here knew so much more than I did. And it just

> blew me away. I was like okay, *what were we not taught?* (Navajo, p. 5, line 15)

As a result, she contemplates teaching science to young Navajo students in a culturally relevant manner as her responsibility to possibly prevent them from experiencing the academic disadvantage she encountered:

> And then there was that part of me that was just like somebody has to do something. So and then I started thinking. You know what, if I were to become a teacher right now, I would incorporate our culture, our Navajo culture into science. It's present you know, a big part of it. There's a way to combine the two and if I go into teaching that's what I want to do. That's going to be a major goal of mine to combine culture with science. (Navajo, p. 5, line 16)

A significant component of being Native American for the participants entailed the personal responsibility they felt not only maintain a sense of self, but to contribute in some way to their community. When they spoke of this responsibility, it did not take the form of being forced upon them by their family or community, but it seemed to be an assumed role of being Native American. Along this vein, many spoke specifically to their personal desire of "giving back" in some way to their tribes and families.

Giving Back

Among Native scholars there is a call for educated Native leaders who are "knowledgeable about their culture and secure in their identity" (Johnson, Benham & VanAlstein, 2003, p. 150). Native leadership encompasses the principles of community, shared responsibility, and cultural appropriateness. Armed with their forthcoming degrees

in higher education, some of the future Native leaders in my study have "claimed their voice" (Johnson, Benham & VanAlstein, 2003, p. 155) which is defined as being aware of their strengths, assuming responsibility for oneself, and knowing where their source (medicine) comes from. Participants in my study propose to use their higher education degrees as a means to give back by promoting change for their people. As a Cherokee student remarked, "I think it's just involved in the traditions and the heritage. As long as I'm giving back you know, somewhere" (Cherokee, p. 2, line 34).

One student who aspires to be a tribal lawyer, speaks to her concerns that her family and some tribes are lacking in adequate health care:

> I definitely would like to do something to give back because I know all the problems my mom and auntie would talk about. There was a lot of problems. I remember one of my cousins wrote a book about his experience in working with the tribes. I think it was [name of tribe]. So, I want to work to help tribes like that. I don't want to see like my mom and all my aunts on my dad's and mom's side suffer because they don't have like health care. (Kickapoo, p. 3, line 25)

Having been confirmed in the Catholic Church, she expresses her views of giving back as part of her Native spiritual belief system and states:

> But the thing is too, about being Native there's a whole different viewpoint. I just try to find the balance between the two in what I believe, you know? I don't really know what's out there. I think it's a real big balance. It's not a loss, like I totally reject religion or stuff like that. But I think it's helped a lot because I look at it as I keep doing this. I keep going

> to school because it's going to help my family and my tribe. (Kickapoo, p. 5, line 28)

Another young woman already gives back to her community by assisting Native people in seeking financial aid that aspire to attend college. She comments on how she wants to use her social work degree to address social issues currently faced by tribal communities:

> There's just so much out there that I want to do with Native Americans, you know? Whether Keetoowah or Cherokee (tribal organizations), it doesn't matter. I would want to work with Keetoowahs or just Native American people as a whole. I would like to have some type of rehabilitation center for drugs and alcohol…I've been thinking about a women's shelter. We don't have one. And then there's another (laughing), all kinds of things. I see my granny like with the elderly. She's made some mistakes, you know, getting older she gave up her house. She lives in an apartment for the elderly. It's not like it's her home. And I feel like there ought to be a community center or a community place for the elderly. A place where like my granny can go outside and work on her garden, plant her own flowers. (Keetoowah Cherokee, p. 5, line 28)

A male Apache student expressed his desire to use his environmental science degree and possibly future advanced degrees as a means to give back by helping to clean up dirty sites on his reservation:

> There's a lot of polluted Indian reservations and I don't think we know too much in-depth about them. And what I want to do with my degree, I

would want to go back to my tribe. Let them know you have individuals, use me so that we can enhance the community that we live in. But I know that with an undergraduate degree, you have a broad understanding of what's going on. And on to the next level, the master's. And beyond that you'll help to refine your educational tools and become more specialized. That in turn you can use to help your people to become better equipped in solving environmental problems. So that's what I want to do. I want to go back and help my people in that area. (San Carlos Apache, p. 7, line 14)

A female student shared her previous experience of growing up with a history curriculum that encompassed erroneous information concerning Native Americans and her desire to use her higher education to make necessary changes:

> But growing up in North Dakota, I've had several experiences with museums and their interpretation of Native Americans and non-Native teachers and what they tell their students. I mean even on the reservation, the things that were taught in our history class is just ridiculous. So, I want to be involved with different museums. I want to go back and work at, or do something to correct what is happening at our cultural center. It's just wrong for kids to grow up and not know where their tribe originated from. It's just ridiculous. And I would love to come up to assist in coming up with a curriculum for Native American Studies implemented in the school system, like mandatory, you know? (Ojibway, p. 5-6, line 41)

For many, their drive and desire to use their education to make a change for Indian people was not motivated by monetary rewards, but a self-induced responsibility to use their college degrees to give back to their communities:

> I would take a pay cut if I was making a difference as far as doing something that meant something. You know like I said, everything I'm learning, I feel like it is my responsibility to pass that on. There's so much information written about us. And a lot of people, that's the only exposure they've ever had to Native Americans, like the book they open or the museum they visit. And there's so much things that are incorrect and so blown out of proportion. Just a little change, you know? And that would mean I was doing what I need to do. (Ojibway, p. 5, line 31)

As an example, one young man's focus was directed towards college graduation and the possibility of playing professional baseball. He shared his plight of personal persistence in college completion and career planning as a life long ambition. Using these assets, he hopes to give back by dissolving some of the stereotypes held by majority society:

> I was just always so headstrong in knowing that I wasn't going to fail. I set out to just be doing what I'm doing to disprove the stereotypes about Native Americans amongst just everybody, you know? It's so, it almost seems that you know Native Americans do get the worst of it when it comes down to it about the stereotypes and that kind of stuff. That's just something I wanted to do is to dispel the stereotypes and just prove people wrong at a very young age by being Native American and succeeding. So, I'm not quite there but hopefully in the next half year or so, hopefully

everything I've been working so hard for will turn out. (Umatilla, p. 10, line 37)

Another student hopes to also use her educational attainment as a means to break down the negative stereotypes held by mainstream society. She comments on her desire to give back by being a role model for other Native people:

> Being a Native American, being Keetoowah, is something that I want to be an example to those, our Native Americans, to show them that we can make something out of ourselves. And if you continue your education, you can be an example to the Keetoowah people because even though we have that many members (8,000), not a lot of them are educated. Because there are so many people that just think, 'Oh, they just drink all the time.' That's just the stereotype. Yea…it may be true on some, but there are some out there too, like myself, that is proud to be Native American *and* able to get an education. (Keetoowah Cherokee, p. 2, line 9)

Some of the students desired to use their degrees as a means to provoke survival and persistence in Native communities. One young woman speaks specifically to swaying the stereotypes concerning Native Americans in business and her views on Native survival through persistence:

> So it really kind of, it's kind of like you're the underdog almost and you know it. We talk about that a lot in business, the program that I'm in, just because we make up less than one percent of the population. A lot of the businesses that Native Americans are involved in are like casinos, and how that's a stereotype, and how we need to break that and start learning

> to build small businesses and to be better business people. And you know people know that know, that your stereotypes are not always what we are. But to kind of use it to push us forward to kind of, I don't know how to say it. But to use it to let others understand we're not, we're not a huge population, but we're still going to survive, we're still going to make it through. I think the number of people that are going to college is slowly increasing and I can't wait, you know, for someday it not to be unheard of for a Native person to have their doctorate degree. I think it's just something positive, you know enough about the whole alcohol and poverty thing. It's time to focus on more positive things. (Navajo, p. 1-2, line 38)

Tribal identity as defined by the participants' family and tribal communities reflected a strengths perspective as the participants noted the pride they felt in being a part of such a rich ancestral heritage. Along with this pride came a sense of assumed responsibility to learn and preserve the cultures for future generations, as well as the desire to give back by using their formal education as a catalyst to enhance the opportunities and lives of others. Strengths were also noted when the students viewed themselves as different than majority society, further reflecting the pride they felt in being a part of a distinct heritage. However, difference as viewed by majority society and in some instances, other Native Americans, were often revealed as emotionally painful, causing them to reconsider their self-identity.

Difference as Viewed by Self, Majority Society, and Other Native Americans

When answering the question of what being Native American meant to them, components of tribal identity as expressed by pride, responsibility, and giving back were evident in the answers of all the participants. The data further encompassed a richer, thicker description of tribal identity as the students further elaborated on the complexity of their self-identification by expounding upon their experiences of cultural dissonance. In their cultural resilience theory, HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003) speak to the importance of Native identity as a factor of persistence for this population in higher education. Moreover, a limited number of other studies have also indicated a more pronounced Native identity can be considered a strength while pursuing public education (Bowker, 1993; Huffman, 2001; Jenkins, 1999; Rodriquez, 1997; Whitbeck, Hoyt & LaFromboise, 2001). However, the effects of cultural dissonance for Native Americans in mainstream education have also been reported a detrimental barrier in retention due to the profound diversity between Native culture and majority society institutions (Eshelman, 1997; Garrod & Larimore, 1997; Lin, Lacounte, & Eder, 1998).

An effect of cultural dissonance for Native Americans in mainstream education is "ethnostress." Cajete (1994) defines it in this way:

> Ethnostress is primarily a psychological response pattern stemming from the disruption of a deeply held cultural life and belief system that one cares about deeply. Such a disruption may be abrupt or occur over time and generations. Its initial effects are readily visible, but its long-term effects are many and varied, usually affecting self-image and an understanding of one's place in the world. (p. 189)

This disruption of culture and beliefs reflects the aftermath of centuries of colonial subjugation resulting in conceptual hegemony, something that must be resisted in order for Native communities to survive (Grimm, 1996). Ethnostress can be seen as problematic for many Native American students attending mainstream educational institutions. Through the voices of the students interviewed, it was uncovered that many recognized the hegemonic ideals of the dominant culture and see themselves as different than these views. Because of this, they have given considerable thought and personal insight into who they are as Native Americans. Their struggle in resisting being pathologized has caused them to consider their own family and community culture's survival while contending with understanding their place in a diverse world that can have various interpretations of what being Native American means.

In keeping with the polarization that has been brought on by American colonization of the original Native inhabitants (White, 1985) it was very common for participants to describe their Native identities as "different" than mainstream society. Known as "indigenous contrasts" (p. 122), this concept is not typically endorsed as a means to describe events in ethnography (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995) as juxtaposing negates the full appreciation of the particular population being studied. However, when the members themselves include this information it can be very useful data concerning their cultural insight and conceptual framework. Much of the time they described their identity difference with celebratory remarks, especially when exclaiming the pride they felt in being a part of such strong, resilient communities. However, their comments on pride were usually followed by reports alluding to the stress they encountered through stereotyping and oppression.

Although not proposed as preliminary research questions, the students shared with me how these struggles influenced their own Native identity assessment. Their identity entailed views held by their families and communities, other Native Americans, and majority society. The data offered insight into how the Native students in this study were able to maintain a sense of Native identity *and* persist in higher education while coping with such effects of post-colonial oppression as ethnostress.

I'm Different and I Walk Around Whole: Identity Through Family and Community

Native American identity is succinctly explained as (Elsass, 1992), "...not only a concern of the individual, but owned, in a sense, by his family and close community as well" (p. 181). It is well documented both in the literature and in my findings the effects that family and community can have upon their children in establishing Native identity (Carney, 1999; Fixico, 2000; Garrod & Larimore, 1997; Lin, 1990; Little Soldier, 1985; Wright & Tierney, 1991).

In response to the question of what being Native American means to them, many of the participants referred back to what they were taught while growing up with their families and communities. In many of their descriptions, each identity component had a sense of interconnectedness, forming a whole as opposed to disjointed parts. This interconnected circular thinking of family, kin, and tribal bonds represents a unity of spirit in Native cultures (Benham & Stein, 2003; HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003) with an aim at balance (Harris & McFarland, 2000). HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003) describe some of these identity factors as oral traditions, respect for elders, spirituality, and ceremonial rituals. When the students were asked what being Native American meant to them, the factors identified by HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003) were named along

with some other factors such as looking different (phenotypes) and a sense of collectiveness in understanding and socializing with other tribal peoples.

Exemplifying the interconnectedness of identity to community and spirit, while coping with the forces of majority society as a Native American, a young Apache man articulates the following:

> You know to be Native American means a lot. My people, the Apache people have suffered in our existence. We've endured, suffered and endured up to present day, and it makes me proud to know that I am Native American. Uh, it's a little sad, too, because everywhere I go, it's looked down and has been said that I am walking around with one strike against me already. That's just because I'm Native American and that's sad. But more than anything I'm proud, because uh, I'm going to put it like this: *And I walk around whole.* (San Carlos Apache, p. 1, line 35)

An Ojibway and Lakota student who considers herself to be an "urban" Indian addresses how this affects her identity while she continues to maintain a sense of being Native American:

> As far as anything else reflecting my identity as a Native American, I don't know.... I guess I'm so urbanized it's hard. I'm also very proud of being Native, the way my parents brought me up. I'm very proud of being Native. (Ojibway and Lakota, p. 9, line 27)

Furthermore, the interconnectedness of identity can encompass attempts to ensure that the childhood teaching of what being indigenous means is passed on to other generations despite the influences of majority culture. Feeling the importance and responsibility of

maintaining traditional culture while feeling "pulled" by the culture of majority society is highly pronounced in the words of a young Navajo woman:

> Being Navajo to me is knowing my culture. Like my family is known for weaving, that is rug weaving, and that is a big part of our family, and knowing the foods that we eat traditionally. So there are many things that make us succinct from the main dominant culture. It's real easy to get lost in the dominate society. Real easy to just give up everything that we were taught growing up. For me being Navajo, I do have a lot of responsibilities, otherwise [the culture] will die out. Everybody is saying it's dying out. And you know it's a learning process, a whole other learning process. And those things are pretty important to me and to me being Navajo is having that knowledge of the culture and it *is* different from the dominant culture and that's how I see that. (Navajo, p. 1, line 20)

A similar response was provided by a Kiowa and Cheyenne and Arapaho student who was raised in an urban area when asked what being Native American meant to him:

> Well to me, it would be mainly my family, getting to know my family and my background. For me the traditions, a lot of learning my oral traditions from my elders. Also having the motivation to make it to their level of expertise. Having to learn the Native ways, but also trying to live in a world where the Native ways, kind of have to be, you know, kind of have to be brought into a way of living. (Kiowa/Cheyenne Arapaho, p. 1, line 20)

Although not disputing that differences do exist between majority culture and Native American communities, one student choose to view being "different" from mainstream society as interconnected to walking down one path:

> It's something you have that most other people don't. I mean you have a tie with something that's been around longer than you have. It's just heritage and a feeling that you have with home that you can't find anywhere else, and a lot of people don't have that. Being Indian you can have that power, that closeness. It's just something you can't find anywhere else. I mean I think they (other Native people) make it two different worlds. I think in their mind it's two different worlds. They walk two different walks, walk down two different roads. It's too hard. I don't think there's two different roads. I think there's only one road—one path. There's just different ways of walking down it. (Cheyenne/Osage, p. 9, line 22)

With each story shared in the interviews, it became obvious to me that all of the student participants possessed a foundational Native identity as relayed to them by their families and communities. Regardless of whether being reared on reservations, urban areas, or rural Native communities, all had a sense of what being Native meant to them. Some of their words reflected the challenges they face with maintaining a sense of Native identity despite feeling pulled by majority society to adhere to conformity. For some, their identity was reflected in the stories of elders and spirituality, for others it was traditional food and art, or the sense of responsibility to give back to their communities through their formal education or the maintenance of their traditions.

Regardless of what being Native meant to them personally, all contrasted their identity concept to those of Western thinking and culture, yet their meanings formed an interconnected wholeness and balance. Polarization by pointing out the deficits of any culture did not portray these comparisons nor did it involve identifying one culture as being superior or inferior to another. No regrets or apologies were made concerning being Native American; instead a healthy esteem existed among all of the interviewees concerning their affiliation with this population. The findings are best summed up in the words of Native law scholar, Rennard Strickland (1997):

> Despite dire deprivation, Indian people have learned the lesson of adapting, of changing, and yet remaining true to basic values. Despite raw poverty and bleak economic aspects, the modern Indian glories in his Indianness. Indian pride is a contemporary reality of Native life. (p. 54)

Through their stories of adaptation despite outside obstacles, these students have demonstrated the ability "to bounce back" (p. 1) which is defined as the epitome of resilience (Strand & Peacock, 2002).

