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BEING NATIVE AMERICAN IN A HIGHER EDUCATION SETTING

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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This dissertation is dedicated to my wife Ryanne and daughter Elliotte.

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Abstract

This qualitative study examined the Native American Graduate Student experience at the University of Oklahoma. Native American graduate students who are enrolled members of their tribes were included in this study. Participants reported membership to Choctaw, Shawnee, Pawnee, Creek, Comanche, Taos Pueblo, Navajo tribes. Participants were interviewed in two separate groups across three meetings to elicit comments about their experience of graduate school. After conducting interviews with participants, data was analyzed for themes reflecting their various experiences. The study identified 13 themes (Appropriation, Alienation, Surviving rather than Achieving, Lateral Oppression, Respectability Politics, Internalization, Structural Posturing, Christian Colonization, Fungibility, Participation, Self-Love, and Decolonization) of participant experiences.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Problem

Currently there is a lack of prominent research within psychology in the realm of Native American graduate student experiences of education. This study will begin to remedy this scarcity of research. While the history of Native American education throughout colonization is well documented from a majority culture perspective, there is insufficient documentation of Native American experiences of their interaction within the institution in their own voice. Primarily this study will work to provide Native American students space to express their experience of graduate school, while also developing areas for future research with the primary population.

Background of the Problem

Most studies concerning Native Americans begin with a litany of severe problems with which Native Americans are struggling. In keeping with this trend, the following is a brief overview of some of these issues. Native Americans experience higher rates of mental health, substance abuse, health problems, and disabilities than that of most of their peers from other ethnicities (Gone, 2003;2012; Keane et al 2008). Available research also shows that Native American populations experience higher rates of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and poverty when compared to majority culture (Ross et al 2012; Keane, 2006). This could be partially due to the Native American population being predisposed to experiencing historical and current trauma at higher rates than that of other ethnicities (Thompson, 1988; Gone 2003). Native Americans populations have experienced colonization for hundreds of years with the effects of the traumatic acts of genocide compounding with each subsequent generation and possibly exacerbating

distressing psychological symptoms and traits (Deloria, 2003; Hämäläinen, 2008). While it is important to keep the issues just described in the back of our minds because they will certainly impact how and what participants will discuss in this qualitative study, this study's focus will be to look at Native Americans sense of being as they present in a unique setting.

Resilience

Now, without going any further, a positive description of Native American communities will be presented to provide a context for positive Native American identity development. Throughout the colonizing process, Native Americans have interacted with and accepted many of the colonizers ways, but have also resisted the physical, psychological, social and cultural dominations. This complex interaction with colonization has resulted in a multi-layered identity development. While focusing on Native American identity does not necessitate a total rejection of Western knowledge and ways, it does involve keeping in mind what is unique historically and traditionally, about what constitutes being Native American. It is vital to select, arrange, prioritize, and legitimize the unique elements of being Native American.

The near decimation of Native American peoples within only decades after Columbus' arrival, has recently been determined as even more devastating than believed even a generation ago (Mann, 2005). Six more centuries of colonial domination has not been enough to break the resilient wills of the Native Americans. Still many Native Americans retain traditions that can help them to be strong, traditional, and resilient to continued oppression. In spite of the intolerable historical and present treatment by

American society, somehow Native Americans have been able to continue and renew some semblance of cultural traditions and health.

Spiritual Resilience

The strength of Native American students is rooted their spiritual qualities, which include elements such as interconnectedness, relationships, harmony, respect, humility, and bravery. There are certain teachings that one will hear if they regularly attend Native American ceremonies or listens to elders that are foundation. Further, the principals mentioned here are not so easily defined, and when one tries to define them, one is always in danger of co-mingling colonial teachings with tribal perspectives. Nonetheless, we believe that the core beliefs found in Native American spiritualties have been key to providing Native American resiliency in the face of oppression.

It is imperative that people working in helping professions, respect the spiritual integrity of Native American ways. Spirituality is the sinew that holds Native American families and communities together. Almost all Native American tribes have "give aways" during which they display generosity, presenting gifts to each other, thereby building social harmony in their communities. Most also have arduous spiritual practices, such as Sundances, scratchings, purification ceremonies, and vision quests. Native American spiritual practices have incorporated sweating as a form of spiritual expression, frequently involving preparatory ritual or prayer and for rites of passage including birth, puberty, weddings, and death (Hibbard, 2005). Each tribe and sometimes different clans have specific protocols for their rituals. Many Native Americans attend Christian Churches, but professional helpers should not assume that they have abandoned traditional principles (Lawson, 246).

For many generations, Native Americans have developed unique spiritual ways to cope within extreme external threats. A professional helper may misinterpret some of the profound inwardness and trust in the Creator that sustain them through many hardships as depression and pessimism, but a deeper look will reveal humility and bravery in the reticence that helps in facing painful hardships. Strong spiritual values have been passed on so that the present and future generations of Native American students can experience healthy living.

Resilience of Traditional Families

Traditionally, tribal membership was more than just living within a group or geographic region. Native People belonged to a family, clan or band, community, and tribe. From time immemorial, responsibility for the wellbeing of each other was communal and still is in some Native American communities. Parents never raised children alone; grandparents, aunts, uncles, other elders and adults, and siblings sometimes acted in the parenting process, transmitting information, knowledge, support, encouragement, and advice. Native American extended families nurtured, trained, and educated children. If a child could not live with parents, a relative was always present to take the child, and treat him as if he were her own. In turn, every vulnerable elder or tribal member was cared for by younger members. Elders lived with and were cared for by family members. The community expected both children and elders to be treated with love and the greatest of care. Individual and collective identities were forged in the caring circles of extended families.

Native American Community Resilience

Nourishing tribal communities are contingent on successful transmission of traditions, practices, and knowledge. Generational transference of cultural ways is best achieved by healthy families and communities within a setting that allows for the cultivation of such practices. Tribal communities and elders are repositories of spiritual rites, naming ceremonies, language acquisition, ceremonies that mark important influences in the lives of of individuals with connection to their tribes. Traditional practices and ceremonies are crucial for conveying cultural knowledge and values. Due to the aforementioned oppressive and harmful occurrences experienced by Native Americans, the fabric of Native American communities has been damaged by colonization. Increasingly, Native American families have found it more difficult to provide the security, education, material needs and cultural guidance that Native American children need (Robbins, 2012). It is for these reasons that students be afforded the opportunity to gain support for their Native American identities through adherence to traditional practices, in that the connection to their tribal heritage bolsters their capacity for resilience.

Despite the systematic oppression suffered Native Americans have demonstrated great resilience, adaptability and healing, often within family and tribal community contexts. Extended families commonly come together to care for children who have lost parents. Meals are shared with special honor, care and money "give aways" are offered to poverty stricken grandfathers and grandmothers. Tribal languages have been retained and in many cases revived in tribal churches and weekly community gatherings. Brave Heart (2000) argued that Native Americans have deep emotional attachments, traditional

values, and strong commitments to help others. Allen et al (2011) in qualitative study in which they interviewed Alaska Natives/Native Americans of the Yupiit tribe about the impact of reintegrating spiritual practices in their lives found that it was not only healing to the individuals, but also served as a protective factor for Alaska Native/ Native American family and community systems stability and cohesion.

Significance of Study

Presently, there is an evident lack of research and literature concerning Native Americans experiences within university settings. There is especially a vacuum in terms of research literature directed toward exploring meanings related to their identities (Gone, 2012) in general and in university settings. This vacancy of knowledge concerning Native American students' thoughts and feelings about how they view themselves in relation to their college experiences leaves a void where there could potentially exist a foundation from which various other studies could ground themselves. This study will begin to remedy this flagrant oversight and provide understanding of Native American college student identity, their social interaction, and their sense of place at universities.

Unlike other studies about Native Americans in higher education, the authors of this study do not begin with the assumption that higher education for Native Americans is important or is a good thing, or even needed. Some writers argue that education is foundational to advancing the opportunities of Native American populations (Kincheloe, 2008). Vine Deloria (2003) conveys that education is central to obtaining civil rights for marginalized populations. The point of this study is to allow Native Americans to give voice to their ontological experience of being students in university settings. This does not mean that the research concerning their "success" or lack of success in college is not important for this study. In fact, such studies may act as barometers for underlying issues

Native American student may be experiencing in higher education settings, which may be indicators of the significance of this study.

Native American students have one of the highest dropout rates and Native American males express the lowest expectation to attain at least a bachelor's degree when compared to all other groups (Ross et al, 2012). Native American's low attendance and high drop out in college is at a disproportionately high rate when compared to the majority population (Ross et al, 2012). While it may be that a college degree is not tied to success within Native American communities, it seems that those that do desire an education are not getting their needs met by the institutions that they attend. There could be multiple cultural/tribal factors involved in Native American students' "unsuccessful" experiences at universities that qualitative studies such as this one might facilitate in teasing out. Exploring possible explanations for university drop out or success through the experiences of Native American students may contribute to eventually providing culturally competent services to these students in university settings. The goal of this study is not to attend to drop out rates of Native American students but rather to understand how their identity development is impacted when attending college at a predominantly white university. This study provides a venue for participants to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences regarding their identities as they interact within a university setting.

Further, this study marks an attempt to put Native American identity issues not simply in a higher education setting but also with a background awareness of a history of colonialization that has striven for genocide, a history of education endeavors to "kill the Indian and save the man," and governmental and social efforts to define and steal Native

American tribal/cultural identity. Further, not only will the above topics be viewed in the context of their past histories and their continuing residual impacts but also their current costumes and corrosive effects. It is hoped that the outcomes of this study will be substantial in creating awareness and contribute to eventually meeting the cultural/tribal needs of Native American students that may be struggling with various issues such as assimilation to majority culture, historical trauma associated with education, and finding space within a university setting to be Native American.

Modern-day Colonization

Colonization in terms of this study is defined as the displacement and destabilization of Native American communities. This includes the relocation and demoralization of Native American communities by the United States government and its agents in order to fulfill manifest destiny. Further, this will include any undermining of cultural beliefs, languages, and customs held by Native American populations of what is now known as North America. The definition of colonization for this study will also include any acts by the colonizer to provoke, either subtly or overtly, Native American peoples to adopt the belief, values and mindset of the colonizer (Weaver, 2009).

Colonization has been historically linked to education in the form of boarding schools, which were used to assimilate the Native American population (Deloria, 2003; Tinker 1993) Colonization of Native American people has not only persisted through education but also through the removal or traditional ceremonies a beliefs of Native American peoples from learning (Thompson, 1988; Deloria, 2003). According to Maslow (1971) spirituality can be a tool with which individuals can conceptualize their reality. Being that traditional practices and language were forcefully discouraging in the

education of many generations, Native American peoples began passing down their traditions in secret through oral histories (Robbins, 2005; Golla, 2002). However, resistance comes with a cost, in that, as research shows, hiding one's feelings and identity has been shown to create compounded emotional and physical health problems (Richards 2003; Mauss, 2004). It is for these reasons that Native American students should be afforded the opportunity to define their own Native American identity within a university setting in order to understand the ways in which the institution is impacting their identity and thus their well-being.

Any Native American individual that practices their traditional tribal customs is in direct resistance to colonization. The modern practice of ancient customs is essential for the survival of the various Native American tribal cultures of North America. Contemporary instances of Native American resistance to colonization manifest in many ways including protesting environmental destruction, resistance to education, and the unashamed continuation of traditional healing practices (Deloria, 2003; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). Further, Native American students maintaining their indigeneity within an educational setting is in constant conflict with the institutionalized oppression of the system. They are in resistance to a system that has set them up for failure, but their defiance is crucial to the survival of Native American values (Reyhner & Eder, 2004; Deloria, 2003; Kincheloe, 2008). Looking at the experience of Native American students, with this presentation of colonization in mind, is essential to providing them culturally competent spaces to develop their Native American identity while they navigate the hostile territories of the American educational system.

Research Purpose

This study will aim to better understand and explain how students that have attended some college at the University of Oklahoma experience and understand their own Native American identity within the university setting. Given differences between tribal nations, the present study focuses specifically on providing space for students to express their collective cultural perspectives on Native American student identity. This study could provide basis for future research and have therapeutic implications through gaining knowledge of how a Native American identity is developed, impacted, and experienced by Native American students that also have ties to various tribal communities.

This study looks to inform readers of the variations and representations of Native American student identity as defined by the students themselves. Further, this study looks to aid the field of psychology in bolstering clinician ability to recognize distress that the student may be experiencing related to the impact of the university environment on their Native American identity. The study will have the greatest clinical impact on therapists providing services at university counseling centers on campuses with of Native American student populations.

This study provides a framework in which Native American students are able to express their experiences of the influence of various forms of colonization on cultural identity, tribal status as a student, and traditional healing. The emergent domains within the gathered information will provide evidence with which researchers will be able to derive definitions of Native American student identity. Primarily this study will provide evidence to answer the question ‘How do Native American students at a university understand their experiences, in terms of their feelings, cognitions, and insights about

internal and external contradictions that contribute to the complex of their emerging sense of Native identity?'