Are You a **Real** *Indian? Stereotypes from Majority Culture*

From the onset of European arrival to what is now the United States, the stereotyping of Native Americans have become integrated into our mainstream culture. bell hooks states the following: "Stereotypes, however inaccurate, are one form of representation. They are an invention, a pretense that one knows when the steps that would make real knowing possible cannot be taken...are not allowed" (quoted in Langton, 1994, p. 102). Another states, "By substituting stereotyped history and stereotyped identities it blocks productive relations between real persons. It prevents

valuing the limited but very real meaning in actual lives" (Swanson, 1997, p. 58). From noble savages to the current, "mystical environmentalists or uneducated, alcoholic bingo-players confined to reservations" (Mihesuah, 1996, p. 9), misconceived representations always refer to "the essence of white image of the Indian has been the definition of American Indians" (Berkhofer, 1979, p. xv).

In everyday life, some of the students were often called upon to serve as an educator of their culture to combat the stereotypes that are often held in mainstream society. When sharing their stories with me, some expressed incredulous amusement to some of the assumptions that were held, while others reported their accounts as a matter of fact. An Umatilla student remarked upon the misconceptions and inquisitive nature of those outside his reservation concerning his Native culture:

> You know you grow up learning the history about what happened, all that kind of stuff. But there are so many misconceptions and stereotypes about Native Americans. You know it's kind of funny if you get outside the reservation or the Indian community, you know, people tend to ask you questions, stuff about your culture. (Umatilla, p. 1, line 41)

A young Apache man speaks to his personal experience concerning the negative stereotypes held by the general public of his tribe:

> Everywhere I went, everybody I would meet, it would be uh, uh, out like in a mall, airport, or just anywhere they would ask me, 'Hey, where are you from, what tribe are you?' And that's all they would ask. I guess in a common meaning, 'Hey what tribe are you?' Apache. 'Hey, those Apaches are they real mean?' (San Carlos Apache, p. 2, line 38)

Seeing the need to educate others concerning the misconceptions about his tribe as a survival concept he went on to remark:

> So, I'm really not opposed to it if it helped others to know and understand about our people and what we do, our tradition. You know, I was for it because I want people to know that Apache, we're not by the books' definitions, 'savages.' We're just real Indian people, too, trying to survive out there and we do what we can to do that. Yea, I hold an image, like, sure I won't scalp you. (San Carlos Apache, p. 3, line 1)

Some of the interviewees shared their majority experiences of being seen as a stereotypical icon or novelty, a common occurrence that continues to be reinforced by media stereotypes and pictorial metaphors (Merskin, 2001). For example, the media depiction of the Native American "primal ecologist" (p. 8) is viewed in the literature as an oversimplified misconception of imagery that demeans Indians, placing them in the same context as animal species who are a natural part of the environment (Wilson, 1992). An example of the primal ecologist is found in 1971 television commercial of an "unidentified American Indian wearing a strange mixture of plains and woodlands clothes, paddling a canoe (from yet another era), and beholding modern pollution with tears in his eyes" (Wilson, 1992, p. 17). Some scholars have described this depiction as a crude view of the environment and a crude view of Indians (Cronan, 1986). An Apache student interviewee who chose to pursue a degree in environmental sciences describes another view of this profound media stereotype's influence:

> There was an individual...who used to do commercials. His name was Iron Eyes Cody, he used to ride a horse (laughing) and he used to come on

commercials and I would say, 'Dad, look the Indian guy, the Indian guy, he's going to cry. Dad, watch, watch Dad, look, look, look.' Sure enough, he always cried on those commercials and it was kind of funny. He saw trash. He saw this filth and he always cried. Later on in life it kind of affected me because I saw our reservation being trashy and dirty. Let's clean this, it's a dirty site and I always wanted to play a role and do my part in enhancing our reservation. I didn't know where to start. And that was also too, when I got into college, understanding that hey, in order to do what I always wanted to do in the past, I've got to educate myself about certain areas like water quality and air quality. Because a lot of the things that dump into our rivers float downstream which there's a lake downstream according to where we're at. That, if not now, will eventually affect us in the future. Now I'm the present future. (San Carlos Apache, p. 6, line 39)

Inaccurate media depictions are responsible for the often misrepresented image of what *real* Indians look like to majority society, which is usually confined to those representing the Apache and Sioux tribes (Strickland, 1997). An Apache student spoke to his personal experience with this image while being in the company of diverse tribal members:

When I was in St. Louis going up in the arch, there was some Italians and I had my braids on…and these ladies asked me, 'Are you a *real* Indian?' And there was all these people, Indian football players. They look Indian.

But [one lady] said, 'But you're the only one who looks like a *real* Indian.' (San Carlos Apache, p. 10, line 3)

A Choctaw male student shared a similar experience:

> I was in Columbus, Ohio, with a friend of mine. And uh, I don't know if they have any Native Americans there or not, but apparently they hadn't seen any. I was there with my friend and it seemed like people wanted to take pictures of me being Native American. (Choctaw, p. 1, line 26)

A Navajo and Apache participant spoke of the overt irony that is often found in the majority perception of "the Indian image was always alien to white" (Berkhofer, 1979, p. xv). In a contemporary experience he shared an encounter he had while employed as an iron worker and traveling throughout the United States:

> I went to the ferry to go to the Statute of Liberty. The guy that was working the ferry asked me if I was Indian, when I said, 'Yes, I am Navajo and Apache.' He said, 'Do you speak a foreign language?
> (Navajo/Apache, p. 8, line 4)

Through these indigenous contrasts, the students presented an empowering perspective by defining not only who they were, but also who they were not as viewed by the eyes of majority society. The students who shared these outside experiences of Native American stereotypes did not elaborate on their inner feelings about how these outside perceptions made them feel, nor did they seem to be "stuck" in these experiences. However, their voluntary inclusion of these experiences spoke to the importance this held for them. It almost seemed that to them, such stereotyping encompassed yet another mark along the continuum of being a Native American in the 21st century. However, when

stereotyping occurred at the hands of their acquaintances, friends, or other Native Americans, it ceased being "matter of fact," causing the participants to invoke more emotion in the often painful stories of their experiences.

Show Me Your Card: Difference as Viewed by Other Native Americans

"Too many spirits are broken by daily encounters with racism from non-Indians and by the lateral attacks inflicted by one Indian person against another," (Ambler et al., 2003, p. 10). For some of the participants, their experiences entailed not only learning to cope with stereotyping from majority society, but also from other Native American students, known as externalized oppression. Its counterpart, internalized oppression can occur on a very individual level through poor self-image because they "look" Native American to majority society. An Ojibway and Lakota student reported, "I've heard of a lot of people who are embarrassed and tend to change the way they look so they don't look Native" (Ojibway/Lakota, p. 9, line 26).

Internalized oppression among Native Americans is uncovered when behavior toward our loved ones becomes externalized as community members inflict pain and suffering upon other members. Described as a "double consciousness view" it encompasses a combination of the traditions taught by our elders, combined with mirroring the dominant subject position (Roupart, 2003):

> Like colonized groups throughout the world, American Indian people have learned and internalized the discursive practices of the West—the very codes that created, reflected, and reproduced our oppression. As American Indians participate in, create, and reproduce Western cultural forms, we internalize Western meanings of difference and abject Otherness, viewing

> ourselves within and through the constructs that defined us racially and culturally subhuman, deficient, and vile. (p. 87)

This form of internalized oppression is seen as a result of colonization. Colonization is also reflected in the Euro-American race theory that "understood blood as quite literally the vehicle of transmission cultural characteristics" (Garroutte, 2001, p. 224).

Combining race theory with political goals, the establishment of a documented blood quantum for Native people was projected to eventually diminish the tribes and the responsibilities held by the federal government to the tribes. The assumption held for this belief was that inevitably all Natives would intermarry with Whites and become totally assimilated into mainstream society, resulting in cultural genocide. Race theory regarding Native Americans evolved into members of Federally-recognized tribes being required to carry Certificate Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) cards. These cards document the "blood degree" of Native descent and must be presented prior to being eligible for services provided by the Federal government which were a result of treaty agreements (Garroutte, 2001). One student commented concerning her dilemma of being recognized legally as a member of the Cherokee Nation while being denied the social identification set by other Native Americans because she did not "look" Native:

> I know for me being Indian, I guess it's kind of harder because I guess you have to *look* it to be accepted. It's hard when you look one way and your blood says another. My father's side are full-bloods. It's a little harder for me to say I'm Native American without somebody saying to me, 'Really? You don't *look* it.' It's kind of hard for me because I stick out like a sore thumb at pow-wows [laughing]. When I go to the [Indian] clinic I have to

> show them my blood card and they want proof and identification that you are what you say. But yea, I think it's more difficult for me in that situation, but I think it's more difficult for me than someone who looked it with black hair and black eyes. (Cherokee, p. 4, line 15)

She goes on to share her feelings of also being seen as an outcast in some of the Native campus organizations that she holds membership with, "I'm sure I'm not the only one, a lot of the girls [in the Native student organization], they've had some problems…coming to college known as a 'wanna be'" (Cherokee, p. 3, line 5). A "wanna be" in Native American culture refers to people whom are not viewed as Native Americans by other Natives, but who deeply aspire to be seen as such. Her resolution of "making up" for not looking Native American to others was: "I think it's just being involved in the traditions and heritage and as long as I'm giving back, you know, somewhere."

In the political race theory definition of Native peoples, full-bloods are considered the only "really real" Native Americans (Garroutte, 2001, p. 224). One student expounded upon a similar experience she witnessed regarding a national college internship she participated in with other Native American students:

> There was a very clear division among everyone. I think that you know, its there because one of the biggest issues that we had was like the full-blood Indians didn't like the people, you know, who had just a little bit [of Native blood] because they didn't feel like they deserved to be there. I was caught in the middle because I looked [Indian] but all my friends didn't. And I think every single one of them knew about their culture. No matter

> how small, they were all willing to learn. And I think that if you just have a willingness to learn and you take all of those steps to do that, that gives more of a Native identity than someone who's totally Native and been around their culture all their life, [rather] than just judging someone else because they don't look it and they don't have the right amount of blood. (Creek/Navajo, p. 6, line 28).

Some Native scholars hold the belief that healing can only occur when internalized oppression is named or written about (Ambler et al., 2003). However, claiming the presence of internalized oppression is not commonly expressed outside of Native communities as it encompasses the risk of becoming a "self-fulfilling prophecy" (p. 90) to dominate society (Poupart, 2003). In other words (Ferguson, 2000):

> Since a good part of the ideological work of race to fix meanings and relationships as natural and durable, the racialization of cultural forms and practices not only extracts behaviors and attitudes from the social matrix in which they are embedded but transforms them into immutable racially linked characteristics that produce poverty and bad citizens. (p. 20)

Because of this, I was in much deliberation of whether or not to toss out these "negative cases" for fear that reporting them would further ostracize Native Americans in majority society. Leaving out negative cases is contradictory to qualitative research as Becker (1998) states, "By bringing the left-out something back into our analysis, we can add new dimensions to our thinking and understanding" (p. 150). Including outlier cases in qualitative studies is also a part of triangulation as this complicates, rather than simplifies the data (Mathison, 1988).

Most important, ignoring that internalized and externalized oppression happens does not make it go away as evidenced by the accounts shared by these students. The pain and conflict they felt concerning opposing Native community views on who is Native American and who deserves to be accepted as such is flagrant. However, the inclusion of their voices can be instrumental in breaking the silence of these internally- and externally-harbored beliefs that have the potential to destroy Native communities (Poupart, 2003).

The colonial implementation of race theory was designed to directly connect Native blood to Native culture as a means to eventually diminish the responsibility of the federal government to indigenous peoples. As a result, the government considered some Native Americans to be more traditional than others based upon their documented blood degrees portrayed on cards issued by the federal government. In keeping with this theory, some Native Americans have "bought into" race theory creating identification division among tribal members. As a result, internalized oppression can occur on an individualized basis when the person views himself or herself through the eyes of previous and current social constructs of being vile or ugly because they are Native American. In turn, internalized oppression can become externalized when these constructs are used by Native Americans to inflict pain and suffering upon other tribal members. The students in this study revealed contentions with difference concerning their tribal identity through their majority society experiences with stereotyping and internalized and externalized oppression of Native peoples. Based upon the limited data available in this study, further inquiry is needed to more fully examine the origins and effects of externalized oppression among indigenous populations.

What About Us Normal *People?: Difference Uncovered by the Experience of Mainstream Educational Systems*

And for some it was their experience attending mainstream educational systems that first made their difference as Natives obvious to them. As stated (Sanchez, 2003):

> First, and at the earliest contact with public schools, the question of identity is forced upon American Indian children and becomes a very important and difficult lifestyle challenge. As reinforced in the American public education paradigm, it remains much easier for children to relinquish the cultural affiliations of indigenous American Indian nations and simply accept attempts toward assimilation into the dominant culture…These issues play immense roles in the development of American Indian identity and with American Indian children finding their position in the world. (p. 41)

This has resulted in causing my study's participants to initiate an exploration of who they are as Native American people based upon their experiences in mainstream education. For them, this struggle had to be dealt with in some capacity to restore their balance in who they are as Native people while staying focused on their educational goals. Despite these challenges, their persistence and determination to complete college were evidenced in their remarks of how each in their own personal way chose to cope with this stress while maintaining a strong sense of being Native Americans.

Caucasian peers

Issues of past and contemporary trust and discrimination were a part of the mainstream educational experience for many whom were interviewed. One student expounded upon his impressions of and feelings for Caucasian students in the high school setting as compared to those toward Native American students:

> When I was in high school, I was afraid of the (Apache word) or what we call White kids. I was afraid of the White kids because every time we talked to them, you know, they were different. For some reason, there was something sly about them, something slick. Whereas, the Indians, a lot of them, they were comfortable and openly knew. It was like they had an understanding of how I am and I know who you are. Whereas, Caucasian individuals they always have that slyness about them, the split tongue, you don't when it's going to strike. (San Carlos Apache, p. 10, line 38)

A young woman expounded upon her experience of realizing her difference as a Native American while attending college in a mainstream university and how it provoked her to contemplate what her identity meant to her:

> I guess when I started college it was just I began to realize, oh, I am Native because I'm different than most of the people because I went to a White school and stuff. I guess it never occurred to me because when I was younger, it was like everybody was Indian. So it was like I started thinking about that. (Kickapoo, p. 1, line 23)

Another young woman responded concerning her level of comfort with Natives as compared to being with mostly White students:

I get sense of peace when I'm around other Indian people than when I am just like stuck in a classroom full of White people. I don't have anything against White people, but I don't have the same (feeling) just like being completely comfortable. Because it's hard with a name like mine, because nobody knows how to pronounce it, so.... (Creek/Navajo, p. 3, line 8)

For another the difference realization came as part of a class he attended in his undergraduate studies:

I took a course called "Cross-Cultural Communication" and that's when I got my culture shock because we got divided into groups and we were told to think of Native stereotypes for our minority group. And uh, you know I heard some of the worst ones, right? That the Europeans had come up with and it was then I started to realize that I was different and I accepted my identity, you know, fully and then everything else fell into place. You know at that time I started participating in the ceremonies in my village, my hair grew long and it was just a natural thing. I started to, you know, get away from my friends who were in fraternities and I started hanging out with, you know, my *real* brothers and sisters. (Isleta, p. 1, line 28)

Some of the students elaborated on the discrimination that was directed toward them by Caucasian college classmates concerning their political and minority status as Native Americans. Despite these painful distractions, they went on to speak of the conscious efforts they utilize to stay focused on graduating from college. One respondent reported on how he felt, "The Caucasian race thinks we get too much, whether it's money or other government assistance" (Choctaw, p. 5, line 20). He went on further to discuss

the competitive nature of admission into graduate school and a fellow Caucasian student's remark of, "'Native Americans can get into another school easily. What about us *normal* people?' And that's where passive aggression comes through" (Choctaw, p. 5, line 23). When asked if he felt pressured as a Native American because of these types of comments to work harder academically as a means to "prove" himself, he responded, "It does make us want to work harder, but just getting done [graduating from college] is an accomplishment" (Choctaw, p. 6, line 5).

Another shared the personal pain she felt at not being considered a "normal" person by a classmate and the potential destruction this could cause if she lost control and reacted angrily to this statement. This comment was especially painful for her because it was made by a Caucasian student that she went to lunch frequently and considered to be a friend. Of the Christian belief system and a member of the Cherokee Southern Baptist Association, she shared her resolution in dealing with this dilemma, "My faith is what really held me back and my thinking of 'I've come too far for somebody that had the ignorance that she had at that moment to ruin my education'" (Keetoowah Cherokee, p. 8, line 43).

For one student the self-discovery of being Native American, as viewed through the eyes of majority society, started much earlier. Her experience was ongoing, integrated into her childhood and adolescence. She describes the pain she felt growing up in a geographical area and attending a school system that was exclusive to Caucasians:

> It was really difficult for me to be so different...being brown in general, whether being Indian and Hispanic nobody really cared. It was just different and I hated it. In junior high I had a lot of problems. And being

an outsider I was treated very badly. The kids were mean to me. And I didn't have any friends, you know they would call me spic, Pocahontas, all kinds of nasty things. It really made me feel ugly, you know? The boys would say I was disgusting and looking in the mirror, I honestly saw myself to be a really ugly girl, like *really* ugly and then I saw my (Native American) mother as ugly, too, because to me, she was everything they had taught me was bad about me. (Apache, p. 2, line 13)

She goes on later to describe how she used these experiences to motivate herself to achieve and accomplish her goals and find resolution of who she was a Native American:

> I think once I got into high school, I realized all of that I could use it, just to prove me. You know every bad experience I had. All the pain that I had gone through, that I had made it through, had better be for something. And I've just decided that I guess I made a decision, probably in my junior year [of high school], that I didn't care what anybody said. And they could hate me all they wanted, but in the end I was going to be more, *be more*. But now that I have gotten older it makes me proud that I have something that other people don't have. And that I have that connection and that camaraderie of the [Native] people. (Apache, p. 11, line 23)

Value and expectation difference

For a young woman raised on the Navajo Reservation, the classroom behavioral expectations in a mainstream educational institution were overwhelming as compared to her own tribal cultural values:

> It was just my freshman year (laughing), you know? It was just instant, you know like, this is how it's supposed to be. You've got to talk in class.

> You've got to communicate and that was new to me. And things like eye contact...you know it's kind of frowned upon [at home], like when you look into someone's eyes, it's like you're staring into their soul or something. And those things were new to me and I was told you've got to get used to it. You've got to get used to talking in class and all those things were new to me. Cause you know it was like don't speak unless you're spoken to and don't say anything unless you have something important to say. And so this one was like, say something, *right now* (laughing). (Navajo, p. 3, line 15)

One student expressed her feeling comfortable in answering personal questions in the interview, a result of practiced self-disclosure in her academic studies, "You know it's just of course, you know through social work, that's the first thing you have to do is start writing about yourself. I'm used to it. I'm used to that part" (Keetoowah Cherokee, p. 10, line 7).

For some students value differences were noted in their own thoughts concerning academic and career differences as opposed to what others think is advisable for them. Feeling the push to go into a field that would provide more money and to pursue graduate education as soon as possible for the same purpose as conflicting with her pull to spend more time at home, one student shared her resolution in reacting to this pressure:

> And career-wise people were like, if you go into this field you would make more money and if you go into this, you would get so much benefits. It's like I get told right after you graduate, you can apply for graduate school and after you're done you can have so much money. And that was

not a part of my choice and what I wanted to do and it was forcing me like, you know? And a lot of people don't understand the importance or the need for me to go home. They just don't get it. They're like, you know, that's going to put off five more years of your getting your education and getting your Ph.D. and all of those things. You know education is always going to be there and I understand that. But my parents only have like another ten, fifteen, or twenty years to be here, a limited amount of time and I feel the pressure to go home and learn these things. And it's just like they don't understand why I am the way I am. (Navajo, p. 3, line 16)

The history of mainstream education for Native Americans was designed to completely assimilate the children into dominant mainstream white society. Today, Native people who have maintained a sense of their indigenous identity continue to struggle with the forces of majority educational institutional values. Known as ethnostress, combating the attitudes and beliefs of others that they are not "normal" combined with feeling pressured to conform because they are viewed as different than majority society. In this way, the difference is not good, as was instilled in them by their families or communities, but encompasses something that must be changed. For many this dilemma is met by revisiting their cultural upbringing, adhering to the very resilience that is documented by HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003).

Elders

An integral part in instilling Native identity to younger generations is employed by the elders who teach the language and traditions (Fixico, 1997; Wilson, 1996) and provide wisdom and direction in life experience to those who are younger (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). Some Native scholars hold the belief that the grandparent/grandchild link is the strength and resilience of the young Indian people to "become indigenous ancestors themselves" (Allen, 2002, p. 201). Native students can draw from their faith in the grandfathers and this can be instrumental in persisting in school as one elder told his young grandson concerning his sacrificial offering to the Creator, "When you offer your tobacco…turning back is not an option…there is no giving up" (HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003, p. 17). The participants in this study often mentioned elders who taught them the languages, songs and stories, ceremonies, arts, and traditional food preparation, all viewed as an integral part of Native identity.

Respect

The teaching of the elders often entails a stark contrast to the culture of mainstream society. It is the respect for nature and a creator, along with children and elders that establish the "foundation of discipline and authority" (Eggan, 1971, p. 104). Showing a strong respect for elders is a common cultural value among all tribes (Sue & Sue, 1990; Kawulich & Curlette, 1995) and the proscribed roles given to the elders in providing support is reported as a protective factor (Benard, 1992).

A Navajo and Apache student shared how he employed coping skills by seeking the wisdom of his elders in coping with a bicultural world:

To me it's belonging to a people that's almost extinct. To me, being a Native American is living in two different communities. I've been in situations where I've asked myself what would my elders think and all that time it gives what this dominant society can't always give me. (Navajo/Apache, p. 1, line 12)

The importance and cultural integration of showing respect to one's elders is stated by a Choctaw student:

I think growing up that was the first things we were taught, I don't know whether it was respecting our elders or speaking our language. I believe our heritage strongly appreciates, as it should be, our language. But respecting our elders was something we were taught throughout. I don't know if it's just because my grandparents raised me that I strongly believe in this. But you always see a younger Indian person respecting their elders. (Choctaw, p. 2, line 6)

Teaching Traditional Ways

The roles of grandparents constitute culturally-defined responsibilities both historically and in contemporary Native culture (Bahr, 1994). It is not uncommon for grandparents to have a very distinct role in the raising of their grandchildren, especially when it comes to teaching them the cultural values and traditions. A young, single mother shared her thoughts on being exposed to the native language of her grandparents:

And my grandparents raised me and they were my mom and dad. They had me since I was seven months old. I grew up with my grandmother, [who was] much [more] elderly than all the other parents and stuff. It was

> common on the reservation. I mean it wasn't that uncommon, I guess. My great-grandfather, he was not so very much into the Native American religion, but he loved the pow-wow. He loved the music and spoke his language and my grandparents didn't. They understood it. They didn't speak it at the house very much. (Ojibway, p. 2, line 7)

A similar response was expressed in the words of a young male student whose upbringing on a small reservation reflected the teachings his grandparents concerning being Native American:

> When somebody ask me if I'm Indian or Native American the first thing that I think of is where I'm from. And, you know, family oriented, just because the Native American culture is so close-knit. What it means to me is I'm very proud of what I am. In a simple sense, it means being, you know, growing up and learning and hearing what my parents had to teach me, and my grandparents had to tell me about traditional ways and being indigenous. (Umatilla, p. 1, line 20)

A young Apache woman describes the importance of her grandparent's role in relaying the history of her tribal heritage:

> I think it's just a connection with everything that came before me, because I grew up with a really rich history from my family, like who my ancestors were, and what our history is. I think I was raised that way by my grandparents especially that it was important for me to remember all of that. I had a really strong tie, almost like that's a really important part of me is where I come from. (Apache, p. 1, line 20)

Another student provided an account of the role of grandparents in instilling Native identity in their grandchildren. She questioned her full-blood mother concerning why her maternal grandparents had provided such limited knowledge to their children concerning their Choctaw culture:

> I can remember when I was little my granny, she taught me [tribal culture]. I know that she did teach me a few Choctaw words. I can't remember them now. My granny was good to us, but she wasn't around for us kids. But she died really young and so did my great grandma and grandpa. And then my mom's dad he tried to teach me Choctaw. I have an aunt, a great-aunt and I was around her when I was around her growing up. She kind of took over my granny's spot. But my mom's family isn't very big so, it's almost like they stopped. They stopped educating. My mom, I'd ask her and my [mother's sister] why do you think they didn't talk to you about this, get you more involved? And she really didn't have an answer so she didn't know. (Choctaw, p. 2, line 4)

A similar experience is shared by a student whose mother is Caucasian and her dad is a full-blood Cherokee. Although her father was absent during much of her childhood, she describes the role of her paternal grandparents in trying to teach her what being Cherokee meant:

> My dad was supposed to have me for weekends, but I never saw him until I was sixteen. But his parents, my grandmother and grandfather, yea oh yea, they would take me pow-wows. And my grandfather would try to teach me the language, which he now hasn't spoken in years. We did these

> once-a-month things with my grandmother. We were exposed to [the culture]. Otherwise my mom wasn't much of a help. She didn't know much about it either. (Cherokee, p. 1, line 26 & p. 2, line 2)

A Keetoowah Cherokee woman spoke extensively of the roles held by her dad and grandmother in teaching her the language, the songs and the preparation of indigenous foods:

> My father he sings Cherokee a lot and that's something I will always remember, even at home, him singing that Cherokee. And that's how I learned to really understand a lot of Cherokee because he would write it out for me in English. And that's where I learned my Cherokee, too…is through the singing, the gospel singing. I'm not too big on the foods that we eat, maybe like wild onion, things like that. That's a lot of stuff my grandma cooks. She said 'You don't even know how to make the food that you need to eat. That's good for you.' So, she's going to teach me how to make that. (Keetoowah Cherokee, p. 3, line 11)

The participants often referred to the importance of their elders in teaching them what being Native American means. This is demonstrated by the reverence and respect that they hold for those who are older and wiser than themselves. Whether guiding them through the traditions or language, the role of elders in the lives of the participants was viewed as integral to establishing their identity. Likewise, the support of other family members is also very important in instilling identity and in reaching their educational goals.

Family Support

The importance of the nuclear and extended Native family is viewed as both an identification bond and substantial support system (Fixico, 2000). As noted in the tribal identity theme, the students named their family members as the primary source of instilling who they are as Native Americans. From an academic perspective, in a study of Navajo college graduates, parents' and family members' support were ranked the highest on a measurement scale of what contributes to college success (Rindone, 1988).

In lieu of "family strengths," a cultural resilient factor described by HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003), the students in this study used the words "family support" when responding to the question of what other factors had assisted them in completing college. In keeping with allowing the members of the study to define their own terms to classify their events (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995), I have replaced the preliminary category of family strengths with family support.

For all of the students interviewed, family members served as their major support network in college persistence. For many acquiring a college degree was such a collaborative effort that they felt as if it belonged to all that were involved in their support. This is relayed by a young Navajo student who expounds upon the importance her family's support as they look toward her graduation:

> I swear every one of them. You know my dad, my mom, my two brothers and two sisters, you know? You know me graduating, it's like yea, I'm graduating, but to them it's like they're graduating as well. It's like a big deal (laughing). (Navajo, p. 9, line 2)

A Cherokee Keetoowah woman provides remarks concerning both her nuclear and extended family along with her Cherokee church family serving as a substantial source of support toward her studies:

> My family they're such big supporters. My husband, he's always there to help me anytime I need it. Any kind of paper I write, he's looking at it, making sure everything is good or somebody in my family does. Or even my church family, we have a bunch of teachers and education majors in there. And they're just, anything you need help on, just be sure and tell us. They've been a big support. (Keetoowah Cherokee, p. 9, line 26)

A Choctaw student provides a similar answer when asked what other factors have helped him to complete his college education, "I would say my family. They've always encouraged me, not just my immediate family, but I have cousins and uncles who've always seen something in me" (Choctaw, p. 4, line 23).

A Navajo student responded that during the critical freshman year in college, it was the family decision to have her sister live with her that made all the difference in persisting:

> For me personally, it was having my family. One of my sisters moved out here with me and that helped me so much. My freshman year, I stayed in the dorms. You know it was tough. I'm pretty quiet for the most part. I really keep to myself so I'm not outgoing. I didn't make much friends, so it was just pretty tough. But then my sister came out here with me. We got our own place and I don't know. It helped me so much. I mean seriously, I wouldn't be here if my sister wasn't here with me. (Navajo, p. 7, line 21)

When asked what other factors assisted her in finishing school, a Kickapoo student responded in this way:

> I'd have to say just like the support of my family. I'm the only one of my cousins that goes to school. But my mom, she's always there for me. Like when I was thinking about coming here, she was like 'If I have to, I'll get you wherever you want to go.' So that was kind of one thing for me. And my grandparents, too. [My grandfather] was just always supportive in everything I did. He never thought that I couldn't do anything. I think their support and my extended family, too. (Kickapoo, p. 6, line 37 & p. 7, line 3)

She goes on to further explain the personal motivation she has to complete college to set a precedent for her cousins to follow in using their education to provide for their parents:

> Like my cousins, you know I want to set an example because my Aunt Sally, she works at restaurant as a cashier. She's fine with that, but she has no benefits and she's already like forty-seven years old and she's always sick and everything. And so I want to encourage her daughters to help do something, so they can help their parents. (Kickapoo, p. 7, line 8)

Another response regarding family strengths and support was provided by a young wife and mother who was going to college full-time while being employed part-time:

> I have a very strong support in my family that has really helped me. But then my immediate family of course. My husband and daughter have learned to take care of themselves (laughing). So, my immediate family is my network of support. My mother and my sister also, you know they help

a lot by just helping with my daughter. When I have to study all weekend or write papers, they take her so that it can be quiet in the house. (Ojibway/Lakota, p. 4, line 27)

For others drawing strength from past and future generations was instrumental in completing their education. A Creek and Navajo student comments on the importance of the strength she drew from her family, especially her grandfather, now deceased:

> I think my biggest supporters were my grandparents. Because it was like if I did something that I received awards or joined anything, I think my grandfather was the proudest because he would just brag to everyone. I think it was important that I had that support from at least him and then the rest of my family. If I needed anything, they would help. I don't know how I would have gotten through the last two years had it not been for my family. (Creek/Navajo, p. 4, line 31)

A newly married Choctaw student remarks upon the strong support of her family and her future children as motivating factors to complete college, "So, I get a lot of help from family and friends, my parents. And then now my husband and my kids I hope to have someday. Right now, those are the things" (Choctaw, p. 5, line 23).

The importance of family support in completing college was very instrumental to the students, as they were quick to mention their families before naming any other factors that may have assisted them. Many specified their immediate family members, such as spouses, siblings, and/or parents, as being extremely supportive in helping with their studies and/or providing emotional support. However, in keeping with the traditional values of the importance of extended families in Native cultures, it was not uncommon

for grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles to also be included in the support system. The support of their families was so critical that some of the students openly questioned if they would have persisted in their studies had their families not been so encouraging.

Ceremonial Rituals and Sacred Ceremonies

The preliminary theoretical framework for this study addressed ceremonial rituals as a component of cultural resilience. In my findings, some of the students did participate in tribal ceremonial rituals, others found a balance between the rituals and Christianity, while some of the participants adhered strictly to a Christian belief system. For the latter, no regrets were offered for being considered "non-traditional" as they maintain a strong identification with being Native American.