Given that there are many Native American tribes each with their own customs and spiritual beliefs (Hämäläinen, 2008; Deloria, 2003) this study will focus the Native American student experiences of identity in relation to their particular culture of origin as a basis from which to elicit experiences of identity. For instance, the Numunu (Comanche) have a vast and legendary history of warfare and resistance. Stories of the Comanche Nation and their aptitude for battle still echo today (Hämäläinen, 2008). A warrior mentality and resistance are an integral part of the individual Comanche's identity no matter their status. While these may be central tenants to a Comanche identity, other tribal nations may not associate these tenants with their particular tribal identity. On the other hand, Native Americans have overlapping issues and beliefs that allows for connections. They all share histories of horrific oppression in the forms of genocide, geographic dislocation or extreme restriction, religious and educative colonialization, and a schizophrenic assimilationist ideology by American governments and the larger White mainstream society that often manifest themselves in various forms of prejudice and discrimination. They also share values such as: courage, friendship, giving, connection to earth and homeland, collectivity, and forms of spirituality that emphasize co-relation and interconnection. These common experiences may allow for making some general interpretations regarding this study's participants' comments.

My personal experience as a Comanche/Native American student further informs my perspective about the predicament in which Native American students find themselves when attending higher education institutions. On the one hand, I have been

told by Comanche elders that they liken the experience of gaining higher education to waging war for Native Americans. To become "educated can be a way to become a leader in our tribe. It entails struggling and disentangling White ways embedded in higher education. It involves remembering who one is even as one learns about mainstream ways and knowledges. It is a war, a constant battle with outside influences as well as individual constructs of identity. This struggle may result in helping one's own people through gained education. On the other hand, many, Elders included, believe that higher education simply contributes to the on-going assimilation process. This study looks to inform readers of the variations and representations of Native American student identity as defined by the students themselves. They will be given the opportunity to express their experiences of the influence of various forms of colonization on cultural identity, tribal status as a student, and traditional healing.

It is sensible to recognize that the inability to maintain an identity associated with one's culture or the forced conformity to majority culture could be detrimental to the Native American student's self-actualization. Given that many within the Native American culture liken educated individuals to being our new age warriors and leaders, it serves to reason that gaining an education with which to help one's people is becoming an important aspect of what it means to be an "Educated Indian." Providing a basis of research from which clinicians can collaboratively find ways to maintain Native American identity for students would have tremendous positive impact on those seeking services due to incongruences of their values and majority culture on university campuses. This encapsulates providing spaces with which Native American students are afforded the opportunity to expand and solidify their Native American identity without

having to first take on the identity of the colonizer.

Providing a basis of research from which clinicians can collaboratively find ways to respect and accept Native American students' unique tribal/cultural identities would have a positive impact for those seeking services due to distresses resulting from incongruences of their values and majority culture on university campuses. Clinicians then may be better able to provide spaces so that Native American students can be afforded the opportunity to expand and solidify their Native American identities, potentially even helping the to resist taking on and exclusively colonialized identity.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Defining Native American Identity

It is important to review the literature regarding how Native American identity is defined within academia as to provide a coherent picture of how many Native American college students may define themselves as well as how their faculty may view them. This section will provide evidence for various criteria with which Native Americans are defined by the overarching Euro-American majority society as well as by select Native American academicians. Further, this section will emphasize the need to provide Native American communities with the authority to define their own identity within all realms especially within an academic setting.

Colonizer Definition of Native Americans

An overwhelming majority of what is posed as a contemporary Native American identity is still influenced by descriptions of colonial era Native Americans as defined by Euro-American colonists. Majority culture definitions of what a Native American is manifests in various ways including within movies, television, and academic literature. Since the time that the infamous Christopher Columbus landed in what is now known as the Americas, individuals of European descent have attempted to provide depictions of the indigenous populations of the new world. Grande (2004) explains that contemporary educational works depicting Native American history have been largely written by non group members, observing Native American communities to disseminate their findings to the majority population. This creates constructs of what a Native American should be for the misinformed population in that there is a majority culture definition of how contemporary Native Americans should act, look, and speak. The Euro American

definition of what a Native American is a form of attempted colonization of Native American identity, impacting Native Americans by confining ways in which they are allowed to define themselves in non-Native settings. The contemporary view of colonization stems from historical instances of institutional criteria for who can be labeled as a Native American.

Educational literature about Native Americans is no different. It has largely been written by liberal academia who could be viewed as allies to some extent, though often very ignorant allies who neither participate in Native American communities nor make efforts to provide their findings back to the communities they have studied. Sometimes, tribal people refer to them as "helicopter people" who drop in to their communities to research long enough to forward their professional careers and then leave. This long history of educational research, beginning at the turn of the 20th century with anthropological studies has continued into the present. Even extraordinary researchers such as Ruth Benedict (1932) and Abraham Maslow (1971) did research with Native Americans which resulted in erroneous and destructive constructs, defining who a Native American is and how he or she acts, looks, and speaks. The accumulation of research in the field of psychology which has inordinately concentrated on drug and alcohol issues and other problems for Native Americans has contributed to institutional criteria for who is labeled as a Native American.

Blood Quantum

The Bureau of Indian Affairs was created to regulate government relations with sovereign tribes as well as to police the legal status of Native Americans (Getches et al., 2004). In the nineteenth century, the United States government began maintaining

records of blood quantum ancestries of the Native American population and thus created systems and terminology regarding how to identify Native American individuals (Reyner, 2012). These systems included the requirement of having a certain degree of blood quantum to be included in tribal nations and gave way to government mandated terminology related to quantity of blood to describe members that had no genetic relation to any other ethnicity. This further exemplifies how acts of colonialism altered Native American identity in that using an individual's degree of blood to include or exclude them from their tribal community limits the parameters of existence for that tribe.

In the 1960s, the United States government reformed Bureau of Indian Affairs policies regarding the self-determination of tribes to define who could claim tribal membership (Usner,1992). This policy allowed tribal nations the sovereignty to decide how membership would be determined, the criteria for which varies between each federally recognized tribe. Currently, tribes such as the Comanche Nation require a certain minimum amount blood quantum for individuals to claim membership, while others such as the Cherokee required individuals to demonstrate that they are a descendent of tribal members found on the Dawes Role, a document used to keep track of enrolled tribal membership during relocation. The variation between tribal requirements for membership creates a unique dynamic between tribes in that some tribes view particular membership criteria as lax and thus diluting their ideals of what it means to be Native American.

The issue of blood quantum has had a tremendous effect on Native American interactions both within tribal communities as well as with majority culture (Pewewardy, 2002). For instance, because a tribe may require a member to be one fourth blood

quantum in order to vote in tribal elections, those with less than one quarter feel excluded. Further, this can impact tribal politics in that tribes can change the requirements for tribal membership to sway tribal elections. Additionally, those with higher blood quantum may argue that when a Native American has a child with a non-Native American, the price of their children losing certain tribal privileges is only fair. Behind much of the contention over identity among Native Americans is the fact that there are limited governmental financial resources that are divided among tribal members. The higher the blood quantum required for certification, the less dispersed the financial support, which leads to contention and alienation between tribal members (Pewewardy, 2002).

Further complicating the implications of blood quantum membership is the rise in tribal casinos that provide funding for many Native American tribes. These casinos often provide the tribe with resources to provide services for their people and in some cases even provide per capita funding to individual members of the tribe. This creates an arena for fluctuating tribal policies regarding membership in that lower membership can mean higher payouts to members from casinos, but a struggling tribal legacy due to dwindling numbers.

Terminology of Native Monikers

For as much of Native identity is unspoken, so much of Native identity is defined by how individuals verbally identify. Some Native American individuals prefer to be called American Indian, Indian, Indigenous, Native, or First Peoples. Many would prefer to be called by their specific tribe, being that there tends to be a strong sense of loyalty, pride, and belonging within tribal nations. However, among the greater majority of North

America, Native Americans tend to be grouped together and as a collective, make up what is known within group as "Indian country" which refers to the various Native American communities across what is now known as North America. Horse (2005) asserts that nomenclature can be an important factor in how Native American peoples identify and reaffirms that much of the imposed moniker of "Indian" continues to be perpetuated by the United States government. Further, Horse (2005) also establishes that American Indian has become an identifier that many Native American peoples embrace due to the influence of being called as such their entire life. This further emphasizes how external influences can mold Native identity without consent, in that those that wish to be identified as their particular tribe cannot overcome the institutional basis of identification imposed upon them. In a sense the nomenclature associated with Native identifiers has been colonized not only through the imposition of the English language but also through a saturation of monikers that many Native American individuals cannot escape.

While there are countless tribal languages and customs that are specific to the particular tribe they are associated with, contemporary Native Americans experience a sense of shared culture with other Native Americans, resulting in new cultural customs. Deloria (2003) alludes to this sense of cohesion between Native Americans while providing the historical instance of the American Indian Movement (AIM) and pancultural customs such as powwows. "Indian Country" provides spaces for Native Americans to connect with others Native Americans while operating within dominant society. Providing space for Native American students to experience both tribal specific customs and pan-cultural norms is critical to the development of their identity and well-being.

Mascots and Media

Mascots and media have had an impact on many Native American lives through the projection of what a Native American looks like. This alters not only the majority population ideal of what Native Americans looks like but also impacts Native Americans by inadvertently imposing on them a visual description of what they need to look like to personify their own Native identity. This visual description is an amalgamation of the various Native American mascots within educational and professional settings, ranging from the warrior in a headdress to the controversial ~~redskins~~ moniker as well as depictions of Native Americans in movies and television.

These mascots have been shown to have detrimental effects to Native American students and individuals not only though the portrayal of their people by the teams using the mascots but also by their opponents. For example, opponents have used racial and ethnic slurs and derogatory phrases such as "scalp the warriors" and implying that they will send the team on "The trail of tears" in their promoting of a sports contest (Indian Country Today, 2014). Further, the American Psychological Association (2005) states that Native American mascots and monikers are detrimental to the well being of Native American students with regard to negative thoughts of self worth, depressive symptoms, and detrimental views of Native spirituality & customs.

From first encounters, Whites have represented and labeled Native Americans as inhabitants of India, as animals, heathens, murderers, adulterers, thieves, blasphemers, pagans, sloths and liars. Majority culture definitions of what a Native American is manifests in various ways including within movies and television. In these venues, Native Americans have been primarily represented as stereotypes, often as savages or noble

savages. Often the actors are not even Native Americans but rather darker complicated Whites or White people who have been colored with paint. Typically, the Native American women in this media form are brown sexualized Barbie Dolls (Pocahontas). The men are depicted as drunks, stupid, comical, highly masculine, aggressive anti-socials, or mystical medicine men. Only a few movies have been written, produced and acted by Native Americans. The past and current oppression as well as the depictions of Native Americans in the media complicate Native American identity development. External influences have profound impacts upon everyone's views of themselves. How is a Native American supposed to think, act and be? A Native American who is aware of their tribal history, the conflicts between mainstream society values and tribal values, and the portrayals of who they are supposed to be, cannot situate themselves in a classroom in such a way that they can simply go with the flow. In order to maintain integrity Native Americans must struggle with complicated cultural issues, else become absorbed in the ongoing assimilative process.

The Importance of a Native American Identity

Identification with one's Native American culture has been associated with good mental health, both by itself and accompanied with identification with White culture. This is to say that while some Native Americans identify that they have characteristics associated with White culture, they maintain a greater sense of well being when they are able to identify as Native American (LaFromboise et al. 2010).

Oetting et al. (1998) studied the cultural identification of more than 2,000 Native American youth across the United States. They found that Native American youth's cultural identity is deeply rooted in their family's cultural identity. This is to say that the youth greatly identified as the culture that their family identified with, regardless of

surroundings or culture of origin. Building on the Oetting et al. findings, Moran, Fleming, Somervell, and Manson (1999) found that within a sample of 2,000 Native American adolescents, those who reported a bicultural identity, reported high identification with both Native American culture and White culture. These students were found to have the highest levels of social competency and self-esteem, while those who reported low levels of both Native American and White culture were found to have the lowest levels of social competency and self-esteem. In between were those who identified with one culture or the other. The importance of Native American culture was revealed with their findings in that those who identified more with Native American culture had higher social competency and self-esteem than those who reported low levels of Native American culture. Those who solely reported an identification with White culture also had slightly higher scores in these areas than those who reported low levels of Native American culture. Emphasizing the importance of having a solidified identity that incorporates an identification of their culture of origin regardless of characteristics acquired from other cultures. In a separate study, that corroborates the importance of a bicultural identity, LaFromboise, Albright, and Harris (2010) found that bi-culturally competent Native Americans scored lower on hopelessness than those who identified solely with Native American culture. Moreover, in a separate study, LaFromboise and colleagues (2010) measured enculturation, or the acquisition of a new culture (i.e., White culture), and participation in culturally traditional Native American activities and found enculturation to be associated with prosocial outcomes and lower rates of drug and alcohol use. Further, participants who fell in between, not feeling a part of White culture but not participating in Native American ceremonies to have the most problems with substance

abuse. This could be indicative of a struggle to find one's self when their identity is not accepted by either culture. The presented intricacies associated with operating in both the White world and the Native American community support the ideal that while many Native American students identify with pieces of White culture, a greater sense of social competency and self-esteem are found in students that are able to identify holistically with their Native American identity.