Having been away from home for majority of three years to attend college, with only brief visits to his reservation, a Umatilla student combines spirituality, family, and ceremonial rituals with his identity. He speaks to the importance all of these hold for him:

> A day doesn't go by that I don't pray for my family. I'm going back to family because that's my foundation. They're my everything. They're my building blocks to my entire life. Especially [away at college] with my spiritual life that I think without that, I don't know where I'd be. I honestly don't. That's something that helped me become the person that I am and give me the solid foundation for the way I live my life now. I love going home and we can do the stuff. I can go into the sweathouse and I can go up in the mountains with my dad and do that kind of stuff. (Umatilla, p. 8, line 25)

An Apache student who later converted to Christianity, has uncovered many parallels between his Native religion and Christianity, spoke of the importance the tribal ceremonial practices of his childhood held for him:

> I was brought up by my father. He would take me to what we called the Holy Ground. That was where a lot of our traditional tribal people would go to get a blessing for whatever…like new strength, whether it would be for school, whether for health…just anything. (San Carlos Apache, p. 2, line 23)

An Ojibway and Lakota woman who is an observer of some tribal ceremonies and participates in others, remarks upon how this has helped her shape her Native identity:

> I had a pretty strong cultural heritage and strong ties to my cultural heritage and I go home every summer for the Sun Dances. But I *am not* a sun dancer, but I do that every year. I grew up, by the time I was an infant my parents took me to the sweats for first time to baptize me, although they didn't call it baptizing. And I've been in sweats all of my life, sacred ceremonies. I'm pretty spiritual, but I wouldn't say I'm religious. I'm pretty spiritual and so that is what being Native American means to me, the cultural background I always fall back on. (Ojibway/Lakota, p. 1, line 19)

A Cherokee Keetoowah student adheres to the Cherokee Southern Baptist doctrine as part of her spiritual belief system. This juxtaposes against the belief held by some of her fellow tribal members that Native Americans must not be Christian. She refers to the ancient Cherokee ceremonial ritual known as stomp dancing that continues

to be practiced by "traditional" Cherokees who are predominately a part of her Keetoowah tribal political organization. When asked if she considered herself to be a traditional Native American, she replied:

> No, not really, because I grew up in a Baptist home. So, my belief is in the Lord and I couldn't really tell you what their beliefs are. I've never even been to a stomp ground or stomp dances. But still I just let people know that I am Keetoowah. I am Native American, even though I don't go to the stomp ground or pow-wows or wear the jewelry. I'm not into the traditional. It's just knowing who I am. I'm Keetoowah and Native American. I will stand up and even though I'm not traditionalist because I know who I am. Yea, I'm ready to tell everybody that although I don't go to the stomp grounds like you do, I'm still Keetoowah and I'll tell anybody that. (Keetoowah Cherokee, p. 2, line 21)

When addressing ceremonial rituals, diverse practices were mentioned by participants that were quite specific depending upon their tribal affiliations. This component speaks directly to the distinct and diverse cultures that separate Native tribes and prevents them from effectively being clumped together in a general category. Along with their tribal diversity with regards to ceremonial rituals, the students varied in their adherence to these practices. Some amalgamated them with Christianity, while others participated in them infrequently. Participation typically involved returning home which was not often convenient due to their being away at college. Many of the students did not mention ceremonial rituals when asked what being Native American meant to them. This can be analyzed from two perspectives: They had *no* affiliation with the practices, or they

did participate in the practices, but information was not commonly shared with others outside of their tribe. For the students who stated they were not involved with these rituals, this did not appear to pose an identity conflict for them, as they strongly expressed identity in other cultural factors.

Oral Traditions

Storytelling is viewed as a method used in deriving valuable information from the members participating in the study. Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995) report members' stories are:

> ...always partial, being told for many different reasons and adjusted to fit different relationships and situations...an expression of the speaker's experience and views at a particular moment in time, to a specific audience, in order to accomplish particular purposes. (p. 117)

For Native populations storytelling takes on a broader purpose, "In passing on the stories of our lives, we pass on skills to our children, and we parent for resilience" (Sanchez-Way & Johnson, 2002, p. 3). Often the interviewees shared the stories told by their elders in response to some of the questions regarding issues of who they are as Native Americans. One Navajo and Apache man commented that speaking the tribal language is important but hearing the stories of the elders and what they *really* meant is a deeper part of knowing the culture.

In social relationships, storytelling is viewed as an appropriate way for Native Americans to express their ideas and feelings (Kawulich & Curlette, 1998). Indigenous story telling is a process, "Our stories can be told over and over; they are developmental. At every step we learn something new" (HeavyRunner & Morris, 2001, p. 2). This often

leaves the listener to come to their own conclusions of what has been relayed, creating yet another form of analysis that is typically uncommon in mainstream culture (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). In some of the interviews, as opposed to addressing oral traditions directly, the stories were actually *told* to me by the students. I include two written renditions concerning identity and sacrifice that were shared by a Navajo and Apache male student.

Identity

In many Native American cultures, creation is not viewed as a final act as is found in Western thinking, but serves as an ongoing process of renewal (Smith, 1995). One particular student went on to share how his dad would tell his children their tribal creation stories each weekend when he and his siblings returned home after being in Indian boarding school all week. Each night the family lay on sheepskins and the firelight would illuminate the wall of their hogan in what would otherwise be darkness. The stories were always ongoing and would conclude only when sleep would take over. The next time the family was together again his father would ask the children what they last remembered and would resume at this point. (Navajo/Apache, fieldnote, 10/16/03)

This participant's account of his father sharing the creation stories with his children as an ongoing process spoke to the importance Native people place upon their indigenous identity. Further, the stories were used as a means to instill cultural resilience in his children during a critical time when they were separated from the family to attend boarding school.

Sacrifice

The forced assimilation through boarding school experiences and other educational methods that represent the loss of language, family and culture are viewed as legacies to overcome for Native peoples. However, it is reported as possible to be both a traditional Native and successful in academia (Rodriguez, 1997). Many of the interviewees found their pursuit of higher education resulting in much sacrifice of having to leave the comfort of their culture and traditions to a "foreign" environment. However, this sacrifice is often driven by the desire to make a difference by promoting economic survival for their families and communities.

A Navajo and Apache student who moved his wife and two toddler-aged daughters across several states to attend an all-Indian university, spoke wistfully of his desire to return home. Although his Navajo language was his first language, he longed to learn more about his tribal culture while immersing his young children in it. He expressed concern that many of the elders who possessed the knowledge and wisdom of his tribe were dying as he was away at college. When asked about what other factors have assisted him in graduating from college, he responded with a parable that his father had shared with a friend. At his father's funeral, as a tribute to him, his friend shared the story with those in attendance. In storytelling, a parable is viewed as a source of information "through which people address each other indirectly" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 130).

The story entailed a rooster that to his demise, choose to stay in the barn while it burned down. When the farmer arrived and found his property burned, he gave the little charred rooster a swift kick, angry that he did not save himself from the fire. As the

rooster's charred body flew through the air, the farmer discovered the eggs he had been sitting on: protected and intact (Navajo/Apache, p. 7, line 6).

In this manner, the student made meaning that his father was telling him what a true Native American leader is, one who will sacrifice his own needs for the survival of others. By relaying the parable in response to my question, the student was telling me that he saw himself as the rooster. He is the one who is now making the sacrifice of leaving something very sacred to him: his homeland, culture and traditions. In making this sacrifice to obtain higher education, he holds the hope of returning and using what he has acquired to help his family and tribal people. This metaphor is a powerful illustration of collective versus individualistic worldviews.

Support Networks

Family support was found as the predominant theme in factors that have assisted the students in higher education. However, the students also mentioned support networks assisted them in pursuing higher education. Secondary factors were noted as campus Native clubs and organizations, Native American professors and counselors, Native friends, and peers who shared similar academic and goal interests.

Native Professors

Native American professors are viewed as role models for Native American students and as integral part of the higher education pipeline in retention efforts (Rodriguez, 1997). One student comments on her personal experience with Native American professors:

> I am in awe and admire all these [Native] professors. Like [name omitted] who has a J.D. He's just full of knowledge in class and topics that are just

fascinating. And I look at him and he looks like somebody from home, you know? You know he talks about all this incredible information that goes on in courts and goes on about sovereignty. You know at home we are not educated on the reservation. We complain a lot instead of what the issue is and do not have active participation. And what can we do to change, you know? That's what I'd like to see now with Native faculty and Native scholars and I love it! And I love that there are faculty out there, Natives out there just being with scholars in whatever they are doing. (Ojibway/Lakota, p. 8, line 22)

A Kickapoo and Cheyenne/Arapaho student spoke of spending time with one of his Native professors at an Indian university, "I would say, 'What do you think of this?' And we'd sit down on the porch and he'd be drinking coffee and I'd be drinking water. And we'd just sit and talk about family ties and stuff" (Kickapoo/Cheyenne/Araphaho, p. 5, line 3).

Haskell Indian Nations University

For the students who were attending Haskell University, the entire student body served as a support network. Sharing the commonality of being Native American, the students developed pride and respect for others of diverse tribal populations. As one student commented:

But I think Haskell is really unique and it really opens your eyes to a lot of, there's a sense of, a real sense of pride about being Native American here and that's what I really like about it. But there's a real sense of belonging when you come here and we always laugh like we call it a little

reservation because it's almost like you're back home again. You're really comfortable with the people who are around you. Even if you have somebody living next door to you who is Alaskan or somebody on the other side of you who is Seminole. You can still identify and there's still a sense of community and belonging. You know we look out for each other. (Navajo, p. 6, line 28)

Another informant comments concerning the support she receives from the other students at Haskell Indian Nations University:

> And one of the students [in my class said], 'I see so much leadership qualities in a lot of the students in my classes and those are connections that I'm going to make for a lifetime.' And I just think that Haskell has given us that opportunity to make connections with all of these different tribes in the United States, where we respect their opinion and they respect our opinion and we can come together to make a decision. So, I think we are coming together. It's possible. It's quite possible to unite as a people. (Ojibway, p. 3, line 16)

Native Campus Organizations

Native American campus affiliations such as the Native American Student Association (NASA), American Indian Engineering Society (AISES), and a Native American sorority were seen as helpful in meeting other Native American people and participating in the campus community. One student remarks concerning her affiliation with a Native American campus sorority:

> I think it is important to have a support system behind you. It's really important to have one on campus if you're away from home. Because the first three years that I was here, I didn't like it at all. I didn't know anybody and I just had problems in going out and meeting people. And I have a support system now. I don't know what I would do without the ladies in my sorority because they've pulled me. Especially this last semester was really tough for me. They pulled me through and any time I need anything, I can call them. So, I think just having a support system other than your family is good. (Creek/Navajo, p. 7, line 40 & p. 8, line 2)

Outside of their families, the students mentioned campus support systems that were beneficial to them while in college. For most, affiliations with Native American campus organizations were named and/or Native American persons such as professors or other students. Future advice given to other Native American students concerning attending college came in the form of "get involved" in some capacity with others on the campus, because "your family is not with you." The students attending Haskell Indian Nations University, remarked extensively of the support they received by attending college exclusively with other Native Americans and expressed the camaraderie they felt because of this.

Spirituality

There is no authoritative view nor theory that can shape a dialogue of Native spirituality as it is seen as an accumulation of aesthetic knowledge (Smith, 1995) and "getting it right" (p. 3) must come from a community of willing informants (Irwin, 1996).

Although the definition of spirituality can vary depending upon the tribe, Garcia (2000) provides a summary of its generalized meaning to most Native Americans:

> Spirituality is giving credit and honor to the Great Spirit, the Creator, Grandfather of all Indian people. Spirituality means living the life that the Great Spirit has blessed people with. It means being respectful of all things, especially the elders and the children. It means taking care of the Mother Earth and not abusing the gifts She has provided. It means acknowledging the Creator in every aspect of one's life. Spirituality is sometimes demonstrated through prayer. (p. 47)

From a cultural resilience perspective, HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003) describe the interconnectedness to Native spirituality in this way:

> Indian people believe that spirituality has been the cornerstone of their survival through generations of adversity and oppression. Spirituality includes our interconnectedness with each other (relationships), the sacredness of our inner spirit, our efforts to nurture and renew ourselves daily (prayer), balance and harmony (awareness), and our responsibility to be lifelong learners (growth). (p. 16)

Common to the Native American custom of oral tradition (Allen, 2002), rather than providing concrete, linear definitions of spirituality and identity, the respondents addressed questions regarding their spirituality with stories of the interconnectedness of all aspects of Native American culture. As noted in a study of Native American Ivy League graduates, "For many Native Americans personal and cultural identity, as well as spirituality are inextricably intertwined with connectedness to family, community, tribe

and homeland" (Garrod & Larimore, 1997, p. 3). This type of circular thinking is defined by the medicine wheel concept which encompasses four areas aimed at balance: physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual (Harris & McFarland, 2000). Native spirituality is further exemplified as, "a pervasive quality of life that develops out of an authentic participation in values and real life practices meant to connect members of a community with the deepest foundations of personal affirmation and identity" (Lee, 1996, p. 310).

To exemplify, I include the words of one student who spoke to how his spirituality brought him back around to setting his feet on a better path as he prepared to complete his long-awaited college degree:

> If you don't have a strong spiritual background to support you, then you can find yourself being led down the wrong path. We always talk about the Red Road and we know what other roads are through experience. And you know I was experiencing that for myself and I've only been sober for the past five years. So, you know I think about some of the reasons that I didn't finish my degree [previously] could have been related to that, not directly, but indirectly. (Isleta, p. 8, line 25)

Balance

For many of the participants balance with the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual (Harris & McFarland, 2000) were needed to encompass Western religion and Native spiritual beliefs of which were intertwined with their identities. It was not uncommon to find the majority of the students adhered to some form of Christianity as part of their belief system; often this was combined with traditional Native values and Native spiritual concepts. A young Kickapoo woman spoke to how she personally finds

balance in merging Catholicism, the religion of her mother and grandparents with her Native spirituality:

> I don't really like pray, pray. I mean like fully or to be tribal and say prayers. It's like my cousins are extreme Christians. They'll come and they'll always say passages and they know what prayers to say. Like they'll come and they'll do it, but I just go through the motions. I think there's been a couple of times when I have [prayed] and I'd pray like the Catholic way and stuff like that. You know like when I want and answer and I'll see that it works, but in general I don't. But the thing is too, about being Native, there's a whole different viewpoint. I just try to find the balance between the two in what I believe, you know, I really don't know, what's out there. I think it's a real big balance. (Kickapoo, p. 5, line 25)

Another student, having been baptized as Catholic, questioned the doctrine held by the church versus her perception of Native American cultural beliefs. When asked during the interview what her spiritual belief system meant to her, she struggled with an effective verbal conceptualization. With some embarrassment, fearing I would think she was "crazy" (as she reported others did when she told them the story) she relented to eloquently share a beautiful effectual account of what spirituality meant to her. This story entailed her spiritual experience during a European trip she had worked hard and saved her money for:

> I went to Italy, being the Catholic country of the world (laughing). At the time that was my dream vacation. I always wanted to go there and it was just horrible. I was just having this hard time. It was my last day and people

were pushing. They weren't romantic as they say they are (laughing). I sat down at this fountain, hot and sweaty. And I was just sitting there and it started to rain and that first drop of rain fell on my sweaty arm. It was like iron doors closing. Everything felt so much better and I felt so calm. It was the weirdest thing. It was the worst time possible, that I could experience anything calm and tranquil. But I felt so safe. (Cherokee, p. 6, line 22)

Another student elaborately articulated on his finding balance in Christianity and the teachings instilled in him by his Apache father who was a practicing medicine man:

> After high school I introduced myself I guess to Christianity, the Christian way. I became involved in stuff, understanding about the Word, the Bible, and it made a lot of sense. And before this time, I never picked up a Bible, never read one, never understood it. And when I started doing that, I felt myself straying away from the way I was brought up traditionally. But I started bringing back traditional ways into my life. Understanding where I came from and it was like they paralleled each other. They both paralleled each other. Yet I increased in my spirituality and I was talking with my father and I picked up a Bible and understood it. And the Bible says remember your children, I remember hearing those same words that I was taught that my father passed on. And the reason why I say this I was told after reading that Bible that the Apache, the Apache way is spiritual and that [the Bible] means nothing. [From outsiders I heard] the way you guys pray is nothing, it's the devil, it's evil. And I read that Bible, you know, and it says not to be judgmental and that's the same way we were taught.