Reclaiming Native American Identity

Current literature maintains that a tribal identity is an important aspect of Native American culture and fundamental to the survival of traditional cultural practices (Gone & Trimble, 2012). Further Gone and Trimble (2012) emphasize the importance of who, in particular, identifies as an American Indian while examining various ways in which an American Indian identity is critical to the future of Native American cultures. Particularly, they pose that the widespread self-identification of Native American heritage has threatened the "presumed commonalities in orientation, outlook, and experience" of American Indians. Their findings suggest a duty to understand said commonalities on the tribal level, and the importance of affording each tribal culture and community a voice with which to describe their own traditions and experiences while avoiding a muddled view of what it means to be an individual within their tribe. The present study places an emphasis on providing a venue in which Native American students are able to define themselves and thus identify what is means for them to be Native American on campus.

EchoHawk (1997) resonates the sentiment that Native American tribes should be afforded the opportunity to reclaim themselves as thoroughly as possible in an article

focused on bringing light to the epidemic of suicide within Native American communities. This entails evaluating self-determination, while allowing tribes to manage their own programs in order to achieve greater congruence between services and cultural values (EchoHawk, 1997). EchoHawk (1997) further iterates that Native American individuals should be allowed to speak toward the various characteristics of their identity in order to begin the evaluation of what services are needed on a tribe by tribe basis. The present study aides in the understanding of tribal perspectives of Native American students in order to provide insight into the specific types of services that may be needed within this community while allowing them the opportunity to convey their own characteristics through their voice. For students this could mean providing spaces or the opportunity to make spaces that are meaningful to their Native identity.

The presented literature on reclaiming Native American identity is foundational to the current study in that it shows how important it is to provide Native American communities their own voice with which to convey their own perspectives. This is an essential aspect of the philosophy with which this study is founded upon, in that the researcher acknowledges the important of allowing Native American populations the space to express their own views. This is an attempt to correct for historical instances of improperly conveying Native American values by majority culture and academia (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Deloria, 2003).

Historical Trauma/ Colonization

Over the past couple of decades, historical trauma has greatly influenced the discourse among Native American mental health professionals about the well-being of Native American individuals (Gone & Trimble, 2011). Historical trauma involves

exposure of an earlier generation to a traumatic event that continues to affect subsequent generations as the symptoms related to unresolved grief, anxiety, and distress have the potential to be passed from one generation to the next (Whitbeck et al., 2004). Brave Heart and De Buyn (1998) maintain that cumulative trauma related to various instances of colonization including forced removal, racism, betrayal, massacres, loss of tribal language, boarding schools, changes in diet, and denial of traditional spiritual expression have contributed to the current high frequencies of negative well-being for Native American individuals. The lasting effects of historical trauma have been shown to increase levels of depression, negative career ideation, and drug and alcohol abuse, within Native Americans communities. The continued aspects of negative career ideation could impact Native American students throughout the tenure of their educational experience, lending itself to feelings associated with not having a goal for college attendance. This creates an issue in that Native American students that have no true desire to complete college due to experienced incongruences with their worldview may be better served by other more culturally congruent practices. It may be that students are told they need to attend college, but are justifiably experiencing feelings to the contrary. A negative career view may also bolster the ideal that one does not belong at college or dominant society in general.

Evans-Campbell (2008) also argued that there is a critical connection between historical traumatic events and contemporary stressors among Native Americans. This adds to the heightened rate of experienced trauma lived by contemporary Native Americans, impacting Native Americans in ways that their majority culture college peers can not understand. Whitbeck et al. (2004) reported instances of historical trauma co-

morbidity with anxiety disorders, depression, anger and substance abuse. Bolstering the fact that Historical trauma tends to compound current trauma for Native American individuals. Further, recent research by within the medical field indicates that reactions to life events can be passed down on a genetic level. Bolstering the ideal that the traumatic events experienced by the ancestors of modern Native Americans, or other groups that have experienced genocide, are felt on a genetic and emotional level, adding to their experiences of current trauma (Sanders, 2012).

In working to provide space for Native American students to develop their own Native identity, it is crucial to validate the existence of not only the traumatic history of the treatment of Native American communities, but the continuing oppression of Native American individuals and their communities. Additionally, it is important to have methods and practices in place on college campuses to address issues regarding historical trauma that Native American students may be experiencing. The primarily researched intervention reported in the literature, which specifically focuses on historical trauma among Native American populations, is the Historical Trauma and Unresolved Grief Intervention, which integrates traditional methods of healing with western theoretical approaches to therapy (Brave Heart, 1999). Historical Trauma and Unresolved Grief Intervention is not a theoretical approach within itself but rather a proposed supplement to be integrated into various forms of therapy to enable more insightful investigations into the various forms and influences of oppressive powers within an individual's life given their ancestral experiences of historical trauma. Therapeutic processes focused on addressing historical trauma involve conversations about processes of de-colonization. Further, this form of therapy entails collaboratively working with the client to recognize

internalized ideology, stereotypes, and constructed schemas. An important component of this process involves reclaiming tribal and cultural histories that have been appropriated by majority culture through colonizing systems.

Acculturation

Acculturation seems to be an aspect of Native American identity that has a great impact on the individual's well-being. Acculturation for Native Americans refers to how the individual incorporates White/Majority and tribal/traditional cultural influences into their personal values (Reynolds et al., 2012). Some studies show an association between acculturation for a Native American can affect their well-being in an institutional setting (Garret & Pichette, 2000; Lester, 1999). Lester (1999) conveys that acculturation stress is positively correlated with suicide rates for Native American individuals, indicating that those that have trouble associating with one or both cultures may be negatively impacted. Erikson (1968) emphasizes that individuals that are unable to identify their personal origins or reconcile their cultural identity may be at higher risk to experience isolation and confusion, potentially resulting in a distressed state of well-being.

Garret & Pichette (2000) provide the Native American Acculturation Scale (NAAS), supplying mental health professionals a tool with which to measure the acculturation level of Native American clients. This scale provides insight into the differing levels of acculturation for students, accounting for traditional practices and characteristics of assimilation on a continuum. Reynolds et al (2012) further supports Garret & Pichette (2000) that it is crucial for Native American individuals to be able to

identify as either traditional, acculturated, or assimilated within the NAAS to avoid a "danger zone" with regard to their well-being.

Garret & Pichette (2000) complied information from Herring (1996) and Lafromboise, Trimble, & Mohatt (1990) to provide five main domains of acculturation for Native Americans labeled: Traditional, Marginal, Bicultural, Assimilated, and Pan-traditional. The traditional level of acculturation requires individuals to speak almost wholly in their native tongue while also participating in tribal customs and spirituality. Those within the Marginal level may speak both majority language and their native language but may not fully identify with their culture of origin of majority culture. Bicultural Native Americans thrive within dominant society as well as within their tribal community and are able to operate comfortably in either setting. Assimilated Native Americans solely accept majority culture and identify with dominant society at all levels. Pan-traditional individuals are those that have fully assimilated and make a conscious effort to return to their culturally specific traditional, including their lost spiritual practices (Garret & Pichette, 2000).

While contemporary work regarding Native American acculturation is fundamental to understanding the intricacies of a Native American student identity, the present study provides a context in which Native American students are afforded the opportunity to define their domains of acculturation with their own voice. This affects the academic sense of acculturation by changing the western European lens with which Native American identity and acculturation is currently viewed.

Nature and Place

Many Native American cultures maintain a distinct connection with the earth and specific places. This comes to fruition through the ways and places in which traditional ceremonies occur. Places are important to many Native American tribes. Even tribal nations that were once nomadic have sacred places that still to this day hold meaning. Colonization has greatly impacted Native culture and identity by limited access to the sacred places as well as creating new meaningful places through acts of genocide. For instance, Medicine Rock in the Wichita Mountains in Oklahoma is a sacred place for the Comanche tribe, long before being forced into captivity, however this site is now held as part of Fort Sill. This creates a contentious relationship between the government, the tribe, and pedestrian sightseers in that, individuals that do not care for the site maintain access to the area.

Many Native American tribes have a deep connection to specific locations, especially with their traditional homelands. Many contend that their connection to their homeland is a primary source of their cultural traditions and knowledge (Cajete, 2000). Embedded within Native cultures across what is now known as North America, a strong sense of the importance of place is apparent within tribal nations. Tribal spaces are both culturally constructed by specific tribal traditions and highly localized within tribal homelands (Cajete, 2000 & Doering & Veletsianos, 2008). For instance, many culturally specific ceremonies have been held on traditional grounds for generations upon generations. Considering themselves integrated with nature and their surrounding environment, rather than disconnected from the earth, Many Native Americans interpret their historical ancestry, cultural traditions, and natural events within a holistic

framework of interconnectedness (Cajete, 2000). Place-focused interventions may facilitate Native American students to re-connect with historical aspects of their tribal identities and to delve into a foundation of spiritual empowerment. Providing spaces and places that are in line with cultural traditions of connecting with the earth could work toward allowing Native American students the opportunity to connect with their cultural identity on a deeper level than traditional university settings allow.

Displacement

The displacement of Native American students has a historical context that still resonates with students today. Students are to leave their traditional homelands to gain an education that they may use to one-day help their tribal people all the while in the process giving up the piece of their identity that is tied to their places associated with culture of origin. This is a problem that permeates tribal nations that were removed from their traditional homelands. Current students, are at times, not welcomed home after leaving for various reasons including a sense that they are abandoning their people by moving away from tribal lands. Current students are not able to build a congruent Native American identity due their displacement as often times there is no space within the university setting that has the type of meaningful associations that Native Americans are used to. Native American higher education students still struggle with displacement issues today.

Current Native American students often feel very alienated in college environments. They are also not able to build a congruent Native American identity due their displacement as often times there is no space within the university setting that has the type of meaningful associations that Native Americans are used to. Stanford

University recently created a program in which they selected several Pueblo students into one of their doctoral programs in an Education Department. Instead of having the students to come to study at the University, the professors went to the reservation to offer many of the required class and taught others on-line. This is perhaps the most culturally congruent for of how education can be attained in that the students are in a space in which they are able to attain a traditional identity as well as an education.

Neo-colonization

Colonization did not end sometime in the past. It continues whenever tribal/cultural beliefs, languages and customs are undermined today. It includes any acts by the colonizer to provoke, either subtly or overtly, Native American peoples to adopt the belief, values and mindset of the colonizer (Weaver, 1998). Further it may involve the displacement and destabilization of Native American communities. This includes the relocation and demoralization of Native American communities by the United States government and its agents in order to fulfill manifest destiny or proselyting individual Native Americans to convert from their traditional/historical spiritual beliefs and values (Weaver, 2009).

Colonization has been historically linked to education in the form of boarding schools, which were used to assimilate the Native American population (Deloria, 2003; Tinker 1993). Colonization of Native American people has not only persisted through education but also through the removal of traditional ceremonies and beliefs of Native American peoples and teaching Western interpretation of the ceremonies and rituals (Thompson, 1988; Deloria, 2003). Because many of these rituals were banned, much tribal knowledge has been lost. Traditional practices and language were forcefully

discouraged in the education of many generations. Consequently, elder Native Americans passed down some of their traditions in secret, through oral histories (Robbins, 2005; Golla, 2002). During the 1960's, having had their ceremonies largely halted for 50 years, the Lakota were able, because some of the female elders were able to remember, to rejuvenate some of their ceremonies. However, they had to fight to interpret them for themselves. Vine Deloria (2003) recalls how churches in South Dakota set up tents around the Sundances, where they brought in Lakotas to teach them that the Sundance rituals had the same meanings as the Eucharist. According to Maslow (1971) spiritual rituals can be an avenue for individuals to conceptualize their reality. While Maslow certainly may have a point that spiritual rituals are avenues for understanding, though possibly as much if not more for the collective, he too was guilty of translating Black Feet rituals into his own very Western psychological constructs (Columbia Presentation, 2013). The point here is that Western education has and continues to undermine tribal ways of conceptualizing by either ignoring them or reinterpreting them in their own image.

The modern practice of ancient customs is essential for the survival of the various Native American cultures of North America. Contemporary instances of Native American resistance to colonization manifest in many ways including protesting environmental destruction, anti-Native American education, and the blatant efforts to dis-continue traditional healing practices, but any Native American that practices their traditional tribal customs is in direct resistance to colonization. Further, Native American students maintaining their indigeneity within an educational setting is in constant conflict with the institutionalized oppression of the system. They are in resistance to a system that

has set them up for failure, but their defiance is crucial to the survival of Native American values (Reyhner & Eder, 2004; Deloria, 2003; Kincheloe, 2008).

However, resistance comes with a cost, in that, as research shows, hiding one's feelings and identity has been shown to create compounded emotional and physical health problems (Richards 2003; Mauss, 2004). It is for these reasons that Native American students should be afforded the opportunity to define their own Native American identity within a university setting in order to understand the ways in which the institution is impacting their identity and thus their well-being. It is essential to providing them culturally spaces to develop their Native American identity while they navigate the often hostile and indifferent territories of the American educational system.

Education's Role in Native American Assimilation

From the onset of Native American boarding schools, government controlled Native American education has had an impact, a predominantly negative impact, in molding Native American identity. The government, as an attempt to fully assimilate Native Americans to Western culture, purposely used boarding schools to change Native American culture. The government did this by removing children from their tribal communities, away from their families, and forcing them to reside at schools often run by the military or missionaries. For example, by removing the children from their homelands, the government was able to alter important cultural traditions regarding coming of age and the attainment of necessary knowledge to live off the land (Reyner & Eder, 2004).

Boarding schools have been a central pillar of the systematic assimilation and destruction of Native American tribes and their youth since the late 19thcentury (Deloria,

2004, Reyner & Eder 2004). The manner in which Native American youth were taken from their homes to attend boarding schools and the ways they were forced to change themselves upon arrival continue to echo painful memories throughout many tribal members still today (Baeta, 2008; Kroskrity & Field, 2009).

Many early forms of boarding schools were developed and run by religions entities within the United States, often receiving government aid in doing so (Reyner & Eder, 2004). After developing an educational regime at Fort Marion in Florida, General Richard Henry Pratt founded the Carlisle Indian School in Carlisle Pennsylvania in 1879. With the founding of Carlisle Indian School, a new ideal about how to address the Native American problem was developed. Boarding schools became commonplace on reservations as well as on military bases. These schools were structured in a very militarized way, both in instruction and in punishment (Holm, 1994; Baeta, 2008). The schools were largely directed toward building vocational skills in an attempt to assimilate tribes without providing them the means for equality. It was through the use of boarding schools that the United States government learned a politically correct way of killing the American Indian by kidnapping and forcibly assimilating their children (Reyner & Eder 2004; Deloria, 2004).

Loss of Language and Culture

One of the central tenants of government run boarding schools was the banned use of any Native American language. Along with not being able to speak their own language students were made to cut their hair and take new names, names that were of European decent rather than from their culture of origin. (Beata, 2008) While there were numerous atrocities endured by Native Americans in boarding schools, the loss of their

tribe specific language has been arguably the most impactful to the survival of the various cultures associated with Native American tribes (Kroskrity & Field, 2009).

Cultures are inherently tied to their language. Language helps individuals to make sense of the surroundings and situations they may be in, and is a crucial part of development both cognitively and socially (Berk; Bloom, 1981). Language impacts how we interpret and understand feelings, non-verbal cues, and the languages of others (Bloom, 1981). Essentially, language is imperative to the development of individuals and their all-around ability to understand the world and communicate with others. It could then be assumed that differences in languages would lead to differences in worldviews. While there are various cultural differences that come into play, languages provide insight into differences of how individuals see the world. Having a common language with others could create cohesion in ways that other experiences cannot, in that feeling understood by another human being a valuable to our well-being and survival (Kroskrity & Field, 2009).

The Contemporary Boarding School Experience

Currently there are about 10,000 students attending 72 Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) boarding schools in the United States (Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2002). Few psychological studies have been conducted with the aim to understand Native American student experiences, particularly the experiences associated with trauma founded in their educational experience. Lacroix (1994) reported that Native American female adolescents attending government run Indian boarding schools conveyed that they experience a loss of cultural identity and have developed the construct that their schools is an "imposed system."

Brasfield (2001) identified what he described as “residential school syndrome” among survivors of government run Indian residential schools, which encompassed characteristics such as restrictive range of affect, feelings of detachment, sleep problems, difficulty concentrating, and exaggerated startle response. This was indicative of an after-effect of the government imposed system that had many incongruences with the individual’s Native American identity, cultural traditions, and beliefs.

Dlugokinski and Kramer (1974) conveyed that students in attendance at government run Indian boarding schools demonstrated constrained academic and emotional development. They also discuss intertribal rivalry and student apathy stemming from a collective sense of identity, given their Native American status, while acknowledging tribal differences. This is indicative of a shared educational experience for the students but may highlight a need to adhere to minuet differences between tribal customs and ways of learning in order to provide students with a culturally congruent environment. Further Dlugokinski and Kramer (1974) recommend reformation of tasks and priorities by boarding school administration, emphasizing that creative solutions should be sought to meet the unique needs of students. This could look like providing culturally congruent spaces of learning and development for Native American students.

While aspects of government enforced assimilation tactics and efforts to ‘civilize’ Native Americans through forced boarding-school educations that removed Native Americans from their cultural contexts and taught them only mainstream American culture and values are veiled in history, many of these issues are still rampant in the contemporary boarding school system (Reyner & Eder, 2004; Phinney, 2000). Many of the issues faced by students in the boarding school system are telling of how many Native

American students interact with western ideology within school settings on an individual basis, outside of the boarding school context. The issues present within the boarding school system can give insight into how Native American college students may be experiencing cultural incongruences at the university level, further emphasizing the need for the cultivation of a Native American or tribal identity for these students.

Foreign Instillation/ Colonial Institutions

Robbins and associates (2010) conducted interviews with 20 former and 16 current Native American boarding school residents. While the current students reported experiencing less over acts of racism and violence, both groups reported profound differences between the values they were taught at in their tribal/familial communities and the one's they were taught in their boarding schools. Some interesting details included several students claiming to have seen a ghost they called "Elbows" struggling down a dormitory hall some nights. Her legs and arms had been partially amputated. Students reported feeling that school taught a judgmental moralistic attitude that did not exist in their communities. It was associated with Christian values.

Foreign instillations and Colonial institutions perpetuate the values and beliefs of Western Euro-American thought. Further, these institutions commonly impose their values and belief through the criteria with which students and individuals are forced to conform to in order to be accepted by the institution. Robbins et al (2012) presented four domains in which participants were able to identify internalized oppressive ideals derived from colonialization practices of majority culture, including Western European values and beliefs, Regimentation, Obsessive cognitive styles, and Moralistic attitudes. The enforced internalization of Western European values and beliefs inherently dictates that

the individual devalues their tribal cultures. This entails an internalized sense that their language, spiritual beliefs, and customs are inferior to dominant society by way of institutionalized education practices. This included the culturally incongruent teachings of hierarchy, independence, and social position.

A foundational tool of assimilation is the regimentation of Native American students in educational settings (Robbins et al, 2012). This regimentation includes structuring every moment of the student's education and emphasizing time as an important factor in gaining knowledge, which may be how much time it takes to learn something or attending classes "on time."

Robbins et al (2012) described how increase internalization of western regimentation can lead to obsessive cognitive styles in that the students become so concerned about every detail of their education and daily life. This can lead to students becoming increasingly less flexible and dogmatic in their interactions, narrowing their intellectual capacity and ultimate limiting the ways in which they are "allowed" to think. Further, Robbins et al (2012) presented evidence that internalized European moralistic attitudes gave way to rigid and fundamentalist perspectives. The authors found this to be detrimental to the well-being of students in that it gave way for students to engage in negative self-thought when conceptualizing what was moral by Euro American standards.

Overall foreign instillations act as a tool to limit student ability to achieve a balanced sense of wellness in that the institution breeds spaces of unrest for Native students. The institutions do this by creating spaces and constructs that are unnatural for Native American students while simultaneously not allowing Native American students to be fully accepted within the institution. By not allowing Native American students to

develop an identity that is culturally congruent, the institution succeed in the colonialization of students by imprisoning them in a constricted ways of thinking coupled with an undeveloped sense of identity.

Native American Students in Higher Education

While historical literature of Native American education has largely focused on the boarding school experience, a contemporary focus on Native American higher education is needed to expand on how present-day Native American students experience university environments. Tippeconic et al (2005) emphasized that a historical and contemporary lack of focus on Native American students in higher education further marginalizes them within academia, resulting in underrepresentation in literature. Tippeconic et al (2005) outlines historical overview of Native American students in higher education, culminating in the current era of "self-determination." This implies that Native American students and tribes, since the civil rights movement of the 1960s, now have more autonomy in dictating the education that they have access to. While there are certainly still challenges for Native American students in higher education, the increase in self-determination is indicative of the need to provide spaces in which Native American students are able to connect with their Native American identity on Non-Native campuses is crucial to those that choose to embark on the journey for higher education.

An overarching theme in the representation of Native American students within academic literature involving higher education depicts them as the "least successful" group within collegial systems (Saggio, 2004). This further imposes an identity upon Native American students that impacts their ability for self-determination. In response to academic focuses on the negative aspects of Native American higher education, there

seems to be a shift in focus to the resiliency and persistence of Native American students (Thompson et al. 2013;Robbins, 2012; Hibbard, 2005). This is a positive shift in the focus of literature in that it serves as a basis from which educators can operate in their interactions with Native American students.

Buckmiller & Cramer (2013) emphasize decolonizing Native American pedagogy and propose a conceptual framework for non-native instructors to interact with their Native American students. In this framework, the authors incorporate strengths of Native American students, such as resilience, sovereignty, and self-determination, into how non-native instructors should interact with their students as well as the historical struggles with attaining education in a university setting. While this work is essential in gaining opportunities for Native American students, there still seems to be a need for student perspectives of their identities within the university setting with regard to interactions with educators as well as surroundings.

Rolo (2009) provides a brief overview of Native American identity on non-native university campuses through the use of available literature and a single interview of a Native American student. Rolo (2009) uses the interview to emphasize the experience of culture shock and the impact of losing tribal connections. This form of academic work is crucial to setting the foundation for providing space in the literature for Native American students to define their own identity. While the Rolo (2009) begins to provide that space, the overall tone is reflective of current western European academic literature, the present study will attempt to provide a basis of research through a Native American worldview, providing an expanded stage for Native American students to convey their experiences within a University setting.

Settler/Savage Theory

To expand upon Native American student identity involves exploring critical aspects of Western European and Euro-American endeavors at subjugation from a Settler/Savage theoretical perspective. Upon arrival and inspection, Western European colonizers dismissed the civilization Native American tribes and communities had created as savage and as incompetent. Using the notion of manifest destiny to rationalize their actions, settlers felt justified in working toward severing Native Americans from their histories and impeding ways of interacting with each other and nature. In his Tribal Critical Race Theory, Braveboy (2006) contends that colonization is pervasive within American society. He argues that U. S. governmental policies have and continue to be rooted in imperialism and White supremacy. Further, Braveboy (2006) asserts that the methods and practices of intentional or inadvertent oppression are intimately linked to the concerning goal of assimilation. Duran and Duran (1995) argued that tribal people grieve from experiences derived from "a soul wounds" related to historical and contemporary instances of wars, reservation subjugation, boarding schools, relocation, and termination. It is for these reasons that the present study is grounded in Settler/Savage Theory, from which the perspectives of Native American student perspectives will be interpreted. This theory identifies the various ways in which Native Americans are subjugated to being "wards" of the state within the framework of the United States as a colonial society (Steinman, 2012).

The most known and articulate Native American theoretician over the past half century has been Vine Deloria Jr. He initiated the Settler/Savage Theory in his book Custer Died for Your Sins (1969), in which he explored how White dominant society tears away Native American peoplehood in its efforts to attain the American continents

resources. One must realize that for Deloria and those Critical Race Theorists that follow him, not all White people are ascribed to majority White culture. Many have a deep awareness of the injustices that people of color experience in the United States and work toward breaking down systems of oppression. Still, they all concur in the view that the use of the word White in referring to dominant society cannot be dropped because racism is still to a large extent about color and that there are those who want to make the problems marginalized people experience as simply economic, and it is not. This is not to say there are no systems of dominant White society that discriminates against individual who also identify as White, for instance socio-economic status can often be used to suppress those who do not fit into the majority society narrative. The use of the word "white" is used as a constant reminder that a prejudicial dichotomy, created by people of Euro-American descent, is still present in today's society.

Deloria's position is that to begin any study with Native Americans, one's journey must begin in the realms of ethics and metaphysics. One can never assume one is not engaging in the on-going genocide of Native Americans. One who lives in the life world of Native Americans with a critical eye, sees regularly how anti-Indianness intrudes on any discussion. In his book, "The Metaphysics of Modern Existence," Deloria (1978) maps out several coordinates to keep in mind. One is that traditional Native Americans define themselves in terms of their inter-connection to everything that lives, which included spirits, and everything else in nature. Also included in his work, Deloria asserts there is not a distinction between the mundane and the spiritual. That is, the spiritual permeates the material world and the psychological world. He argues that modern religions and spirituality in the White world have become almost totally unaware of the

Spirits breaking in on everyday existence. He also teaches that traditional Native Americans are rarely spiritual monotheists. He argues that historically traditional Native Americans were not guilty of believing that their religious or spiritual way was the only one. This point, he says, is crucial in today's world because such monotheistic perspectives often result in violence. Lastly, he argues that traditional Native Americans views of their relationship to places is in stark contrast with the White atomistic notion of private property constituting a, if not the most important, right of Americans. Communal stewardship of place, he believes, entails a spiritual relationship with mother earth that safeguards traditional Native Americans from abusing her.

As discussed earlier, most writing about Native American issues is problematic because it is written from outside of a Native American ontology, that is, from a perspective that knows nothing or nearly nothing about Native Americans experiences. This precludes any authentic form of Native American subjectivity to challenge Euro-American cannon, which has and continues to contribute to colonization. Unless the participants of a study and the writers consistently live within the life world of Native Americans they are very unlikely to be capable knowing in a complex or profound way Native American ways of interacting, cognitions, feelings, and grammar (Edgar Heap-Of Birds in his paintings). Consequently, they are not in a position to be critical of how epistemological and ontological perspectives are normalized from a majority society value perspective.

Racial domination works hegomonically. The Settler/Savage operates in overt ways as well as covert ways of knowledge, power relations, and being. Overt violence and coercion are no longer the primary vehicles responsible for their production. Many of

the rules most of us follow stem from majority culture ideological positions regarding social interactions, feelings, and communications (Crystal, 2003). In the United States, we often believe we think and feel out of the free verdicts of our hearts and minds about racial issues. We are actually following logic and rules provided for us by Western European pre-existing ideologies that date back to the Enlightenment and beyond. Farmer (2002) wrote, "Ideology is hidden in the cognitive and interactive structures." It makes those affected by it incapacitated to see, describe, name and explain it as institutionalized, rationalized and normalized in everyday existence.