> When you're having a hard time, it's great. And that's what we do, some offerings, and that's what the Bible says too, you can use offerings during those times. (San Carlos Apache, p. 5, line 19)

Prayer

With regard to Native Americans, spirituality is sometimes demonstrated through prayer (Garcia, 2000, p. 47). All of the students in the study admitted that they personally pray in some capacity and viewed this as a part of their spirituality. An Apache student shares his thoughts on his personal experience concerning the usefulness of prayer:

> Every time I've ever had a problem, I always prayed about it, you know, traditionally. Growing up then I understood that's what we needed to do along those times. Anytime we needed help we would pray to [Apache word] that's what we would call It. I remember every time my dad would always say just take some [Apache word], sand, dirt. Just rub it on yourself then and pray for things. Pray for yourself and pray that everything would be good. I remember during the hardest times, if I was having maybe a bad dream, I would rub some on my forehead, or if my arm would hurt or things like that. That's the stuff that was given to me that I share now, teaching my kids how to pray. (San Carlos Apache, p. 5, line 9)

When the participants discussed the types of things they prayed for as related to college, they felt it was important for them to do their part in the coursework, viewed as their personal responsibility. Their prayers were mostly for their families as their studies often took them away from those who needed them, causing them great concern. Other

factors in prayer were relayed in the form of seeking personal strength, persistence, and direction. For a Navajo student, prayer directed her choice in what to major in:

> I think it was my sophomore year, I was applying for the education program and I had been doing a lot of praying on what I should do and where I should take it. And business wasn't the first thing on my mind, but I just prayed that God would lead me to a career that He wanted me to do. When it came to praying about it, it was you know, God let me know what You want me to do and open these doors and close them. And make it clear-cut to me where You want me to go and that's exactly how it happened. (Navajo, p. 3, line 34)

An Apache student attested to maintaining humbleness as a part of his praying about issues as related to college in this way:

> I pray for a clear conscience that everything will be okay. I don't pray that I want a hundred percent on that test. I just, that's just not the way you do it. I don't pray about getting high on yourself. That's what I was taught in general, just ask for everything to be good. (San Carlos Apache, p. 6, line 11)

A similar response was echoed by one student's revealing how she prayed concerning college-related stress factors:

> I think my tendency is just for my stress level goes on just worrying about my family because I am like three hours away and just worrying about myself in terms of help. If I don't do well in this way I may not have a scholarship for next semester, so I have a tendency of covering all bases

> (laughing) for myself. It's not like I pray to have to pass this test, you know? Like I have to pass this test. If You are for real, help me pass this test (laughing). (Navajo, p. 7, line 6)

For a Choctaw student, praying to pass a test or to get an A would be considered rude as it negates the personal responsibility of self. Instead she chooses to pray for strength and motivation to do what she needs to do:

> I have prayed like with the research paper and stuff like that. I don't pray to pass a test. I pray for help for me to hang in there, you know? And just to get it done. I don't pray to get an A or anything like that. No. I pray to give me strength and motivation. (Choctaw, p. 5, line 23)

A Seminole and Pawnee student who prays about college-related factors shares a similar sentiment:

> I don't think I've ever prayed for test stuff, sometimes I kind of like hope that I get a good grade, sometimes. I don't pray for like good grades, but I do pray for something like hoping that things will work out so that I can make good grades. I just try to pray for like the help that I stay focused so that I can do it. (Seminole/Pawnee, p. 6, line 33)

Another student remarked upon the strength and persistence that his spirituality provides in completing his college education shares:

> Spiritually I can sit there and pray and know that I have a solid background in my beliefs and the way that I was raised traditionally. But spiritually I can go back and look at stuff that has happened to me and stuff that I learned when I was a young age, to go and give me strength

and help me through tough times. There've been too many tough times through the road. I think being Native American and being so spiritual and having that aspect in my life has allowed me to keep going with what my goal is. And that is to get the degree. (Umatilla, p. 8, line 4)

A young Choctaw man with a wife and two small children at home spoke of the spiritual peace he feels with prayer when he is busy with his studies, of assurance that his family is safe:

> I believe in prayer as something I fall back on strongly to help me get my college degree. I learned to pray from my dad, although he didn't go to church at the time. I've never missed a prayer since then. I don't really pray for my papers going to school. I pray for things around me. Whether it's my family when I'm trying to study, telling me to come home. I pray they're safe when I'm studying. And I've experienced that being in the library studying for a four or five chapter test and being in the library for about three hours. And I'll call to see if they're home, and that's the peace I have. (Choctaw, p. 4, line 23)

When asked how her spirituality helped her to get through college, a Cherokee Keetoowah student responded in regards to personal strength and boldness:

> Oh, it's helped me tremendously. With the Lord, there's just no way. I don't even know how to explain it. It's just knowing He's there and He's the One that's provided me to come this far. I know that. Just because of Him, I'm able to be here. [I pray] to give me strength to finish college, to study, to understand what I'm studying. I think my big thing is talking in

front of a lot of people. So I've been praying about having that boldness to be able to stand up in front of people, to be able to say what I have to say. (Keetoowah, p. 7, line 39)

Prayer for strength and persistence was also relayed in this way by an Ojibway and Lakota student:

> I pray *a lot*. I probably pray twenty or thirty times a day to be honest. But when I am praying I burn sage…it's really hard going to school and having a child and I'm married and I'm working. It's hard. It's really hard. And so I pray every night before I go to bed. And to help me through the day to keep me from being snappy and help me to treat others with compassion. That's like a basic little prayer that I have in the morning and when I'm doing my schoolwork, which is usually a heavy load. I go outside at night and I do this every night. I go outside and I ask [Native Creator name] for the strength and courage to get through it. So, that's how it helps me. (Ojibway/Lakota, p. 4, line 8)

Religious Difference from "Traditional" Beliefs

A Creek and Navajo student who describes her family as "very religious and go to church and everything" goes on to state "my personal belief system doesn't quite follow the way theirs does." Her resolution to this is "I just believe what I believe and that's how I live and how I try to keep up with my standards that I have for myself." She verbally expresses her belief system through prayer in this way:

> [I prayed] I think more in the last couple of years than I probably did the first part of my freshman year, just because I've gone through more

experiences. And I have more of a world experience getting outside of…being away from my family. I still had that connection there even though I was far away. Actually I believe every experience that I have is for a reason and that's what's going to take me into the future. Me not knowing what it is but I've learned something from everything. And I have faith that there's a Higher Being out there and She's going to guide me along that road, and help me when I need help, you know? (Creek/Navajo, p. 5, line 16)

A Navajo student who defines her spiritual belief system as Christian, which separates her "from other Navajos" finds prayer effective in helping her persist in college:

> My family, they're Christians and that's the only religion I know. But its [spiritual belief system that has] helped me out so much. So it does play a major part. There's just days when I feel like: I hate going to school. I can't stand it. I want to go home and all those things. But [prayer] plays a major part. You just pray about it, and it calms you down. It calms your stress level down. As crazy as midterms or finals are, you know it helps. It just does (laughing). I can't explain it. (Navajo, p. 6, line 29)

Another student who identifies primarily with Christianity describes her spiritual beliefs as assisting in her education in this way:

> I'm not like, I'm not traditional. I wasn't raised in traditional, like traditional Navajo ways, I guess. I've been raised in a Christian Reform Church back home and I attend a Baptist church here. And I think it was

fifth grade through my senior in high school I went to a private Christian school. Christianity is an everyday thing for me and so it has like affected my education. It's just an everyday thing [laughing] I don't know how to say it. (Navajo, p. 4, line 43)

Another student who states she has not previously identified with Native American culture until attending a tribally-operated college and an all-Indian university remarks on her religious upbringing as separate from traditional beliefs:

> I was raised in the Assemblies of God Church and to [my grandparents] the Native American religion was bad. And I remember times in middle school, or in junior high when they were having a pow-wow assembly in the gym. And my grandma would specifically tell my teacher she didn't want me in there, you know? And it was just things like that. And getting older I came to find out that she was involved with AIM [American Indian Movement] and you know it's really weird to me. I'd ask her questions and wonder why and she doesn't say much about it. She just says that's not her, anymore. (Ojibway, p. 2, line 10)

Gratitude

"Spirituality is giving credit and honor to the Great Spirit, the Creator, Grandfather of all Indian people" (Garcia, 2000, p. 47). As part of their spirituality and Native identity, many of the student participants expressed their gratitude to the Creator for all that He has given them. One student expressed her gratitude in this way:

> So when I pray it's more like when something good happens. I'm like, 'Thank you.' I don't say God. I probably give It another name. But that

praying, I probably do that everyday (laughing). You know? But I do give thanks and I am thankful for everything that happens to me: the good and the bad. Because I believe that whatever happens, it happens for a reason. Yea, oh yea. I have faith in It. (Cherokee, p. 6, line 32)

One student who parallels his Apache beliefs with Christianity incorporates gratitude for all things as part of his prayer:

> When it rains, thank [the rain] because it's here. You don't know when it can happen again. When the sun comes up, be thankful that I'm breathing another day. Early in the morning, get up and pray. And basically that's what we were taught in church. We pray so God can hear you. Of course He can hear you all the time. I always give thanks for everything, basically what was given to me. It doesn't have to be a whole four-hour sermon. It can be one, two, three minutes. (San Carlos Apache, p. 8, line 38 & p. 9 line 2)

In regard to her educational attainment one student sees her journey on this path as a way to glorify God and views gratitude as important component of the process. She states:

> But the way I look at my schoolwork with you know, with homework, with tests, with studying, with doing papers. I always try to do it for God. It's just hard. It's really humbling. Even when you get those bad tests back where you've studied your butt off and you get a D or C on it. And it really takes a lot of your spirituality when you say, 'You know what God, I got a bad grade on this but, thank you anyway. Thank you for allowing

me to get an education and know that I did my best.' (Navajo, p. 5, line 33)

Gifts

A component of spirituality is defined as "taking care of Mother Earth and not abusing the gifts she has provided" (Garcia, 2000, p. 47). Many Native Americans view the land and environment as part of their spirituality and belief in the spirit world. Ecological consciousness is seen as an extension of their spirituality, offering a dual perspective with mainstream society in which ecology is "not just a science of ecology, but moral and spiritual demands of a sustainable environment as well" (Hendry, 2003, p. 8).

One Iselata tribal member in the study directly addressed the responsibility of caring for the environmental gifts that are provided. He succinctly portrays his view on combining spirituality with responsibility to the environment:

> Well, in terms of, you know, of living in harmony with our environment, right? You know the uh…the concept that is not new that we are caretakers of our mother earth, you know, seeing as how that seems to be the push now. They are trying to develop an institute of sustainability here on campus about professors who are trying to develop that. So, in terms of our survival and our future we think about how we can use more renewable resources and not damage our environment so much. (Istela, p. 7, line 7)

Although environmental gifts were mentioned by some of the students, for others "gifts" took on a more personal meaning. The "gifts" that were provided to them

encompassed personal assets and abilities that are their responsibility to use to their full ability as a means to help themselves and others. For example, one student spoke of her ability to use the computer to assist other Native Americans in seeking financial funding to attend college. She remarked:

> I've helped a lot of people go to school because of the grant situation. They got that money and that's something I'm real proud of. I'm thankful for the Lord that He gave me that ability to do that, to help other people. (Keetoowah, p. 5, line 37)

A Cheyenne and Osage student harbors the belief that his intelligence, ability, and motivation are gifts that have been provided by God's grace and considers himself to be "blessed" in this sense. When asked if he feels this makes him special he comments, "Everybody has those gifts and God wants you to use them. And it's by faith and it's your choice to do what you want" (Cheynee/Osage, p. 5, line 43).

In humble fortitude, a young male student who excels in athletic abilities reflects upon his personal acceptance that he has been given ability that most do not possess:

> All people have ever told me is you've got a God-given talent in your right arm. At first I didn't know how to take it, you know why does everyone always tell me that, you know? But then again now I realize that something was special and my dad will attest to this. (Umatilla, p. 7, line 19)

He speaks to his personal responsibility of using this gift to its full advantage:

> I just don't want it to waste away and all that kind of stuff. I want to use something. I'm using what He gave me, what He's given me, you know,

> to do. And that's what I think, everyone's like you know, you're supposed to do something. That's my calling is athletics and baseball, you know? That's what I mean by that, I was blessed with that ability. (Umatilla, p. 7, line 22)

Further, already a role model to the young boys on his reservation, he and his dad voluntarily held a one-week baseball camp for fifty children two summers ago. He stresses to them the necessity of completing college while pursuing professional athletic aspirations. He goes on to speak of the importance of also using this gift as a means to help other young Native aspiring athletes acquire a college education. He comments, "But I mean I would do what I could do to help that kid go to college to do what they want to do with their life" (Umatilla, p. 8 line 22).

The participants offered varied responses as they spoke to their spirituality and how this has assisted them in persisting in college. For many, their spiritual belief system entailed an amalgamation of Christianity and their traditional tribal beliefs, causing them to seek and discover balance between the two. Whether traditional, Christian, or a mix of the two, all of the students acknowledged that they pray. Gratitude was a common theme in their prayers and they thanked their Creator for all things, both good and bad, because of the belief that everything happens for a reason. Other things that were named as deserving gratitude were the rain, sun, life, intellectual and athletic ability, motivation, the ability to help others, and their education. One student also mentioned praying for his family's protection and safety while he studied in the library. More personal and insightful prayers that were directly related to attending college were perseverance, focus, stress reduction, boldness, courage, and assistance in making a career choice.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Analysis of HeavyRunner and Marshall's Theory

Some studies (Bowker, 1993; HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003; Huffman, 2001; Montgomery et al., 2000; Rodriquez, 1997) have indicated that Native American students do persist in higher education and are able to maintain as sense of Native identity throughout and after their educational process. HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003) find the theory of cultural resilience applies to this concept and define this as factors that nurture and support Native students. They name and categorize these factors as spirituality, tribal identity, oral traditions, elders, family strength, ceremonial rituals, and support networks. Within this preliminary framework, the objective of this study is to explore what cultural factors are perceived as effective in assisting Native students in graduating from college. How do the Native American participants speak to and demonstrate the cultural resilient factors named by HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003)? In what ways does Native American cultural resilience contribute to their persistence in college?

This study is found to be generalizable to the broader theory of HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003) as in various capacities, the preliminary categories of cultural resilient factors named by these scholars were revealed through analysis of the data of my study. Although the frame employed is culturally appropriate, in many aspects, the HeavyRunner and Marshall's factors are general in nature and narrowly define these

factors. Their categories lack in the depth and breadth that would be provided by the participants' voice and in this way, my study differed from HeavyRunner and Marshall's as it focused upon the real, lived life of individual Native American students by utilizing their own voices to speak to their individual experiences.

As a result, my data revealed the rich diversity of the participants concerning the cultural factors of spirituality, tribal identity, oral traditions, elders, family strength, ceremonial rituals, and support networks named by HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003). Although some generalities were noted across all the participants' responses, diversity was found in the varied responses that reflected the participants' tribe, gender, acculturation and age. The students spoke to and demonstrated their experiences with these cultural components while connecting all of these factors to their Native identity and pursuit of higher education.

An example of the richness and complexity found in my study as compared to the HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003) study involved the various meanings that tribal identity held for the participants. Identity was diversified depending upon the students' tribal affiliation and life experience of being viewed as "different" (this being relayed to them by their families and communities as well as majority society). For some, identity meant their family and tribal community; others viewed it as traditions and culture, while others referred to identity as physiological characteristics. And most often, Native identity was an amalgamation of all of these factors revealing the holistic philosophy of the participants' responses. However, generalities were noted for all the participants in the sense that all felt tremendous pride in their heritage. Furthermore, they expressed the desire use their education to "give back" in some capacity to their families and

communities, and assumed a personal responsibility to preserve and continue tribal cultures and traditions.

Oral traditions and ceremonial rituals were also mentioned by many of the participants. However, these aspects of identity were specialized and highly dependent upon the students' tribal affiliation, acculturation, gender and age. It is common for oral traditions and ceremonial rituals to be very distinctive alluding to the diversity among the tribal entities. In one instance, as opposed to mentioning the importance of oral traditions, a student shared some of his tribal oral traditions as a means to better explain what he meant in his responses. Furthermore, the students reported ceremonies, such as the Sun Dance, are reserved exclusively for male participants, and certain tribal elders are the only ones that can administer and participate in other restricted ceremonies. Other students and/or their families purposely choose to exclude themselves from their tribal traditional ceremonies because it conflicted with their Christian beliefs.

When the participants mentioned elders, they evoked descriptive detail concerning their personal accounts of their relatives, especially those involving grandparents. The cultural factor of showing respect for elders was noted and was accompanied by the importance of elders as the keepers of the culture: the ones who know the tribal stories, the languages, and how to prepare the indigenous foods. For many of the students, it was the elders who encouraged them to go to college and receive an education. When this was the situation, the students expounded upon the exceptional significance this support held, as it positively reinforced their decision to acquire higher education.

The participants in my study replaced HeavyRunner and Marshall's (2003) family strengths category with "family support." Especially rich in detail were their descriptions of how their families specifically administered this support in assisting with their higher education. Family financial support was not mentioned, except in one instance when the student referred to her mother telling her she would see to it that she was able to attend school wherever she wanted to go. Although her mother worked as a secretary, it was not the offer of financial support that held significance for the participant, but the fact that her mother was willing to support her academic pursuits. In this vein, the emotional and logistical family support was most relevant and ranged from encouragement to babysitting and proofreading academic papers.

In contrast to HeavyRunner and Marshall's study, the participants in my study described their spirituality and their use of it in college as highly complicated and diversified. Depending upon their keeping of traditional beliefs and/or their conversion to Christianity, or a mix of both, each had their own personal definition of what spirituality meant to them and how they utilized spirituality in college persistence. Commonly found among all participants was their use of prayer as part of their spiritual belief system and this was reported in diverse aspects. For example, some of the participants mentioned the importance of expressing gratitude in prayer, especially for the gifts the Creator has bestowed upon them. Many others prayed for perseverance, motivation, and humbleness while attending college and/or for the well-being of their families. Receiving good grades was not mentioned as a part of their prayers, but instead the students placed this responsibility upon themselves, choosing instead to seek strength to complete all that was expected of them.

And lastly, not mentioned by HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003) were the inter-connectedness of all of these components; the layers and complexities that formed Native identity as the students responded to what being Native American meant to them. My data revealed the factors named by HeavyRunner and Marshall were not mutually exclusive categories, but were piecemealed and highly dependent upon the individual and social perception of the students, their families and communities.

In the interviews, identity emphasis was placed upon Native American traditions and culture versus occupational identity, which is more commonly found in majority culture (Kawulich & Curlette, 1998). Although their college degrees and future occupations were discussed, the discussions were in relation to ways in which their degrees can "give back." Using their education to advance and empower their Native families and communities, as opposed to self-serving purposes, was yet another extension of their identity as Native Americans.

This may be related to the fact that from the onset of their early childhoods, the participants' families and tribal communities were instrumental in instilling in them the preliminary definitions of their Native identity. Often, they articulated ways in which cultural resilience assisted them in persisting in majority societal culture and mainstream education. Especially poignant was how they utilized these Native cultural protective factors to assist them in obtaining higher education through family support, spirituality and other mechanisms.

When the participants described what their Native identity meant to them, they frequently contrasted their culture to that of majority society, often applying the word "different" to assist them in a more applicable explanation. Difference as compared to

majority society culture was very real to the interviewees, and came with no shame or remorse, but instead was revealed as a source of heritage pride. This form of difference was not perceived as temporary but permanent and dynamic, and many of the participants have assumed a personal responsibility to ensure that these "different" traditions and customs are secure and intact for Native future generations. In this way, difference was viewed by the participants as an inheritance that was healthy and positive, and worthy to be passed on.

On the other hand, difference entailed a negative connotation as the interviewees shared their experiences of being stereotyped by majority society. This commonly occurred as they ventured outside of their communities and away from their families. It was during these times that they contended with outside forces that strove to define and redefine who they were as Native Americans, creating ethnostress. Many times, it was mainstream educational experiences that first made their difference obvious to them through cultural dissonance and stereotyping.

These identity stereotypes revealed overt and covert pathologies that have been held since the early colonization of Native Americans in the United States. For example, at times, complete strangers would approach them, desiring to take their pictures or asking them if they were "real" Indians. And in other instances their stories revealed they were viewed by outside society as "foreigners" or as not being "normal" people. Furthermore, externalized oppression presented itself, as other Native people would place judgment on who was a "real" Indian and "deserved" to be treated as such. Especially painful for the students were instances when stereotyping and discrimination occurred at

the hands of personal acquaintances such as their friends, college peers, or other Native Americans.

Restoring balance to the wholeness of their identity was required when the participants contended with outside majority perspectives that pathologized Native Americans via stereotyping, oppression, and discrimination. Although some of the students were subjected to these experiences through their work or travels, it was a common occurrence for these pathologies to became more pronounced and overt as they attended mainstream educational institutions. In this way, they sought and found resolution by examining and re-examining who they are as Native American people when these stereotypical influences and oppressions would manifest. For as Ann Arnett Ferguson (2000) has pointed out, race, as a concept, is essentially divisive:

> It is important that we understand human culture differently, not as a set of immutable characteristics that seem to be transmitted through the genes but as a practical, active, creative response to specific social and historical conditions. As such culture can be a significant mode of defense, of succor, or resistance and recuperation for those with few sources of power in society. (p. 20-21)

Neither did the participants allude to revolutionary resistance to majority culture, but instead sought to find their balance between being Native American and functioning in a majority society that can hold astounding differences in culture and values. Known as ethnic reorganization, this is noted as a common survival tactic that has been employed by Native peoples for centuries (Nagel & Snipp, 1993).

The Native American students in my study were not a colonized, defeated, or conquered people, but instead continue to persevere as they emerge as new leaders. Imagine if you will, a spiral pattern that is evolutionary and empowering, with individually-and socially-constructed life tasks, through the words of an Ojibway and Lakota participant:

> I think about all the history behind me, and like my grandmother who was real strong in spirit. She's in the spirit world right now, but she's a part of me and my daughter and her [daughter's future] children are a part of it. I am just one person in a long lineage. It doesn't stop with me. It goes on and I need to make sure that I can hold it together in a positive direction. We're this history of people. Up to now, it's up to me to represent it in a positive way, a Native way. But I'm also not caving in. I'm pushing an agenda in a positive way. So that said, pretty much sums it up. That's the way I feel.

Implications for Educational Institutions and Tribes

> It is through multiple and rich interpretation of their [Native American] stories that we can better understand the relationship between the individual, the community and institutions of higher education (Oritz & HeavyRunner, p. 218, 2003).

Educational Institutions

Bridging the cultural difference between mainstream educational institutions and Native American tribes will require a conscious and deliberate effort between all entities. Formerly, tribes have not always been receptive to formal education as a result of the

assimilation polices and educational practices that were designed to create cultural genocide for this nation's first inhabitants. However, as economic and cultural survival is now considered critical components for Native American populations, education is now viewed as a form of cultural resilience. As stated in regard to tribally-operated colleges, "Education saves individual [Native American] lives everyday...by putting a name on cultural resilience, the [tribal] colleges help the students recognize what gives them strength for rising above the heartbreak" (Ambler et al., 2003, p. 2).

Based upon the results of my study, recognizing cultural resilience would benefit not only institutions whose populations are exclusively Native American, but can also apply to mainstream institutions. This is especially imperative for universities with high numbers of Native American and other minority populations. As one student remarked on the personal and academic importance of attending a university with a large Native population:

> And I think it helps Native students to go to school, because I think we learn [concepts that are particular to Native issues], like especially in Native-heavy schools. I've heard a lot of Native kids be like, 'Oh, I want to go to Stanford and stuff like that.' You know I could have gone to those schools, because I lived on the east coast and it could have been very easy for me. But you know what, I'm getting a better education here, because the education I'm getting as a Native person is so much richer. (Apache, p. 13, line 23, line 34)

It is impractical to suggest the development of a culturally-appropriate content curriculum as this would be a highly ambitious and unlikely undertaking, because, alas,

there is no "one size fits all." William Tierney (1991) places the practice implication on institutions in the manner that "We must reorient the environment to make sure the student feels welcome" (p. 36). As opposed to the student being expected to fit the culture of the environment he suggests the institution can strive to fit the student.

Per Tierney's (1991) preliminary recommendation, a more useful and practical approach to assist in preventing the types of institutional hegemony revealed in my study, is for institutions of higher education to consider adopting missions promoting true multiculturalistic practice. For example, awareness of cultural difference can prompt faculty and staff to reach out to students from diverse cultures as they become acclimated to the higher education environment. Evidence can be found in the struggle with cultural communication differences of mainstream and indigenous societies as portrayed in the words of two students who were interviewed:

> There are some subjects that are pretty scary (laughter). But you can get yourself to communicate with professors or other students in the class to form some type of study group of some sort. That helps a lot, it just helps so much. And just a big part of it is communication and that's hard to do, especially for Natives. (Navajo, p. 10, line 22).

In relaying the advice he would give other Native students, another participant provides a similar response regarding the need to initiate communicative relations:

> Well, I would tell them, you know don't give up. You know keep trying and if you need, if you ever need help, don't be shy. You know go ask for help or try to get acquainted with somebody or even get involved like on campus, you know. (Muscogee Creek/Seminole, p. 8, line 27)

If provided the essential foundation, faculty might have the ability to integrate these practices in their teaching and other student-relations activities. The institution's fit with the individual student might rely upon cultural sensitivity training and learning styles seminars for all faculty members. The need for such training for faculty is evident in the story of one young woman who found a stark contrast in her tribal learning style of reflection and speaking only when you have something important to say, to the expectation of mainstream higher education to respond quickly when called upon. Another student who spoke extensively of the classroom stereotyping of Native Americans spoke to his adjustment to mainstream higher education systems where Native Americans are poorly represented in number and accurate depictions:

> Basically, that's when I go to class, I see that there's not many Native American students, a White university you know. But again, I've gotten used to that now and it seems like the higher and higher I got the less Indians I do see. So, that's just something I wanted to do is to dispel the stereotypes and just prove people wrong at a very young age by being Native American and succeeding. (Umatilla, p. 7, line 2)

The hiring and retention of more Native American faculty, especially in colleges with high numbers of Native enrollment, is a significant issue for Native students. The students named particular Native American faculty whom they viewed as role models and spoke of the level of comfort they felt among faculty that they identified with. As one student remarked concerning the importance this holds for her:

> I'm still glad that I came here because I honestly believe that [name of university] and schools like this are just so wonderful for Native students.

> You know we have such good [Native American] role models, you know the faculty, and it's just a good experience to have. And a lot of the professors don't realize it, because we don't have that kind of relationship, but they are [role models]. I look at them and I'm like, 'I want to be like that.' Even if you never say anything, I think they don't realize that a lot of kids are sitting there like, 'I want to be like her so much' or 'I want do just she's doing.' (Apache, p. 14, line 7)

This is important to the entire student population, not only for Native Americans but for other students as well, as acceptance of different ways of knowing in the classroom can only add depth to the topics presented.

Many universities have chosen to mandate at least one multicultural course for students as a general education requirement because for many students, college is the first time they encounter those who are different than them. Without a competent knowledge base to accompany the campus experience, learning and interacting with peers in the classroom, and, more significantly, in casual, informal interactions as a part of the larger campus experience (Gurin et al., 2002), misrepresented prejudice can result.

As shared by the students in my study, many of their educational peers (as well as some of my participants) expressed naiveté in stereotyping students that were different than themselves. For example, some Native students report they have been characterized by their Caucasian peers as "not normal" and "disgusting." Similarly, Native students alluded to their Caucasian peers as "slick" and "sly." In essence, Native students reported viewing Caucasian students as basically "different" resulting in the Native students feeling uncomfortable around peers other than those that are Native American. Lastly,

inter-racial stereotyping is reported by the participants, manifesting itself through externalized oppression. Those instances involved Native students placing judgment on their Native peers who did not possess the physiological features consistent with Native expectations by labeling them "wanna bes" and "undeserving" to be considered Native American.

As the students mentioned the support they received by being involved with Native campus programs such as sororities and or academic and social clubs, more personal outreach in this area is an important implication. Especially during the first year of entry when students are most susceptible to departing college, encouraging student involvement would also assist in curtailing students' feelings of isolation and alienation. One student spoke to her experience as a young freshman leaving college because of these factors:

> Don't let your network of support fall apart. Go into your Native American student services department and say, 'I'm really scared, I need help.' That's what I should have done, but I didn't. I was terrified to speak, you know? So I wish that I had a stronger network when I was eighteen. I can't say that if you are 20, 22, or 29 that it is any easier. You still have the same ideas, still need support even though you think you're tough. So my advice is to build a network, that helps me.
> (Ojibway/Lakota, p. 7, line 34)

This is also found in the advice one study provides for other Native students who are currently in college or contemplating going to college:

> I never joined a dang thing the two years I was in [name of school]. I think that's why the first two years I didn't connect with anybody. I just drove to class and when it was over, I just drove back home. And did it every day, every Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday. I think get involved, too. (Cherokee, p. 7, line 25)

Tribes

As the results of my study are inundated with the importance of tribal communities and families in establishing Native identity, I will not reiterate yet again, what has already been extensively referred to in the voices of the participants. Instead, I will situate the tribal implications within the literature to add depth to what has already been stated as the participants' experience in Chapter 4.

Emphasizing the importance of Native communities and families, this study has an emancipatory perspective as its focal point but is focused not upon revolution, but survival for Native Americans. Elsass (1992) writes:

> Indians do not fulfill the traditional requirements of class struggle that is found in the Marxist intellectual elite. Indian movements themselves were found to combat colonial thinking and left-wing social science that depicted their traditions and culture in pathological perceptions. (p. 105)

Survival for this population can take on a different meaning as "Indian survival often proves to be an unstructured process, in which the different Indian peoples mirror themselves in each other, and instead of finding a common goal, their object is to find a common footstep" (Elsass, 1992, p. 104). Resilience for these participants and their tribes has not occurred because of the Federal government policies, but despite atrocities. As

one student remarked on what he views as the contemporary realities of advising other Native students whom are considering attending college:

> I would tell them to stay in school and try to make them aware of the obvious dangers. You know the acculturation process is still going on. So, even through we are learning outside of our culture, outside of the box, as we speak. We should still maintain our cultural values. (Isleta, p. 9, line 10)

Although it is duly noted that the federal government holds the power to define who is Native American, the true definition of Native identity for these participants did not originate with race theory and the infamous Certificate Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB). Put simply, for them, the true core of their identity originated with the values of their Native families and communities. "At the heart of those values is an understanding and appreciation of the timeless: of family, of tribe, of friends, of place, and of season" (Strickland, 1997, p. 130). This was where their true power lies, not in the hands of the elusive "Great White Father" in Washington, D.C.

Emancipation and survival are addressed in my study through the recognition of how the participants view their worlds, an important component found in the road of self-determination and sovereignty. Strickland (1997) succinctly interprets the following passage of survival by Muscogee Creek tribal member and prolific writer, Patty Harjo as "a road behind and a road ahead":

> [Our] ancestral roots are transplanted to a new land of adjustment, grief, pain and sorrow, to a future unknown…a future that seemed only a candle in the darkness, a candle of hope for a new beginning. In this land…all

> cultures and heritages began moving onward toward the sun. Now our sun shines bright, our future is growing clear. We hide our grief, pain and fears. We are moving on. We try to grasp the good of our heritage. (p. 128)

Looking toward the future of Native societies while considering the past is portrayed as "...distinct worldviews, an attachment to specific land bases despite large scale expropriation, a history of resistance to domination, and the fact of survival as distinct communities despite often overwhelming odds against them" (Allen, 2002, p. 203–204). As Dr. John Henrik Clarke is often quoted as saying, "It is impossible to continue to oppress a consciously historical people" (Pewewardy, 2000, p. 19).

True emancipation and self-determination for Native people can be accomplished when their views of reality and perceptions of the world are not seen as pathological, merely because they are construed as different than those held by majority society. Contrary to the pathological perceptions and polarization that can be found between Native and majority cultures, one of the participants in my study viewed biculturalism as not walking down two different roads (an Indian road and a White road) in the manner viewed by some. Instead, he envisioned only one road, with different ways of walking it.

The preliminarily strengths of "different ways of walking" which evolved into cultural resilience for the students in my study originated with their families and communities. Thus, it is the tribes who should primarily stress the empowerment "of difference" from a sociological and political perspective. As succinctly noted (Pewewardy, 2000):

> Subsequently, our strategy and our ethnic struggle against colonization should be to deconstruct it (decolonization process) and replace it with the struggle for tribal community. Many Eurocentric systems are set up to detach us from the community, from our sense of tribal community. Building community opposes domination and injustice. (p. 26)

The findings of this study indicate it is the Native families and communities, not the educational institutions, who should set the precedent for their own empowerment. For the Native participants who were interviewed, it was not the culture of their educational institutions, but the culture of their families and communities that instilled resilience in them, important to persisting in college. Despite their nearing the completion of undergraduate studies, education did not offer assimilation into dominant culture for these students, instead it offered a tool in which they could help others. This reflects that Native peoples have "shown in many cases that they themselves can return to traditional patterns after major changes have taken place…cultural autonomy is neither impossible nor impracticable when Native peoples themselves want it" (Elsass, 1992, p. 103).