Settler/Savage critical analysis deals with foundational questions that have relevance to the existential condition of the Native American participants and suggests the manner in which it can be brought to an end. In this qualitative study, the subjective ways participants understand themselves are explored as well as their perspectives about the ways they believe they have been conditioned by the social and cultural worlds they have inhabited. Participants will be questioned about their subjective views about how they feel about their higher educational predicaments and if relevant, how they have acted in resisting and combating the subjection they may have experienced in potentially oppressive conditions. Native American critical settler-colonial theory challenges injustices and inhumanity utilizing Native American person's subjective perspectives to understand and counter subjection. It accepts no monolithic knowledge and criticizes bastardized and distorted knowledge that pretend to represent Native American perspectives (Santos, 2007).

By providing the above theoretical section the stage is set for an epistemological and ontological interpretation of the data. Unlike many of the previous studies which

explicitly use Frankford School critical analysis or Cognitive Psychological frames to interpret the data, this study will attempt to remedy previous studies. It will carefully take note of the circumstances of the participants' remarks, as they are related to history and present circumstances of their life history and their location. Special attention will be given to the participants' awareness of the contradictions and tensions that are part of Native Americans students' beings in the context of an educational system that both provides opportunities and denies them.

Chapter 3: Methods

Theoretical perspective

For this study, the researchers identified with a Post-Positive Constructionist epistemology, as defined by Crotty (1998). This epistemological stance allows the primary researchers to hold the belief that meaning is a constructed concept rather than something that is found out through discovery and that, because human perceptions are fallible, there is no perfect truth (Crotty, 1998; Creswell 1998). Crotty (1998) conveys the definition of constructionism as reality being an individual concept based on human interaction and constructed from human practices that are all developed within a social context. This elicits an understanding of constructionism which indicates that all meaningful reality is constructed on interactions with others, this view is crucial to how the primary researchers interprets interactions within the context of research.

The researchers agree with this epistemology due to experiences in traditional ceremonies and practices within the researcher's respective tribes. Each ceremony is different in the slightest of ways and the experiences had by each individual within these ceremonies are very unique. As a result, individuals are able to develop their own perspective of meaning derived from the ceremony. Individuals that participate in these ceremonies tend to take a structured amount of time and considerable attentiveness to their experiences to elicit significant ideals about the ceremony based on their personal knowledge. This introspection of their own reality does not take into account anyone else's, that also participated in the ceremony, unique experiences. Because of the primary researcher's background participating in traditional ceremonies and having a Native American world view based in Comanche culture, the ideology that meaning is not a

solid concept was kept for this study. The primary researcher also believes that there is not any one truth that can be applied to every individual, or population, but rather that individuals make their own truth based on experiences unique to themselves within their own social constructs. The primary researcher holds this belief even if the individual's experiences are not something that are comprehendible within western societal constructs. Based on the influences of the primary researcher's culture of origin, this study works within the constructionist epistemology, due to its congruence with the primary researcher's cultural world view. This adds to the trustworthiness of the study in that the primary researcher will be working within a framework that allows one to convey the data within the best possible mindset for both the primary researcher and the studied population.

Phenomenological Research Methodology

This study is founded in phenomenological methods of research as a basis of theoretical framework. Phenomenology places emphases on the "lived experience" of individuals and provides a framework with which the primary researcher can interpret Native American student experiences of various phenomenon in the university setting (Crotty, 1998). Phenomenology uses an emergent approach to data analysis, allowing the researcher to identify constructs and themes. Further, an emergent approach allows for domains to be formed based on the collected interview responses rather than fitting responses into predetermined domains of meaning (Crotty, 1998). Phenomenology falls in line with epistemology of this study in that the individuals interviewed derive meaningful constructs from personal experiences in settings specific to the phenomenon of a Native American student. While Native American students may share some of the

same experiences in the university setting with other students, their perspective is unique such that essential themes of their experiences are exclusive to them. This allows the researcher to look at how Native American students interpret the meaning or phenomenon they experience within various university settings such as classrooms, campus event, and campus housing.

Individuals place symbolism on particular experiences by developing meaning using their distinctive socially constructed tools such as language, familial history, and social customs (Creswell, 1998). A phenomenological approach aids the current study in taking into account how Native American students develop meaning and how their unique perspectives help to interpret their experiences while in college. This theoretical perspective was chosen over various other perspectives, such as ethnographic, because it allows researchers to focus on the particular phenomenon and meanings Native American student experiences within their respective settings, rather than placing the focus solely on cultural customs or beliefs. This theoretical perspective was chosen in order to gain understanding of how a Native American worldview interacts with institutional university constructs and settings.

Critical Inquiry

This study incorporates critical methods of inquiry into the overarching framework as a tool with which to add to knowledge about Native American students rather that to prove any particular aspect of their experiences. This aids in critically examining oppression and underrepresentation experienced by Native American students (Stage & Wells, 2014). This study maintains foundational aspects of critical inquiry conveyed in Kincheloe & Mclaren (1994) regarding the need to examine assumptions of

societal privilege, societal oppression of marginalized groups, and oppression perpetuated by academia. The use of critical analysis aids the researchers in maintaining a critical view of collected responses within the primary framework of phenomenology.

Giroux (1988) asserts that the notion that knowledge is objective is a unique characteristic of dominant culture. To maintain that knowledge is in fact subjective is critical of dominate culture and the guiding assumptions of how knowledge is imparted. Giroux (1988) conveys that dominant culture maintains what is perceived as good with minute particulars that emphasize the correct way of doing things and the exclusion of any deviation from the norm. Finally, Giroux (1988) also asserts that culture is directly linked to power in this regard. This implies that one's culture, language, social relationships, and lived experiences all dictate how much power the individual has within a majority culture system. The use of critical theory in this study is a direct challenge to the institutionalized system and emphasizes that the system is not accommodating of alternative forms of thought.

Indigenous Methodology Framework

This study builds off of the proposed theoretical orientation to incorporate the Indigenous Methodology framework. Evans et al. (2009) defined Indigenous Methodologies as "research by and for Indigenous peoples, using techniques and methods drawn from the traditions and knowledges of those peoples." The main purpose of using Indigenous Methodologies is to emphasize that the research is conducted in harmony with a Native American perspective with respect to the culture of origin. Within this framework the researchers challenge Western European methodologies of research and ideals of psychology through generating meaningful discussion based on Native

American beliefs of human nature. This framework attempts to neither contest nor rebuff Western psychology, but rather provide a basis from which to afford meaning outside of conventional constructs. The orthodox research practices, such as the use of standardized assessment tools, of western psychology are in much need of reform based on the distorted process used to define knowledge and truth (Simonds & Christopher, 2013; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008). The Native American constructed knowledge and values that this study provides can elicit new and unique perspectives of psychological theories than could traditional methodologies (Anderson & Braud, 1998). With this in mind, the primary researchers attempt to explore Native American student perspectives on their own identity in the university setting with culturally appropriate research practices. In this study, the researchers have deliberately chosen not to use assessment instruments, which have been shown to not be accurate for Native Americans. For instance the Minnesota Multi-Phasic Personality Inventory and the marital satisfaction inventory, instead the researchers chose to use a qualitative approach that will allow participants to describe their own beliefs and feelings. Further, the researchers plan to do two-hour presentation with University Native American students providing them the opportunity to work through some of the issues that are described in this manuscript.

Research Design

This is a qualitative study, which utilizes interpretive techniques to describe, code, translate, and identify themes derived from individuals within the context of their own worldview. The researchers chose to use the three interview series model described developed by Erving Seidman (2006). Three separate interviews were conducted with two groups of participants. There were four participants (three females and one male) in

one group and three (one female and two males) in the other. Each interview lasted approximately 50 to 60 minutes. The first interview was used to "establish the context of the participants" experiences. They were encouraged to talk about the schools and programs, which they attended well as relationships with teachers, mentors, and fellow students. The researchers followed Seidman's suggestion to "narrate the context" of participant's lives in the framework of their university. The second interview focused on the "details of experience." They were not asked, at this time, about the meaning of their experiences, but rather to relate detailed narrative of events that took place on their campuses and with the persons they described interacting with during the first interview. The last interview focused on the "meaning of their experiences." This means that the focus is not on cognitive learning or even emotional connections but rather on making sense of their experiences. While this session is based on the descriptions of context and delineated details discussed in the first two meetings, the final session's focus was to help participants to frame and make meaning through general interpretations.

The interviewer used a semi-structured supplemental question script to begin discussion during the first and second interviews. This supplemental questionnaire script will be used to begin discussion and elicit further discussion from the participants, rather than to gain direct responses. Primarily the open ended nature of the questions will allow for an unstructured interview process, allowing participants to respond in their own way (Crotty, 1998; Creswell 1998). A full list of supplemental questions can be found in appendix 1.A of this manuscript. The interviewer used rephrasing and probing as a way to elicit elaboration or clarification from the interviewees (Bodgan & Biklen, 1992). The use of supplemental questioning utilized non-directive probing techniques (Lincoln,

1985; Robbins et al, 2012). Using the aforementioned techniques, the researcher used simple acknowledgements in most cases and neutral follow-up questions when needed. These techniques were used to insure there is limited influence in answers of participants. Extensive memos were taken throughout the entire interview process. Participants were provided with contact information counseling services.

For the most part this structure worked very well. However, it should be noted that it was not possible to keep each of the session focuses from bleeding over into each other. Nonetheless, the first two sessions' focuses build a foundation for the last session to give content to the overarching meanings that were discussed. In addition, the interviewer observed that offering generalizations about the context and details of their experiences was easier for some participants than others. In order to get substantive responses about the meaning of experiences from some participants required putting a focus on them and asking for more elaborations. In the end, every participant was able to offer some meaningful interpretations of their experiences.

Participants

It should be noted that in an effort to protect the identity of the participants, a number following the moniker *participant* in the results section identifies each participant. Each number is the same individual participant throughout the results. The participants identified as (3) male and (4) female and as being from many tribes and cultures. In an effort to preserve the anonymity of the participants each participant is not identified with any one particular tribe or graduate program. This is due to there being a low number of Native American graduate students in their respective programs and done as a protective measure from any retaliation they may experience as a result of their

participation in this study. The participants reported being members of the Creek, Choctaw, Shawnee, Pawnee, Taos Pueblo, and Navajo nations. All participants identified as enrolled members of their respective tribes and active in their communities.

The Participants reported being in various programs at the University of Oklahoma including Psychology, Economics, History, Music, Philosophy, and Law. The total number of participants for this study was N=7, with three men and four women. The participants were recruited from the researchers' existing social and educational networks through snowball sampling (Creswell, 2003). This allowed the researchers to attain an adequate level of willing participants within the Native American graduate school community. By using snowball sampling and word of mouth recruitment, researchers attempted to counterbalance a historical mistrust of Westernized methods of research felt within Native American communities.

Data management

Data was collected using a digital voice recorder and kept on a password protected flash drive, in a locked office, and kept in a locked cabinet. Additional files were kept on password protected computers to ensure the data is secure for the privacy of participants. Memos and printed materials were clearly marked and filed in a locked cabinet. The transfer of data between researchers required a password to grant access (Huberman, 1994; Crotty, 1998; Creswell, 1998).

Researcher-as-Instrument

Being that the primary instrument in the collection of data for the study is the researcher it is critical for the trustworthiness of the study to provide an in depth look at the researcher's level of involvement in the study as well as interactions with societal

constructs surrounding the research topic (Guba and Lincoln, 1981; Pezalla, Pettigrew, and Miller-Day, 2012). This study used one primary researcher as a means to gather data and a second primary researcher to analyze the subsequent interviews. The second primary researcher aided in curbing researcher bias and was made aware of the primary researcher's subjectivity throughout the entirety of the data coding process.

Researchers

The primary researcher for this study is a member of the Comanche Nation and a graduate student at the University of Oklahoma in the Counseling Psychology program. The researcher is dedicated to research with various Native American tribes. He has completed research with the Comanche, Cherokee, Choctaw, Navajo, Kiowa, and Apache nations. The primary researcher has also worked with various Native American individuals form various tribes as a counselor in an academic setting. The primary researcher interacts with his tribe on a regular basis and participates in traditional customs and ceremonies. As a result of this, the researcher is familiarized with tribal and cultural protocol and methods of interaction, affording a more subjective view of data gathered from other Native American individuals.

The second primary researcher is a member of the Cherokee Nation who identifies as a Cherokee/Choctaw man. He is a professor in psychology and has been an active participant in his own tribal ceremonies as well as the ceremonies of other tribes throughout his life. The second researcher has worked with various tribes throughout his career, adding to the foundation of psychological research involving Native American cultures. The second primary researcher's cultural background and body of research also

provide him with a more subjective view of Native American identified individuals than that of an individual hailing from the majority culture.

Being that both researchers served as the primary instruments of data collection and interpretation, bias and subjective theoretical frameworks must be thoroughly examined as to provide a clear picture of the basis from which the researchers collected and interpreted data. The primary researcher also provided a subjectivity statement in the appendix 1.B of this manuscript. The purpose of providing the subjectivity statement is to make known to the reader the primary researcher's explicit bias in this study.

Research journal

The primary researcher kept a research journal in written and digital form throughout the entire research process. The journal served to keep memos regarding anything research related that the primary researcher might have thought of at any given time. One primary aspect of the journal was be to keep track of researcher subjectivity through written introspection of memos. The use of memo writing is crucial for researcher ability to keep track of fleeting thoughts for data analysis throughout the entire research process (Crotty, 1985). Memos were used during the data analysis phase to aid in eliciting domains of significance. Further, the primary research used journaling and memos to regularly self-reflect on subjectivity and bias throughout each stage of the research process and used each reflection in the data analysis phase as a means to convey strengths and limitations of the researcher as an instrument for this study.

Data Analysis

Domains were elicited from data via coding of transcribed interviews. The second primary researcher aided in data coding in an attempt to curb researcher bias. Researchers

attempted to code each transcription using the guidelines of phenomenological and indigenous methodologies as a team while conferring their results. This meant coding interviews in a culturally congruent way, while affording each interviewee the freedom to develop personal symbolic meaning from their shared cultural perspectives.

Researchers provided one another with their memos and analysis of data with which each researcher cross-analyzed. Researchers reviewed one another's interpretations, taking note of differences and bias. The researchers delineated their results to one another and participated in three main team meetings to create domains that were reported as results for the study (Huberman, 1994; Crotty, 1998; Creswell, 1998). The researchers will use research journals, memos, focus groups, and the interviews themselves to develop domains use this to define trustworthiness with which to code the data. Upon reaching a consensus of the domains within the found data, each interview will be coded by each member of the research team. After each interview is coded, the research team will reconvene to harmonize their findings between interviews. The team will them decide which domains justifiably meet inclusion criteria for the final manuscript. This study primarily relies on investigator triangulation with which to account for bias and inconsistencies. That is the use of multiple investigators using the same methodology with which to interpret data (Crotty,1998) This study also recognizes Patton's (2002) assertion that triangulation's primary purpose is not so much to account for inconsistencies as it is to allow for uncovering themes and information that may not be readily available.

Trustworthiness and ethical considerations

Keeping in line with the research paradigm, trustworthiness is built into the study using the criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative research found in Morrow (2005). Criteria for this study includes developing a sense of similarity within the data and between domains, which in turn adds to the internal validity by cross checking multiple times over by the researchers in order to verify accuracy of the comments made. The study also presented findings on the generalizability of the results, making clear the external validity of the research. This was done by providing similarities between tribal groups based on pan cultural identity aspects and beliefs, setting the groundwork for future research. Additionally, the limitations of generalizability are clearly outlined in the discussion section.

Researchers also provided stability to the study by conducting sound and exhaustive analysis of all pieces of data. This included a thorough examination of all journals, memos, available literature and collected interviews to provide the utmost reliable presentation of results. Additionally, the study will provide objectivity with the use of unbiased members of the research team in the data coding process, as well as providing a well-documented statement of subjectivity of the primary researcher (Morrow, 2005).

The primary researcher attempted to account for ethical concerns by conducting research in accordance with guidelines set forth by the institutional review board upon research approval. This entailed gaining community approval through meetings with members of the Native American community on campus and leadership to conduct the study with members of the Native American graduate student population. Each member

of the research team attempted to account for and acknowledge any perceived bias throughout the process. Further, the research team consisted of members of the researched population and thus is be inherently more subjective than out-group members are.

Chapter 4: Results

The researchers agreed upon thirteen themes. The thirteen themes identified were Appropriation, Alienation, Surviving rather than Achieving, Lateral Oppression, Respectability Politics, Internalization, Structural Posturing, Christian Colonization, Fungibility, Participation, Self-Love, and Decolonization. All identified primary themes are associated with perceived experiences of colonization within the institution by the participants. The comments below are a culmination of how each participant's identity interacts with colonization on a daily and fundamental basis. The comments are associated with various forms of colonization but also the resistance to colonization. The participants essentially talk about survival and the ways they have learned to navigate the institution that is so different from the world they knew and grew up a part of. Their comments are those of resistance.

Appropriation

Many participants expressed feeling a sense of lost culture and indigenous identity while at the University. One participant in particular expressed she did not feel comfortable speaking in class due to the reaction of others during an activity in which she was subjected to her culture being appropriated.

Others indicated a similar sense of lost identity when non-natives claimed a Native identity. This is a common issue brought up by participants who are in connection with their tribal identity. When a non-native claims a Native identity it inherently colonizes what that identity means and takes away from a true sense of Native identity. This is particularly problematic when the individual claiming a false Native identity holds power of the Native student, as is the case in one participant's recollection. Participants

expressed feeling distressed when others claimed Native identities, but also pity for the individuals who felt they needed to latch onto an identity they know nothing about.

The first of the below comments is expressive of anger due to the dis-respectful pilfering of Native American cultural and ethnic heritages. In this case, a professor appropriates a Native American talking stick, the researchers assume, without getting permission or consultation from a tribal elder from the particular tribe that used the particular stick. Further, it had feathers on it which could have restricted who might be allowed to hold the stick, depending on tribal cultural and spiritual beliefs. Because it is used out of the proper tribal context, the participant views it as "stupid." The ceremony is done carelessly without knowledge of cultural practices.

This second participant experiences not only estrangement and its accompanying loneliness, but also loss of self and identity, by not being validated for who she is. The professor is able to decide "not to talk about culture today," because if they do not identify with one of the "other" cultures in American society, they hold the power to make that decision. While also being able to claim Native identity due to being in a position of power. For this participant this privilege of just not dealing with racial/cultural issues today does not exist as it does for those of majority culture. The participant expresses resistance fatigue as she again feels frustrated.

Participant 1*"In this class called advocates of peace, we were doing this presentation and everybody was talking about the holocaust in Europe. So I did a presentation on John Trudell, I shot some videos, wrote some stuff up, and it was, it was weird. I felt like they didn't really listen or nothing. Another time, in a class discussion, I tried to talk about decolonization and genocide and stuff, while they were handing around this talking*

stick with feathers on, it was such a crazy experience. I didn't know how to react; cause they handed me the stupid stick, and I can't remember the question but I started talking about losing my culture. This one person said that everybody should be mixed up; and everybody in the class was agreeing on that. I stood up to them and everybody in the class was agreeing on that, so I said how I thought how it's (culture) important to me. Because like already, I don't know my languages, and its just being erased more and more. So I told them I thought it was crazy that that they thought that, and everybody just kind of attacked me. This Asian girl stood up and said she was proud to have mixed cultures; it was a crazy experience. That happened a lot in that class, I thought I was gonna go in there and learn about a bunch of stuff and everybody was gonna be conscious. But, like nah, everything they did was racist. There was this lady that said she had this poster, and she said we are like a box of crayons (group laughter) some of us are red some of us are yellow some of us have funny names, like, names!"

Participant 2*"One of the things that I just remembered, as frustrated as I do get, and as down-hearted, after certain interactions that are with primarily professors, oddly enough…(sigh) I was just so tired this last year. Particularly, it was really one thing after another, like 'well let's not talk about culture today' or 'well you know what that's just too complicated' or 'you know how us Natives are, English isn't our tribe' just a lot of stuff like 'you know how it is on the rez' and they are not even from the Rez! I would, daily, come home frustrated. Thinking, did I do enough? Did I say enough? Then it just came to me one day, why am I being so frustrated when I should also be really sad for them, like can you imagine not feeling an identity? So much so, that you have to pretend*

you are someone else's identity to feel validated. Like this lady who infuriates me on a constant level, I was overwhelmed by sadness for her, like oh my goodness when she sees me she has to defend herself, and she has to latch on to what I have, the value of a tribe."

Alienation

The first of the below participants speaks of an elemental feeling of alienation stemming from being in a place that is predominately "White." She felt more at home among people of color. She feels she is different on campus than students of majority culture. She does not describe her experience as being overtly discriminatory, just weird. This visceral sensation of alienation felt, due to knowing one looks different in terms of color, is vital to understanding the current incomplete analysis of racial race relations on institutionalized campuses.

All of the below participants speak of alienation in terms of having once felt a part of a community. This is significant in that they still feel traces of self-identity, but express feelings of losing connections that make them who they are. The last two participants felt more a part of a Black community, but would prefer to have a Native American community that does not exist for them. The later feels that she is not in "the know," and seeks others who are not "in the know." She remembers feeling part of a world where she was validated as a vital member. She feels herself withdrawing more and more, and is close to resignation in terms of connecting to others. The last comment expressed feeling outcast and ignored by the university as a whole and within the classroom setting.

Participant 2 *"I think, again it goes back to my first answer, where I've gotten more isolated the more school I get. And, I don't know what it's necessarily attributed to. My*

time may have become more valuable, I don't know. I'm trying to think about things like, 'is this person really worth having lunch with?' When I could be at home with my baby. So I've become really selfish, in regards to who is in my world. Maybe more than usual, but at the same time, I'm not around other Natives that I'm so comfortable with. In high school it was all Natives, Navajos, and I was voted most friendly, so there was nobody I wouldn't be friends with or talk to. You know how high school does that. Then in college, I had a wonderful group of a bunch of Navajos, who were also just a help, and we had the best time, and supported each other. Then again, in my master's degree, it was international students I gravitated to. Here in Oklahoma I'm noticing I probably just hang out with two other students that are in different cohorts than me. They are both moms and have kids, the two of them tend to be very open minded. More than my cohort. I have people in my cohort who, well, it's predominantly people who 'know everything.' I wonder why they even come to class, because they know everything. My class is surrounded by people like that, and those two women are the least like that. I've noticed they are the ones who make the effort to talk to me and I reciprocate that. But, that's also because we are talking about how hard it is being away from our babies. So its very special right now, the older I get I'm pretty stingy with my time, and who I get to associate with. I think though if there were more Navajos around or Natives in terms of associating with, I think I would be more open to doing that. I think that, but of course, I don't have the opportunity to test that unfortunately."

Participant 4*"I grew up around non white people, even here on the east side, most of my friends were Black, Native, Salvadorian and Mexican. I became hyper-aware of*

Whiteness, and how it was infiltrating my indigeneity. In different ways, violently, I rebelled and became angry. I learned how to harness that anger and I think it's something good now. I want to keep it. I like people feeling comfortable around me. I like people feeling like they need to watch themselves because white people won't do that normally. They will run all over you. Whiteness will drown you out real quick as any person of color. So I learned a new step to maneuvering within whiteness, because you know, most natives, especially in Oklahoma even if you're in the community, you ain't. On the rez, ten minutes outside there's a white town. So I learned a new step to maneuvering now within academia and what was valued and what wasn't. So it's good and bad, I understood I learned and understood how to remove colonial leaches who had attached to me, subconsciously without me knowing. I could identify it quicker when I observed what was going on in school, while still trying to hold onto who I was through things, without them knowing it. All this stuff that I've been through has, uh, created a monster"

Participant 3 *"I went to a historically black middle school and high school in Tulsa. That's where I'm from. So the first thing I noticed about OU is how 'other' I am. Because it's so white at OU that, I guess when I first came here, I realized was I was so used to being around people of color, especially black people, growing up. Like my whole life, that it was just mind-blowing I guess. I just learned I am very much, like, not home. I mean in general, my family hasn't left Tulsa since we got removed there, so I don't know. That's like one thing about being in Norman … I guess that's true for all people of color at OU but especially like being native in Norman is like very weird, very very weird"*

Surviving rather than achieving

Participants indicated feeling a pull to create or reclaim a space for indigenous peoples in the university setting. For most participants this manifested as activism and being outspoken in the classroom. Participants expressed how professors and other students perceived them as troublemakers. This manifested through a spectrum of instances including social justice engagement, advocating for one's self in the classroom, or simply having alternative thoughts from the westernized methods of pedagogy.

The below comments allude to surviving rather than achieving, finding breath in an institution that is suffocating to Native Americans. The first participant expresses he is surviving at the university and has determined to help others survive. His comment entails defending and supporting them when they are not heard or supported. He fears that many Natives may lose their identities by joining fraternities and sororities, which reflect the larger White institution's values and act as colonializing agents. He wishes to help other Native Americans breath, to maneuver through the university, which hosts both white and brown-skinned deceivers, without losing their tribal selves. He does not say that Native Americans should not attend higher education courses but is not so sure of its intellectual value for Native Americans. He is intent on their maintaining of their tribal intellectual sovereignty. These participants talk of rebellion as a form of survival, as such this rebellion is built on hope, the hope that what they have achieved is space for other Native students.

The last participant introduces the notion that surviving not only entails going to college or working on at a paying job but also maintaining integrity through resistance.

This resistance must be felt by not only the resister but also by those being resisted. To be truly alive and human is to require justice in situations you occupy and this sometimes requires harsh or even violent action.