While pursuing higher education these students were able to retain their core identity of being Native American. Although not denying that their college degrees will create evolutional changes, they hold firm in their identities as a survival mechanism. George Manuel, the Shuswap Indian leader from Canada calls indigenous peoples to a "re-evaluation of assumptions" and a "new language in which the truth can be spoken easily, quietly and comfortably" (Allen, 2002, p. 201). He goes on to state how this can be accomplished:

> We do not need to re-create the exact forms by which our grandfathers lived their lives—the clothes, the houses, the political systems, or the means of travel. We do need to create new forms that will allow the future generations to inherit the values, the strengths, and the basic spiritual beliefs—the way of understanding the world—that is the fruit of a thousand generations' cultivation of North American soil by Indian people. (p. 201)

Thus, the data from this study imply Native tribes, communities, and families should continue to support and implement practices that are utilized for language and culture retention. Further, Native scholars and others with an interest in this area can work together to design culturally-appropriate prevention models for Native Americans that emphasize pride in their cultural identity. Lastly, for economic empowerment, communities should support and encourage their Native American tribal members to obtain higher education. For as noted in my data, when Native Americans become college-educated they then serve as role models to other Native Americans that higher education can be accomplished despite stereotypes.

Directions for Future Research

Proposed Spiral Identity Model: Transforming Quest

The students in my study described a highly complicated definition of Native self-identity. As compared to HeavyRunner and Marshall's (2003) study, the data in my study revealed that the participants' Native identity is not fixed or static, but is constantly fluid and evolving as they react to life experiences that have caused them to shape and redefine who they are as Native Americans. In this sense, repetition with variation is an applicable

theme regarding the evolutionary identity of the Native American participants. I was initially introduced to this concept as I processed my findings with a colleague, Joseph Faulds (personal communication, March 3, 2003), while searching for an applicable visual model to map out the complexities of identity and experience found in my participants. Repetition with variation is typically found in the formation of oral storytelling and literary themes, often via ethnographic studies as a way to bridge cultural differences (Eastman, 1936; Erdrich, 1988; Faulds, 2003; Heath, 1983). In particular, repetition creates emphasis; provokes memory and emotion, while variation creates rhythm (Gerard, 2002). And when repetition and variation are coupled, meaning is shaped (Faulds, 2003).

When I asked the students in the study what being Native American *meant to them*, they responded by telling me stories that resembled repetition with variation. In other words, they repeated to me what was told to them by their families and communities regarding their cultural significance and difference of being Native American, and how these views varied depending upon their life tasks and experiences. Their repeating of tribal identity stories and the application of these interconnected concepts are in contrast to Garrod and Larimore's (1997) study of Native students attending an Ivy League university whereas they found:

> For Native students raised to think of themselves as parts of an interconnected whole, leaving home to attend college can cause feelings of loss and isolation. To separate oneself from this intricate tapestry of interconnectedness is to leave behind the entire fabric of one's identity. (p. 4)

For the participants in my study, the early stories of their Native identities were not left behind when they departed their communities to attend college, but instead these stories and concepts became integrated into their perception of self. At the core of their identity were the traditions and cultures that were originally taught to them by their families and communities of what it means to be Native American. In this sense, the elders and grandparents were sharing the stories of tradition and culture; their grandchildren were actively listening and applying them to memory. Pewewardy (2000) conceptualizes the Native identity core in a collective sense:

> Indigenous Peoples have never lost their ethnic and tribal core. Even though modified and developed, the core is still there. Only our awareness of it has dimmed. Only our embracing of it has waned. Many tribal members have left their tribal identities altogether following the assimilation policies of American education. Yet the core chooses to remain, to wear their tribal identities with pride and work with and for their own tribal communities and nations. (p. 23)

The "fabric" (p. 4) of identity described by Garrod and Larimore (1997) is what I refer to as the individual identity core for the participants in my study, and this has remained internally intact. However, the core's shape and consistency varied, and was highly reactive to the students' personal life experiences. This identity core is best described as fluid and dynamic because it can expand and swell in a positive way (as when they are feeling proud of their heritage) or can constrict or atrophy in a negative way (as in pathologies), depending upon individual family and community and majority society cultural occurrences. Succinctly stated, "Knowledge of self comes largely from

an ever increasing appreciation of how others think about the individual and self knowledge ensures the smooth functioning of the wider community" (Gardner, 1983, p. 239).

Through each life experience, the participants' Native identity evolves through their personal reassessments in an effort to restore their balance of who they are as Native Americans. In other words, this process encompasses individual life task conceptualizing while contemplating the interdependence and collective nature of tribal culture. This is defined in part by life tasks, a concept that can be traced to the work of social psychologist Alfred Adler (Mosak, 1995). Accordingly, Kawulich and Curlette (1998) referred to the life tasks described by Alfred Adler and applied these tasks to Native American defining concepts.

As a result, findings indicated that a correlation existed between Adler's original three interdependent life tasks of work, social relations, and intimacy (Kawulich & Curlette, 1998). Furthermore, they expanded and defined Adler's life tasks to apply to Native American tribal populations. Adler's task of work was described as reciprocation to others and social relations involved extended family and tribal community with an emphasis on the non-verbal and the expression of their ideas through oral storytelling. And lastly, intimacy was portrayed as a separation of gender roles while maintaining a sense of equality among couples.

Adler also described two additional life tasks that he alluded to but did not name as spirituality; the other was described as coping with ourselves. Kawulich and Curlette (1998) addressed the two additional life tasks and tailored them to Native American culture. They described coping with ourselves as identity and portrayed this as cultural

preservation and a sense of belonging, while spirituality was described as physical and mental healing.

Borrowing from the concept of repetition with variation, I propose that the identity of the participants creates a spiral of intertwined overlapping circular patterns that depict the life tasks and life experiences of Native Americans. Linear models that depict the Native experience have proven to be inadequate in that they are too restrictive and polarizing, as one end can be seen as bad and the other end as good. For "Native Americans do not approach life in a linear fashion, instead use circular models, much like the medicine wheel concept" (Harris & McFarland, 2000, p. 7).

The spiral pattern can be further evidenced to be a culturally appropriate model as it holds particular significance in ancient Native American culture. Its use can be traced to clocks engraved on large rocks in the southwestern part of the United States that gauged the four seasons. Furthermore, the spiral is symbolic in that it also refers to the four seasons of life (infancy, youth, middle and old age) that is never ending and in continuous renewal. Such a pattern is also known as a central symbol that links spiritual awareness with a holistic, balanced view of physical reality (Thomas et al., 1992). The spiraling journey of Native American life is described as a "transforming quest" (Faulds, 2003, p. 3) as it requires the ability to bridge cultural difference while maintaining balance in identity.

In particular, the spiral model I propose is a positive one in that all experiences form a part of the whole. As one student distinctly reported she gives thanks for everything, the good and the bad, because she believes everything happens for a reason. In this way, the participants articulated and exhibited an emancipatory perspective: one

that does not negate the fact that oppressive experiences continue to occur, but instead choose to set their focus on their life's goals of enrichment and empowerment for themselves, their tribal communities and future Native generations. As a Navajo student stated after elaborately discussing her experience with stereotyping and her personal desire to use her education as a tool to overcome oppression, "It is time to move on to more positive things."

As this model is situated in the limited amount of data in my study, further exploration can possibly lead to grounded theory. Anselm Strauss (2001) defines grounded theory as:

> …not really a specific method or technique. Rather it is a style of doing qualitative analysis that includes a number of distinct features, such as theoretical sampling, and certain methodological guidelines, such as the making of constant comparisons and the use of a coding paradigm, to ensure conceptual development and density. (p. 5)

Viewing Data Through the Lens of Bourdieu's "Cultural Capital"

Additionally, based upon the results of this study, potential future research direction is to further inquire how the dominant society views Native Americans and why. Of special interest is to view my data concerning ethnostress; internalized and externalized oppression through the theoretical lens of Bourdieu's cultural capital referred to by Ferguson (2000) in *Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Masculinity*. She refers to this theory as the "class interests and ideology of the dominant class, which has the power to impose its views, standards, and cultural forms as superior" (p. 50). As a result, social inequality is recreated and reproduced by the following:

> Thus the ruling class is able to systematically enforce the social distinctions of its own lifestyle and tastes as superior standards to be universally applied to. This imposition is effected through the exercise of 'symbolic violence,' the painful, damaging, mortal wounds inflicted by the wielding of words, symbols, standards. (p. 50-51)

In keeping with this theory and specific to Native Americans, Ferguson (2000) refers to computer education programs designed for elementary children that portray this population as historical icons while combining nature and Indians. In this context, Native Americans are referred to as museum pieces, portrayed as living in the same manner prior to European arrival in America. This type of social inequality is also referred to by Aaron Schutz (2004) when he mentions Michelle Fine's call to conduct research beyond the marginalized to better understand "how the privileged dominate others and are themselves enmeshed (often through pastoral processes) in systems of domination" (p. 21).

REFERENCES

Anderson, A. C., Bowman, M. J., & Tinto, V. (1972). *Where colleges are and who attends.* New York: McGraw Hill.

Allen, C. (2002). *Blood narrative: Indigenous identity and Maori literary and activists text.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Ambler, M, Peacock, R., Fisher, J., McCleary, C. M., Crazy Bull, C., Red Owl, S., & Davis, T. (2003). Cultural resilience. *Tribal College, 14*(4), 8–10.

Bahr, K. S. (1994). The strengths of Apache grandmothers: Observations on commitment, culture and caretaking. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 24*(2), 240–244.

Becker, H. S. (1998). *Tricks of the trade: How to think about your research while you're doing it.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Benard, B. (1992). Fostering resiliency in kids: Protective factors in the family, school and community. *Prevention Forum, 12,* 1–14.

Benham, M. K. P., & Mann, H. (2003). Culture and language matters: Defining, implementing, and evaluating. In M. K. P. Benham & W. J. Stein (Eds.). *The renaissance of American Indian education higher education.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Benjamin, D. P., Chambers, S., & Reiterman, G. (1993). A focus on American Indian college persistence. *Journal of American Indian Education, 32*(2), 24–40.

Berkhofer, R. (1979). *The White man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the present.* New York: Vintage Books.

Bernard, B. (1997). *Turning it around for all youth: From risk to resilience.* New York: ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education. (ERIC Reproduction Service No. ED 412309).

Bobiwash, A. R. (1999). Long term strategies for institutional change in universities and colleges: Facilitating Native people, negotiating a middle ground. *The Fourth World Journal.* Toronto: Center for World Indigenous Studies.

Bower, B. L. (2002). Campus life for faculty of color: Still strangers after all these years? *New Directions for Community Colleges, 118,* 79–87.

Bowker, A. (1993). *Sisters in the blood: The education of women in Native America.* Newton, MA: Women's Educational Equity Act Publishing Center.

Boyer, P. (1997). *Native American colleges: Progress and prospects.* Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation.

Boyer, P. (1997). First survey of tribal college students reveals attitudes. *Tribal College Journal of College Students of American Indian Higher Education, 11*(2), 36–41.

Brady, P. (1996). Native dropouts and non-Native dropouts in Canada: Two solitudes or a solitude shared? *Journal of American Indian Education, 35*(2), 10–20.

Brown, L. L., & Robinson-Kurpious, S. E. (1997). Psychosocial factors influencing academic persistence of American Indian college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 38*(1), 3–12.

Cajete, G. (1994). *Look to the mountain: An ecology of indigenous education.* Durango, CO: Kivaki Press.

Canda, E. R., & Yellow Bird, M. J. (1997). Another view, cultural strengths are crucial. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services, 78*(3), 248.

Carney, C. M. (1999). *Native American higher education in the United States*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Champagne, D. (1997). Does the focus on multiculturalism emphasize difference and racial/ethnic stereotypes? In de Anda, D. (Ed.), *Controversial issues in multiculturalism* (pp. 27–39). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Cibik, M. A., & Chambers, S. L. (1991). Similarities and differences among Native Americans, Hispanics, Blacks, and Anglos. *NASPA Journal, 28*(2), 129–139.

Cronan, W. (1986). Indians in the land: A conversation between William Cronon and Richard White. *American Heritage, 37*, 19–25.

Crotty, M. (1999). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. London: Sage.

DeJong, D. H. (1993). *Promises of the past: A history of Indian education in the United States*. Golden, CO: North American Press.

Deloria, V., Jr., & Wildcat, D. R. (2001). *Power and place: Indian education in America.* Golden, CO: American Indian Graduate Center and Fulcrum Resources.

Dinges, N. G., & Joos, S. K. (1988). Stress, coping, and health: Models of interaction for Indian and Native populations. *Behavioral Health Issues, American Indians and Alaska Natives, 1*, 8–64.

Eastman, C. A. (1936). *From the deep woods to civilization.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Eggan, F. (1971). *Social anthropology of North American tribes.* Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Elsass, P. (1992). *Strategies for survival: The psychology of cultural resistance in ethnic minorities*. New York: New York University Press.

Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Erdrich, L. (1988). *Tracks.* New York: Harper Collins.

Eshelman, M. (1997). *Issues in Native American education.* Retrieved August 1, 2001, from Arizona State University, http://seamonkey.edu.asu.edu

Faulds, J. (2003). *Charles Eastman's from the deep woods to civilization: Purposive tension in journey and metaphor*. Unpublished manuscript.

Feagin, J. R., & Feagin, C. B. (1996). *Racial and ethnic relations* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Ferguson, A. A. (2000). *Bad boys: Public schools in the making of Black masculinity.* Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.

Fixico, D. L. (2000). *The urban Indian experience in America.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Fuchs, E., & Havighurst, C. (Eds.). (1997). *To live on this earth: American Indian education.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Fugate, S. (1996). The Kellogg foundation: Building leadership. *Winds of Change, 11*(2), 44–46, 48.

Garcia, F. M. M. (1999). *Native American warriors in education: Journeys of persistence, stories from the heart (doctoral degrees)*. Abstract from: Netscape: Dissertation Abstracts International: AAG9941246.

Garcia, F. M. (2000). Warriors in education: Persistence among American Indian doctoral recipients. *Tribal College, 11*(3), 46–50.

Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.

Garrod, A., & Larimore, C. (Eds). (1997). *First person, first peoples: Native American college graduates tell their life stories*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Garroutte, E. M. (2001). The racial formation of American Indians. *American Indian Quarterly, 25*(2), 224–240.

Gerard, P. (2002). *Writing a book that makes a difference.* Toronto, Canada: Story Press.

Grimm, J. A. (1996). Cultural identity, authenticity, and community survival: The politics of recognition in the study of Native American religions. *American Indian Quarterly, 20*(3/4), 353–374.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1998). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research* (pp. 195–220). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gurin, P., Dey, E.L., Hurtado, S., & Gurin, G. (2002). Diversity and higher education: Theory and impact on educational outcomes. *Harvard Educational Review, 72* (3), 331-366.

Haight, W. L. (1998). Gathering the spirit: at First Baptist church: Spirituality as a protective factor in the lives of African American children. *Social Work, 43*(3), 213–222.

Harris, E., & McFarland, J. (2000). *The assessment of cultural protective factors among Native Americans: The survey of the Nez Perce culture*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Evaluation Association, Honolulu, HI.

Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

HeavyRunner, I., & Marshall, K. (2003). 'Miracle survivors': promoting resilience in Indian students. *Tribal College Journal, 14*(4), 15–17.

HeavyRunner, I., & Morris, J. (1997). Traditional Native culture and resilience. *Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement: Research/Practice, 5*(1), 1–4.

Hendry, J. (2003). Mining the scared mountain: The clash between western dualistic framework and Native American religions. *Multicultural Perspectives, 5*(1), 3–11.

Hoxie, F. (1984). *A final promise: The campaign to assimilate the Indians, 1880–1920.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Huffman, T. E. (1986). College achievement among Sioux and White South Dakota students. *Journal of American Indian Education, 26*(2), 32–38.

Huffman, T. E. (1991). The experiences, perceptions, and consequences of racism among Northern Plains Indians. *Journal of American Indian Education, 30*(2), 25–34.

Huffman, T. E. (2001). Resistance theory and the transculturation hypothesis as explanations of college attrition and persistence among culturally traditional American Indian students. *Journal of American Indian Education, 40*(3), 1–23.

Irwin, L. (1996). Themes in Native American spirituality. *American Indian Quarterly, 20*(3/4), 309–327.

Jaimes, M. A. (Ed.). (1992). *The state of Native America: Genocide, colonization and resistance*. Boston: South End Press.

Jenkins, M. (1999). Factors which influence the success or failure of American Indian/Native American college students. *Research and Training in Development Education, 27*(2), 1–15.