Participant 4 *"I guess I just want space. I'm still in academia too, but just having a space where indin kids can breathe, is what I've tried to provide, and in any way. I don't think I did it probably, but that's what I've wanted. To have space for the Navajo in a class, that didn't feel like they were being heard, and was quiet. I know what's going on in those times, so I go extra hard at people. I just want to create a space where the Indian person, who wants to remain Indian, and wants to change the system rather than the person, is possible. I want to create a space where that's possible and to retain some kind of intellectual sovereignty. Even if the system is against that. And I don't know, I don't think that was achieved but I feel like I worked toward it, even if a little bit. Either through indigenous people's day and things like that, or doing youth camps for people that I know that are going to OU. For the young Comanches specifically, and telling them how they are going to have to maneuver, when they get to OU. How to not just accept what other Indians are doing there, because I think its like having a fraternity or sorority, its great I guess, if that's how we are wanting to fit in, but its also colonizing our own selves. It has to be, because we are joining another institution, within an institution, and I think we lose ourselves. So I think by my rebellion and things like that, I achieve somewhat of a space, maybe, for kids to feel okay with doing that. Not to feel safe, because it will never be safe. But I don't know if anything's accepted, but I've learned from them, not from their positivity but from the craziness."*

Participant 5 *"It has to change now. There's not time and if it doesn't, then it turns into, for me, just a survival tool for indigenous people. Literally making money, and protecting themselves through it, not giving into it, or believing it you know. That success or that because I get a degree, I'm better than the homeless person that's drunk behind the Gallup Walmart that's gonna die from a rock busting his head open tonight. That I understand that, that resistance, is as ever much as sacred and warrior like as my own. We have to resist somehow, and the only way to survival is to resist, even within us in education, we have to resist somehow. If it's as some people have said tonight, it's just 'I'm just getting through it' or if it's 'nope I'm fighting them, everything they say I'm letting them know,' that's true love, if you really want people to change and love them then, that's the only way to put it in their face. An alarm clock that's soft is not going to wake anyone up, in my opinion. You have to let them know. It has to be ugly… if we do that, then things can change."*

Lateral oppression

These participants spoke of Lateral oppression; that is I n this case an oppression that occurs between Native Americans. Participant 3 expresses she had great hopes of finding a Native American community upon entering this University but found that the Native Americans in the organization she joined to be "assimilated" into White culture and encountered a "creepy" director. The participant may have suffered both as a Native Americana and as a woman, referred to as an intersection of oppression.

Possibly the most telling remark is that they "don't seem to care when something is harmful" and they "use their heritage to justify something that is harmful." She does not name what it is exactly. One might speculate that it could be the misuse of

alcohol or buying into the institution as a whole. Nevertheless, whatever it is, she feels disoriented and a dissonance that she cannot reconcile, so she terminates her connection to tribal persons at the university. Further, she describes a tribal person who is taking advantage of his position and the students' vulnerabilities. She wants to interact with persons with similar values but finds even Native Americans acting in colonized ways.

The later participant is also spoke of lateral oppression but discusses it as a double bind predicament. Many Native Americans are angry with him for having entered into a White system, which offers rewards. They see him as having become assimilated and in gaining a degree, he thinks of himself as better than he thinks of other Native Americans. The participant wants to express his metacognition that he is mindful of the contradictions and is taking care to maintain his traditional tribal ways but is not believed by others in his community. On the other hand, because he recognizes and criticizes the "Whiteness" of his tribal Nation, he is seen as a troublemaker within the institution. He expresses the anguish of being "in between" which is a kind of limbo that could lead to feeling hopeless at times.

Participant 3*"The only Creek person on campus I know is ****, and we don't get along well. When I came into OU, I was so shocked by the shear amount of white people. I didn't really know what else to do, so I ran to AISA, and immediately turned around. I didn't really have the vocabulary to explain how I felt. I told my mom, because I got a scholarship from them, I got like, that AT&T whatever scholarship, from American Indian Student Association and I dropped it after a semester of doing work with them. I told my mom that I dropped that scholarship, and she was really mad at me but I could not explain to her why. I was like, I cannot associate myself with these people. Like,*

they're not good, they just got bad vibes, bad medicine. I thought, like these people don't care, I don't know. It was because you know they were so, encapsulated by whiteness or assimilationist. Plus, I did not feel comfortable with the old director of it, all who ended up actually ended up getting like fired for being creepy toward young women pretty recently. So I mean even trying to flee to like, the American Indian fellowship at OU was still like just extremely colonized. I could not get along with those people at all, and really the roomful of people in here are the only natives associated with OU that I would ever mess with. Cause, I mean it's just everyone else is just really colonized and don't seem to care when something is harmful. That's what I couldn't deal with, is that they would use their heritage to justify something that's harmful. "

Participant 4 *"As soon as they discover I have a degree or something also there's the 'IJ' there's the Indian jealousy within my community. With the full bloods or Indians that are angry with me and think that I think that I'm better than other people because I've went to school. Then there's me in the middle of it, who places no value on education but I'm literally just wanting to survive. So it puts me in the middle, like all these people talking. On the other hand, persons who work at the Nation in my tribe respect you only if you are 'educated' and you graduate and attain whiteness within my tribe. You're not working for my nation if you haven't attained whiteness. But they don't want to hire me. They don't want to hire anybody that is working to indigenize or decolonize their people. Only the one's who want to attain success or what they deem success, whiteness and money."*

Respectability politics

This participant is expected to be respectable when at the university. He recognizes it as a politics of respectability that begins by having tribal persons to speak Majority Culture's language, English. He realizes that behaving in such a way that one is not an affront to the civility of those in power and those who adhere to their definition of civility. He mentions language but it could refer to dress, goals, ownership of prestigious items, definitions of success, etc. His words suggest that he may have played the game of respectability upon first going to the university. Then he dared to challenge the ideas offered him, but then became pessimistic about even offering his critiques as they were "shot down." This is an example of how engaging in respectability politics is not enough, as he tries to "give" himself to his classmates in order to save not only his humanity but theirs, and it is met with hierarchical resistance.

Participant 5 *"I could spot out the respectability. When I was being given a treat for my whiteness. When I could speak in a vernacular that they understood, and they deemed fluid, or poetic, or viable in their institution. I also came I understand how to do that and I learned how to do that but I also became very aware of what I was doing. I had to keep myself and I had to play them. I couldn't give myself. I purposefully don't give myself away at the university, because it's not for them. I'm not concerned with them, I'm honestly not concerned with OU or indigenize or decolonizing anything at OU. It can burn down. I learned to protect myself as well, because those first few times, when you're a young Indian in college, you try to give yourself a few times and each time its shot down."*

Internalization

This participant describes the dangers of internalization of the notion that there is "something is wrong with" Native Americans. She describes it in larger terms than just negative views of Native Americans but possibly about Native American beliefs when she calls it "brainwashing." She choses not to take on the values of her oppressors. She describes the process of trying in her mind to stave off the onslaught of assimilation pressures. Then she associates the overt assimilationists' covert desire to have what Native Americans have, a tribal identity due to their having lost their own identities as members of majority culture.

Participant 2 *"They win a little when we think something's wrong with us. But the days I can get ahold of the fact that they want what we have and we've been brainwashed to think that its something that is the opposite, that day really made things a lot better for me. Because I just can't imagine somebody saying 'hey I'm this (tribe)', and saying 'I think I'm (that tribe) too,' when they are not Native, you know like I just can't even imagine that world. I just think that's also maybe if institutions realize that, when they let these people in, that its affecting their students. But also to know if they do have the students in there, who strongly know their identity, they can get through it."*

Structural Posturing

The former narrative is an excellent example of the Structural Positioning described in the theoretical section of this dissertation. The professor engages in teaching that assumes that Native Americans are ontologically dead to White folks. Whatever relationship that may exist is a Settler/Savage relationship. The savage is not human. The professor doesn't acknowledge the cultural capital of tribal groups. The professor's

response of "oookaay," dismisses the participant's perspective. He knows that the only way he can be respected is if he metaphorically dies to his Native American self and acts White.

The later participant, describes what she experiences as an almost unbearable interaction with a professor whose focus was so much on his own personal interests and imbedded so much in his epistemological underpinnings that he was incapable of seeing her as a real human being, connected with tribal ways. She has views grounded in her tribal beliefs that are at odds with his Darwinian and Victorian perspectives. She does not mention what they were, but she experiences his dismissal of her views and herself. Instead of fading into his world and perspectives she experiences him as "disgusting," and resists. She associates her need and desire to fight with her people and cultural heritage. The distancing herself from him is in some way linked to her need to fight for survival as a person.

Participant 4 *"I know James Baldwin says to be even partly conscious and black is to be in a rage constantly, and I felt like that. Especially when I first started understanding who I was, because you understand systemic problems. Because you understand your position in relationship to the colonizers and settlers. The only person you can be is the savage, and you know that you're seen as that. So things like a picture being shown in class. I remember when I was semi-conscious, being shown five pictures, one was of the plains in Oklahoma, the second picture was a railroad on those plains, the third picture was a railroad, a post office, and some houses, the fourth picture was some light poles and the fifth was just a city. So they wanted words about what it meant and the class all gave, everyone of those kids, gave like, 'progress,' 'technology,' things like that. Then it*

got to me and I just kept getting angrier and angrier. It like got to me and the first word that we all learn about and say when we become conscious, was genocide. And I remember the professor acting like I was stupid for saying that. And being like oookaaay, and then moving on. So I remember that as being like some of my first interactions on campus. Nothing I do is going to be validated, I'm going to have to validate my own existence, and I learned that from my very first time being on campus. "

Participant 6 *"I think my advisor just perceived me as just like an object just an object more than anything else. He wasn't like really concerned about what I wanted to do. So like, when I was coming toward the end of finishing my masters he really wanted me to work with him on my PhD, because it makes them look good you know. They are able to get tenure with that and that's like what he was really wanting me to do, and I had already made him look good. I was like 'nah I don't want to do this anymore; I feel weird writing about your Victorian stuff'. People I have no connection with, like I don't care. I just want to write about my people. Like I'm tired. I'm doing activist stuff and dealing with my community and then writing about Victorian stuff is like being all over the place. I wanted everything in line, in harmony with how I live my life. Like simplified. And he just got really upset that I was, basically dumping him as an advisor. He ended up taking a sabbatical because he studies Darwin and he had a class in Victorian science, and he basically, wasn't contextualizing Darwin at all. He was calling the Fuegian indigenous people cannibals and like saying that basically, Darwin was right. Perpetuating, you know, really problematic things and we told him that, but he never changed it, he was just really a disgusting person in that way."*

Christian Colonization

The participant argues that people of color have had much if not all of their cultural heritages stripped from them by a White Supremacist society. Our government and those in positions of great responsibility have made extravagant efforts to assimilate people of color into a largely Euro-American heritage and expect them to like it. This participant expresses feeling empty as his tribe is losing their unique tribal cultural heritages. He bemoans the Christian Colonialization of his tribal members. He sees Christianity as being successful in bringing Native Americans into churches and conventional morality and away from traditional rituals and values. As a holder of this knowledge the participant feels even more disconnected from his tribal identity as a result of another form of colonization, while also seeing this as an issue many other students experience.

Participant 4 *"for me again its mixed, my tribe, as much as anybody's, the corporation of my tribe the nation is they're assimilationist, and proud of that. There is four things that are celebrated, as any assimilationist does, and in most native communities even traditional or not. When I was on the Navajo rez the same things were celebrated across the nation and they were the four things that's killed us. Christianity, Mormon, a lot of infiltration in every rez I've been in; military, education, and governance. We have a government. Each one of our tribes here military service. Education celebrated. Church, Christianity has crept into all of our tribes."*

Pessimism

This participant alternates from wanting a total apocalypse to wanting a revolution of accepted educational assumptions. He is pessimistic about the present

system as ever being able to recognize Native Americans as human beings. He expresses a lack of belief or is pessimistic in the agency of persons in power ever willing to bring about radical positive change. He expresses futility regarding the present conceptual frameworks to truly account for the ongoing antagonistic politics against Native American people.

All of the participant repeatedly conveyed stories in which they felt they were rebelling against the way educational institutions and majority society has told them to act. Most participants expressed feeling a great need to either break down the barriers within the education system in order to allow for indigenous ways of thinking and learning or as in the case below burn it down and start over again. The sentiments expressed below could be indicative of some semblance of burn out that comes with constant resistance. Regardless of the pessimism expressed the participants continue to engage in activism and indigenous ways of thinking.

Participant 5 *"I don't believe we can change by beating them at their own game or anything. I think that's slavery, we have to break the chains and I don't believe it can happen. But I believe that's the only way, and when I say burn it down I don't mean maybe. I do mean physically, but I mean to get rid of it, of all these ways of thinking. To bring it, even things like Dineh College or Creek College, these things are good… until they notice all the things I just said. It will be a continual perpetuating cycle of genocide, eraser, and colonization. So that's what I believe has to happen. White people let go of some of your power. And uh do more than listen, give us some power within your institution, get rid of the institution, and help us rebuild something from the ashes after we burn that stuff down, let us be involved in the making of something new."*

Participant 7 *"I'm a pessimist man, I don't think they can offer me anything that will help me survive I'm almost to the space in my life now that I'm not sure I know indigenous ways can offer a lot to the world."*

Participation

The below participant reiterate a point alluded to in others' responses; that is, that her individual self is defined not so much by individual achievement but in her participation with others in her tribe. The example she uses alludes to "the pipeline" which is significant because the work she wishes to do is related to mother earth. By participating with her people to save the land is to overcome alienation in several ways. It is to be connected with her people and Nature and it is also to resist the encroachment of Big Business into their worlds. This emphasis on connection and participation within one's tribe is direct resistance to the colonization experienced within the institution and majority culture on a daily basis.