Johnson, V., Benham, M. K. P., VanAlstine, M. J. (2003). Native leadership: Advocacy for transformation, culture, community, and sovereignty. In Benham, M. K. P. & Stein, W. *The renaissance of higher American Indian higher education.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Kawulich, B. B., & Curlette, W. L. (1998). Life task and the Native American perspectives. *Individual Psychology, 54*(3), 359–367.

Kirkness, V. J., & Barnhardt, R. (1991). First nations and higher education: The four Rs—respect, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility. *Journal of American Indian Education, 27*(2), 1–15.

Kreiger, N. (1999). Embodying inequality: A review of concepts, measures, and methods for studying health consequences of discrimination. *International Journal of Health Service, 29,* 295–352.

Langton, M. (1994). Aboriginal art and film: The politics of representation. *Race and Class, 35*(4), 89–106.

Ledlow, S. (1992). Is cultural discontinuity an adequate explanation for dropping out? *Journal of American Indian Education, 31*(3), 21–36.

Lin, R. L. (1990). Perception of family background and personal characteristics among Indian college students. *Journal of American Indian Education, 29*(3), 19–28.

Lin, R. L., LaCounte, D., & Eder, J. (1988). A study of Native American students in a predominately White college. *Journal of American Indian Education, 27*(3), 8–15.

Lincoln, Y. S. (1995, April). *Standards for qualitative research.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.

Lintner, T. (1999). Cycle starters: American Indian doctorates as role models. *Tribal College, 10*(3), 46–49.

Little Soldier, L. (1985). To soar with the eagles: Enculturation and acculturation of Indian children. *Childhood Education, 61,* 185–191.

Lum, D. (1996). *Social work practice and people of color: A process-stage approach* (3rd ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

Marguia, E., Padilla, R., & Pavel, M. (1991). Ethnicity and the concept of social integration in Tinto's model of institutional departure. *Journal of College Student Development, 32*(5), 433–439.

Masten, A. S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist, 56,* 227–238.

Mathison, S. (1988). Why triangulate? *Educational Researcher, 27*(3), 13–17.

Merriam, S. B., & Associates (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Merskin, D. (2001). Winnebagos, Cherokees, Apaches, and Dakotas: The persistence of stereotyping of American Indians in American advertising brands. *The Harvard Journal of Communication, 12*, 159–169.

Mertens, D. M. (1998). *Research methods in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative and qualitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Miheseuah, D. A. (1996). *American Indian stereotypes and reality*. Atlanta, GA: Clarity Press.

Minner, S. (1995). Completing university degrees: Barriers for Native Americans. In *Reaching for the future: Boldly facing challenges in rural communities*. Conference proceedings of the American Council on Rural Special Education (ACRES), Las Vegas, Nevada.

Mishler, E. G. (1995). Models of narrative analysis: A typology. *Journal of Narrative and Life History, 5*(2), 87–123.

Montgomery, D., Milville, M., Winterowd, C, Jeffries, B., & Baysden, M. F. (2000). American Indian college students: An exploration into resiliency factors revealed through personal stories. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 6*(4), 387–398.

Mosak, H. (1995). Adlerian psychotherapy. In R. J. Corsini and D. Weddling (Eds.), *Current psychotherapies* (5th ed., pp. 51–94). Itasca, IL: Peacock.

Munro, B. (1981). Dropouts from higher education: Path analysis of a national sample. *American Educational Research Journal, 18*(2), 133–141.

Nagel, J., & Snipp, M. (1993). Ethnic reorganization: American Indian social, economic, political, and cultural strategies for survival. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 16*(2), 203–235.

Nichols, L. S., & Nichols, T. (1998). 2+2+2: Collaborating to enhance educational opportunities for Native Americans. *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences, 90*(1), 38–41.

Ortiz, A. M., & HeavyRunner, I. (2003). Student access, retention, and success: Models of inclusion and support. In M. K. Benham & W. J. Stein (Eds.), *The renaissance of American Indian higher education* (pp. 215–239). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Pascarella, E. T., & Chapman, D. (1983). A multi-institutional, path analytic validation of Tinto's model of college withdrawal. *American Educational Research Journal, 20*(1), 87–102.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Pavel, M. D. (1991, November). *Assessing Tinto's model of institutional departure using American Indian and Alaska Native longitudinal data.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Boston, MA. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 339324)

Pavel, M. D., Skinner, R. R., Farris, E., Cahalan, M., Tippeconnic, J., & Stein, W. (1998). *American Indians and Alaska Natives in postsecondary education.* (National Center for Education Statistics). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Pevar, S. L. (1992). *The rights of Indians and tribes: The basic ACLU guide to Indian and tribal rights* (2nd ed.). Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Pewewardy, C. (2000). Renaming ourselves on our own terms: Race, tribal nations, and representation in education. *Indigenous Nations Studies Journal, (1),* 11–28.

Prucha, F. P. (1985). *The Indians in American society.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Ray, M. (2001). *Indian education in the modern classroom.* Retrieved August 1, 2001 from http://imdiversity.com

Red Shirt, E. M. (1996). *The lingering death of assimilation: Problems and issues in Indian Education* [CD-ROM]. Abstract from: Netscape: Dissertation Abstracts International: AAG9705297.

Rindone, P. (1988). Achievement motivation and academic achievement of Native American students. *Journal of American Indian Education, 28*(1), 1–8.

Rodriguez, R. (1997). Learning to live a warrior's life. *Black Issues in Higher Education, 14*(20), 1–4.

Roupart, L. M. (2003). The familiar face of genocide: Internalized oppression among American Indians. *Hypatia, 18*(2), 86–100.

Rutter, M. (1987). Psychological resilience and protective mechanisms. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 57*(3), 316–331.

Sanchez-Way, R., & Johnson, S. (2000). Cultural practices in American Indian prevention programs. *Juvenile Justice Journal, 7*(2), 1–9.

Smith, A. W. (1995). A Cherokee way of knowing: Can Native American spirituality impact religious education? *Religious Education, 90*(2), 241–255.

Schutz, A. (2004). Rethinking domination and resistance: Challenging postmodernism. *Educational Researcher, 33*(1), 15-23.

Spady, W. (1970). Dropouts from higher education: An interdisciplinary review and synthesis. *Interchange, 1*(1), 64–85.

Strand, J. A., & Peacock, T. D. (2002). *Nurturing resilience and school success in American Indian and Alaska Native students.* Abstract from: The ERIC Database ERICEDRS 20021201.

Stein, W. J. (1992). *Tribally controlled colleges: Making good medicine*. New York: Peter Lang.

Sue, D. W., & Sue, D. (1990). *Counseling the culturally different.* New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Swanson, T. D. (1997). Through family eyes: Toward a more adequate perspective for viewing Native American religious life. *American Indian Quarterly, 21*(1), 57–72.

Swisher, K. G. (1997). Preface. *Journal of American Indian Education, 37*(1), 3–6.

Thomas, D. H., Miller, J., White, R., Nabokov, P., & Deloria, P. J. (1993). *The Native Americans: An illustrative history.* Atlanta: Turner Publishing, Inc.

Thurston, K. (1998). Mitigating barriers to Navajo students' success in English courses. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College, 26*(1), 29–38.

Tierney, W. G. (1992a). *Official encouragement, institutional discouragement: Minorities in academe—The Native American experience*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Tierney, W. G. (1992b). Utilizing ethnographic interviews to enhance academic decision making. In D. Fetterman (Ed.), *Qualitative approaches to institutional research* (pp. 1–30). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research, 45*(1), 89–125.

Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (1988). Stages of student departure: Reflections on the longitudinal character of student leaving. *Journal of Higher Education, 59*(4), 438–455.

Top 100 degree producers. *Black Issues in Higher Education, 19*(9), 45–122.

Trower, C. A. (2002). Why so few minority faculty and what to do?: Diversifying the region's professoriate. *New England Board of Higher Education,* 25–27.

Walters, K. L., & Simoni, J. M. (2002). Reconceptualizing Native women's health: an "Indigenist" stress-coping model. *American Journal of Public Health, 92*(4), 520–524.

Wells, R. N., Jr. (1997). *The Native American experience in higher education: Turning around the cycle of failure II.* Washington, DC: National Institute of Education. (ERIC Document Reproductive Services NO. ED414108)

Wetsit, D. (1999). Effective counseling with American Indian students. In *Next steps: Research and practice to advance Indian education.* (EDRS No. ED427910)

Whitbeck, L. B., Hoyt, D. R., Stubben, J. D., & LaFromboise, T. (2001). Traditional culture and academic success among American Indian children in the upper midwest. *Journal of American Indian Education, 40*(2), 48–60.

White, H. (1985). *Tropics of discourse: Essays in cultural criticism.* Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Willeto, A. A. (1999). Navajo culture and family influences on academic success: Traditionalism is not a significant predictor of achievement among Navajo youth. *Journal of American Indian Eduation, 38*(2), 1–24.

Wilson, A. C. (1996). Grandmother to granddaughter: Generations of oral history. *American Indian Quarterly, 20*(1), 7–14.

Wilson, S. M. (1992). "That unmanned wild country": Native Americans both conserved and transformed new world environments. *Natural History, 101,* 16–17.

Wing, D. W., Crow, S. S., & Thompson, T. (1995). An ethnonursing study of Muscogee (Creek) Indians and effective health care practices for treating alcohol abuse. *Family & Community Health, 18*(2), 52–64.

Wolcott, H. F. (2001). *Writing up qualitative research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Wong, C. A. (2001). The schooling of ethnic minority children: Commentary. *Educational Psychologist, 36*(1), 57–67.

Wright, B. (1997). For the children of infidels?: American Indian education in the colonial colleges. In L. F. Goodchild & H. S. Wechsler (Eds.), *The history of higher education* (pp. 72–93). Needham Heights, MA: Simon & Schuster.

Wright, B., & Tierney, W. G. (1991). American Indians in higher education: A history of cultural conflict. *Change, 23*(2), 11–20.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

Cultural Resilience: Factors That Influence the Graduation of Native American Students
Consent Letter for Adult Participants
September 2, 2003

Dear Participant:

I am working on my doctoral dissertation entitled, "Cultural Resilience: Factors That Influence the Graduation of Native American Students." I am very interested in exploring the personal and cultural motivating factors that assist Native American students in completing their college degrees. These personal perspectives may benefit other Native students, higher education institutions that serve Native Americans, and tribal communities.

I will be conducting 1-2 interviews with Native American students in their last semester of undergraduate studies. Participating students will take part in preliminary interviews lasting for 1-2 hours each that will be audiorecorded. After the preliminary interview, one follow up interview, lasting approximately one hour for each participant will likely be conducted in person or via telephone. For the second interview, some interviewees may be approached concerning their willingness to have some of their interview responses videotaped.

The audiotapes and transcripts resulting from these interviews will be placed in a secure location and will be destroyed when no longer needed. Virginia Whitekiller and/or a designated transcriptionist will be responsible for transcribing all recordings. However, only Virginia Whitekiller, will know the names and identifying information of the participants in this study. Names will be changed in the field notes or papers in order to protect the identity of the participants.

Interviewees who are approached and agree to be videotaped, will not be under protected anonymity as they may be identified by their physical likeness and/or name.

This study will result in the completion of my doctoral studies, and may also result in published articles and presentations at professional conferences.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to participate. However, if you choose to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime with no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If at anytime you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may contact:

Institutional Review Board
Carol Olson, Ph.D., Chair
415 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, OK 74078
(405) 744-5700

If you have any other questions or concerns you may contact Virginia Whitekiller or Stacy Otto the following addresses and telephone numbers. Thank you for your participation in this study.

Sincerely yours,

Virginia Whitekiller
Doctoral Candidate, EDLE
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, OK 74078
(918) 456-5511 ext. 3507

Stacy Otto, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, SES
Oklahoma State University, 216 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078
(405) 744-9196

Please indicate whether or not you consent to participate in this study by placing a mark on your preference and signing your name on both forms.

_______I agree to participate in the study of "Cultural Resilience: Factors which Influence the Graduation of Native American College Students" and have been given a copy of this consent letter for my records.

_______I choose not to participate in the study of "Cultural Resilience: Factors which Influence the Graduation of Native American College Students."

______________________ ______________________ ______________

Signature Please print your name here Date

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Cultural Resilience: Factors That Influence the Graduation of Native American College Students

The following assent is to be read and an affirmative must be given and recorded on the audiotape and/or videotape for the individual's consent to be audiotaped and/or videotaped. If consent is not given, the interview cannot transpire.

Script: I am Virginia Whitekiller, a doctoral student at Oklahoma State University. In fulfillment of my doctoral studies, I am working on a dissertation research project entitled: Cultural Resilience: Factors which Influence the Graduation of Native American College Students. I am very interested in interviewing students such as you, regarding what pre-entry cultural factors have assisted you in completing your college education. This study has the potential to assist higher education institutions, Native American college communities, and other Native American students in gaining insight into cultural factors that can be helpful to Native American students in finishing college.

I would like to ask you a few questions concerning your experience in higher education that will take approximately 1-2 hours of your time. After the preliminary interview, one follow up interview will likely be conducted that will take approximately one hour of your time. The follow up interview will be conducted in person or via telephone. For the second interview, some interviewees may be approached concerning their willingness to have some of their interview responses videotaped.

Please feel free to take your time concerning your decision to participate in this project. Your participation is strictly voluntary and your identity will be protected regarding your audiotaped responses. If you are approached and agree to be videotaped, your identity will be revealed either by your physical likeness and/or by your name. Can I answer any questions you may have about being interviewed? As I will audiotape your answers during the preliminary interview, I need permission to tape our conversation.

Do you agree to be interviewed and audiotaped?
Protocol:

1. What does being American Indian or Native American mean to you?
2. What is home to you?
3. Why are you going to college?
4. How is your spiritual belief system related to going to college?
5. What factors have helped you complete your college education?
6. What advice would you give to other Native American people who are considering going to college or who are currently in college?
7. What does it mean to you to be interviewed by another Native American? Or what are your thoughts about being interviewed by another Native American?
8. What else do you want to tell me concerning your educational experience as reflected in your identity as a Native American and/or your spirituality?

Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 10/13/2004

Date: Tuesday, October 14, 2003 IRB Application No ED0427

Proposal Title: Cultural Resilience: Factors Which Influence the Graduation of Native American College Students

Principal Investigator(s): ✓

Virginia S. Whitekiller	Stacy Otto
507 Wheeler St.	216 Willard
Tahlequah, OK 74464	Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and Processed as: Expedited

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Dear PI :

Your IRB application referenced above has been approved for one calendar year. Please make note of the expiration date indicated above. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact me in 415 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, colson@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Carol Olson, Chair
Institutional Review Board

TABLES

Table 3.1: Participants

Age	Gender	Tribal Affiliation	Major
20	F	Cheyenne/Osage	Computer Science
21	F	Muscogee Creek/Seminole	Social Work
22	F	Seminole/Pawnee	Social Work
22	F	Umatilla	Art History
22	F	Keetoowah Cherokee/Creek	Social Work
22	F	Choctaw	Engineering
22	F	Jicarilla Apache	Broadcast/Journalism
22	F	Choctaw	Comm./Journalism
22	F	Cherokee	Biology
23	F	Dine Navajo	U.S. Government
24	F	Kiowa/Cheyenne/Arapaho	Business
25	M	Navajo/Apache	Accounting
26	M	San Carlos Apache	Environmental Science
29	M	Ojibway/Lakota	Business
29	M	Dine Navajo	Tribal Management
30	M	Isleta/San Felipe	Amer.Indian Studies
31	M	Ojibway	Amer.Indian Studies
36	M	Kickapoo	Sociology
56	M	Muscogee Creek/Navajo	Early Childhood Educ.

Note: To protect the anonymity of the participants, column information with the exception of age is in random order.

VITA

Virginia Whitekiller

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Dissertation: CULTURAL RESILIENCE: FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE GRADUATION OF NATIVE AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

Major Field: Higher Education

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, On September 16, 1961, the daughter of Mary and Johnny Drywater.

Education: Graduated from Wister High School, Wister, Oklahoma in May of 1979; received the Bachelor of Social Work degree from Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma in May of 1987, and received the Master of Social Work degree from Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri in May of 1995. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree with a major in Higher Education at Oklahoma State University in May, 2004.

Experience: Four years adjunct instructor at Northeastern State University 1995-1999 and three years full-time faculty at Northeastern State University 2001 to present.

Professional Memberships: Southwest Social Science Association, American Association of University Professors, American Educational Research Association.