Participant 6 *"I can't unlearn the things I've learned, especially about my family, and like you know, who I am and my role in my community. Like, I belong there for a certain reason. My people are medicine people, and they are supposed to be there, and I'm supposed to dance, because I bring healing to my community. That's really important for me. Because we are fighting a pipeline here too, and its going through our grounds. So its really important for me to be there, to show up for my people. So they will understand how important it is to fight against this pipeline, and to stand up against it, and to make them feel powerful again. Because they have been beaten down by colonization."*

Fungible

The below participant fears that she is being defined by the amount of money she is worth. She does not believe that her value as human being is appreciated. She feels that she is a commodity that can be replaced by the institution. The program wants publicity for having a Navajo in their program and they can get it by taking pictures of her to advertise on their web page and they can use her interview to show boards that they are multi-cultural. Through their acts she becomes a fungible object rather than a human being. She is not the first participant to expressed feeling she had been used as a token during the course of their graduate education. She feels taken advantage of by the university and individual professors.

Participant 2*"I'm not comfortable with saying 'look at me' and 'this is what I've done.' So it really put me in an awkward position, but I was thankful. So I kinda was cornered into, 'okay I'll do the interview' and then weeks went by and they asked for my picture, and I was thinking 'oh god I don't want my picture out there.' It just created this anxiety within me, and I didn't end up going to the interview. They ended up emailing my training director, who ended up emailing my chair, who ended up emailing my department chair, about "why isn't she doing this interview." I ended up doing it after a lot of coaxing, and then as I feared, my face was everywhere on the website. Like 'this is our minority.' 'This is Navajo.' It just, it became something that I probably should be proud of, and I am proud of it, I don't want to take away from everybody that wrote my recommendations and for the aid that I get. But I just felt very, publicized in a manner I didn't think they deserved, in a sense. Like I would probably do that for the University of Arizona they at the time, really did a lot for Navajos. But here I don't think they deserve*

the recognition of that amount of publicity, it was really embarrassing. It felt like really 'look we have a Native' and 'look she comes here.' I was wondering why I was so uncomfortable, and it was because of that. I felt like they didn't deserve the recognition of having a Native, because I haven't felt the support I would like"

Self love

This participant is wrestling with severe doubts about everything but he in the midst of his, at times, contradictory comments he emphasizes the need for self-love. In the context of other things, the participant has said, the teaching of self-love may be the highest form of resistance. In an oppressive society, that does not acknowledge Native Americans as human beings, Native American children may have to dig deep inside themselves to find the power to validate themselves.

Participant 4 *"For me, it's first communal which is what she was talking about, ceremonial I have roles that I know that's what I'm supposed to be. And what I'm supposed to do as a chanter. Even where I live in the city, organizing ~~hobechi~~ sweat lodge ceremonies, or going to youth camps and just interacting. Honestly my only goal at those camps is to teach self-love. It's something that I think has long been dead within our community. a lot with our youth, some of the things I offer is the way I've been able to maneuver in whiteness in Norman, in Oklahoma City or the places been. Sometimes I do away with the humble Indian stuff, because I want kids to see an Indian that loves themselves and loves his people. If it comes off cocky, if it comes off violent, that's okay with me. Even if that's apart from my culture, I think that's what's needed now. We need a couple Indian Kanye Wests and a couple Indian people that just don't care. Who are gonna tell you they're dope. Because we are constantly told, we are not. I think it's a part*

of boarding school culture its uh 'hey be humble all the time.' For our youth to see somebody that is resisting and who loves himself and wants his people to love themselves. As well as, within my community, my role is there as a chanter or whatever else I do at my grounds. So that's what I think I offer to the white world."

Decolonization

The first two participants struggle with ambiguous feelings of frustration and confusion about higher educations. The first, is certain that language is a big part of her education and hoped to experience a tribal/cultural experience at her tribal college, but was disappointed as she quickly learned the tribal institution had been "colonized." It continued the tradition of assimilating Native Americans and further separating them from their ceremonies and traditions and pushing them in the direction of entering a system with vastly different values. The second believes that college can help tribal people to become more aware of their colonized predicament, at least more than the Marines. It is suggested that higher education may support a Native American's efforts at decolonization of themselves and others.

The last participant extends the first participant's notion that there is another kind of education that is more important for Native Americans to learn than the higher education of American colleges. She argues that it is more important to learn camp ways, dances, tribal ways of working and recreation in order to preserve a way of life that is valuable.

Some participants elaborated on how their communities as a whole do or do not value education. Some saw education as a way to gain understanding of how colonization can be beaten and others expressed how it further colonizes Native American

communities. Most participants felt their Native community takes precedent over school and expressed being aware of the impact the constrains places on them by graduate school had on their ability to perform what is expected of them by their tribal communities. Western notions of individual development focuses on future attainment and is guided by Western values such as individualism. Native American elders speak of us as Human Beings. The point is to be what we are. This can be realized through ceremonies and participation in Tribal activities.

Participant 3 *"My tribe, Creek nation, we have our own tribal college, and it very much plays into the same educational institutional structure that we have here. Part of the branch, of our tribal college is that you can take like, one of the degree paths is for like big gaming and big business and stuff like that. For money. There's like lots of higher education programs in my tribe that will help you out, and motivate you to go to college. So I feel like there is more of that. Like me growing up and dealing with my tribe, it was always more about, 'be successful' and 'go to school.' I always did those programs, before I did my traditional programs. More than language learning and stuff like that. It was more of like the 'go to college,' to motivate you to go to school. So I always thought it was good to go to school and as I got older I felt more disconnected with my people. I kind of like realized I was getting too educated you know. I kind of realized, I'm not learning what I want to learn right now. I felt like that in high school, and as soon as I got to OU, I realized I probably rather do the like, language track at creek nation tribal college. That's what I considered doing rather than going to OU. So I guess my tribe specifically or at least the more government side, not necessarily my people, or the elders, but they are definitely more into being educated and the whole education thing.*

But I guess what I've learned in all of that is, it's definitely not the kind of education my community, or my people need, by any means. I don't know, I think specifically about my family, and they don't really have an education. They are very like, separated, from their more traditional ways. Because they got into their early twenties and abandoned their grounds, and stomp dances, and they got into drugs and stuff like that. So my family needs like a lot of healing, and I think that's the kind of education that I'm more concerned about. I just kind of learned the current system I'm in just kind of like perpetuates that, rather than heals it, by any means. It's like the trauma that's been in my family and our ceremonies, and they don't stomp anymore and so it's just hard. It seems my tribe has been leaning more towards that, at least the government and what we are getting as kids, is leaning towards go to school rather than keep in touch."

Participant 1 *"I'm the first one in my family to go to college or anything. I think it'd be good for people in my community, like my cousins. Because I wish they could become more awakened, and stuff like I am right now. I think college could help, but I see them all wanting to go to like, the marines and all this crazy stuff. I don't know, I wish there was some way they would rather get educated about their self, instead of going off to kill people and become more and more colonized."*

Participant 6 *"For my community, for the Absentee Shawnees, they don't value education. They value tradition. There are two different bands in the Shawnee tribe, the Big Jim band and the White Turkey band. I'm from the big Jim band and we are the traditional people. The White Turkey are the more assimilationist and not traditional. So*

the Big Jim band they, they like actively avoid colonized spaces, especially education. Because they say it alters, you know, and takes away the Shawnee. So that's like, it doesn't matter, so that's why I like, that's why I do the time and put in the work for my tribe. Because it doesn't matter that I will have a PhD, it doesn't mean anything to them, you know. Am I there at bread dance? Am I there helping at football games? Am I there helping at camp, that's what they care about."

Chapter 5: Discussion

Are Native American students seen as human beings in academic settings? The participants interviewed in this study are not sure. Instead, they convey they are dead in relation to the White system that dominates the United States. Instead of being allowed to be human beings, these students feel those who subscribe to oppressive systems see them as savages. They are aware of the genocide that began with Columbus' arrival and has continued through forced boarding school educations, lack of citizenship until 1924, lack of religious freedom until 1982, extreme poverty, and very low life expectancy today. These participants know they are intrinsically part of a group that is often afforded the lowest status of all groups in the United States and now in early adulthood, in graduate school settings, they are bursting to talk about their unique predicaments.

The participants in this study convey being directly impacted the moment they set foot on the campus. They express feeling estranged by an institution that is inherently foreign to them. Liberals miss the point when they focus on Native Americans being alienated from full participation in majority culture's educational, economic and social life. They do not understand the matrix of gratuitous violence entailed in the structural positioning described above. The participant's languages, ceremonies, religions, epistemologies, customs, all the sources of who "I am" have been ravaged. Participants argued that characteristics of Whiteness are imbedded in notions of reason, cohesive interaction, time, expressiveness, and relationship to earth, speaking style and much more.

There are hints that some participants believe there is some possibility of a relationship with White educational systems when they speak of feeling separated. To

speak of alienation is to acknowledge that they are part of an oppressed group, but they also convey feelings that the current situation is beyond oppression. They imply that there is not the possibility of genuine relationships within White higher education systems. Some of the participants believe that Native Americans have been utterly stripped of their "cultural capital," which if not actively respected means that there is little to be exchanged in a relationship with individuals of majority culture. To speak simply of Native Americans as being oppressed ignores the structural positioning they are born into and experience viscerally in higher education. If a counselor were to try to ally with some of these participants it would mean they are minimizing their suffering and lack of power. A much deeper understanding and empathy would be required to connect with these participants.

Primarily the themes expressed by participants were derived from survival and assisting others in learning how to survive. They expressed feeling the need for indigenous species on campus and a desire to change the system as a whole. Participants expressed many instances of historical trauma including callbacks to boarding school systems and genocide. In the boarding school system Native Americans lost the ability to control how learning takes place for the youth. The participants expressed a desire to regain intellectual sovereignty while also being able to achieve knowledge that will help them succeed in colonized society.

Some of the participants focus on isolated events of prejudice, but most comment on a more comprehensive ontological condition in which Native Americans find themselves. They insinuate and exemplify how the primary problem is a structural privileged positionality that professors and other students, including many assimilated Native

Americans, are not willing to give up. Participants describe a Savage ontological status for Native American within majority culture that is the result of being in a state of accumulated suffering and genocide over centuries, to the point of having no cultural heritage. In order to interact with majority culture, Native American persons must talk and behave as if they are White. This "code switch," as participants put it, fundamentally takes away from their Native American identity. Then to top this off, as one of the participants contends, she has to put up with the fungibility of being advertised by her department in recruitment materials. White persons' welfare has been predicated on the animalization Native Americans, else they could not justify taking and exploiting the land, suppressing their religions, and forcing labor. The White system exploits Native American land. An amnesia appears to have occurred about the accumulation of suffering that built this country. Most Americans pretend that these exploitations are events of the past that no longer need to be discussed. Nevertheless, these participants have not forgotten, they actively speak toward the objectification and tokenization they experience in their programs.

Other participants offered caustic remarks about notions of civility classroom settings. The institutions try to convince themselves that they are infinitely inclusive and provide space for diverse perspectives. However, how can they accomplish this if they are utterly embedded in Whiteness and the belief that Majority culture is the true embodiment of humanness? Almost every participant described knowing that they knew that anything too much out of bounds of White civility would have its costs for them. In essence, participants made the contention that one cannot over-estimate the amount of violence they experience on a day-to-day basis due to judgments based on European

notions of civility.

Serving these students may look like meeting them where they are at rather than asking them to come to conform to majority culture norms of treatments. There may be many markers of historical trauma inhibiting students from seeking counseling in the majority culture sense. Understanding their experience is essential to healing, and imperative when attempting to offer counseling services to this group. This study serves as one of the first steps to understanding how to begin healing the oppression conveyed by the experiences of the Native American graduate students in this study.

Negative reactions to the systems of colonization should be listening to, this is not the entitlement at play from the new generation. These are important comments on the intricacies of Native American experiences on this campus have been. In order to even remotely begin an authentic counseling relationship with a traditional Native American a White counselor would have to acknowledge how they have been part of a group that has engaged in on-going violence meted out to Native Americans. These participants teach us that many Native Americans may be all too aware to the ways many White therapists avoid the non-relationships that have existed. For instance, they would be leery of the White counselor claiming Indianness or one who would begin building rapport by drawing analogies between their own suffering and Native American suffering.

If a counselor truly wants to have a counseling relationship with a Native American student whose views are similar to these participants, they must move beyond the perspective that asks, "Why can't we all just be people." Individuals similar to these participants may think this probably means, "Why can't we all be normal civilized white people." It is vital for counselor' development to encounter a Native American who is

able to convey the fears and anger articulated by these participants. “Nice” Native Americans may never allow White counselors to gain a deep understanding of what it means to be Native American.

Native Americans are always caught in the nexus of violence. These participants even suggest that all Native Americans even if they are assimilated, call themselves Christian, or who reject their culture are caught in the nexus of violence. How did they become Christian? What generation? How are they viewed by majority society they try to survive in? No matter how they identify, Native Americans are met with systemic violence. Identity was central to participant comments, many of their realizations regarding colonization and survival revolved around maintaining their Native American identity. The participants felt the institution does not allow their Native identities and bodies on the campus without a price. In many instances, the participants feel this price is violent forms of colonization and forced assimilation.

Clinical Implications

As I reflected upon the above comments, I asked the questions: What if I find myself working with a Native American who has an extremely difficult time articulating their own subjectivity and when they try they find emptiness or they begin reciting White dominant societies’ values? What if I am working with a client like these participants who have realized that the universal unraced perspective is a lie, and it dawns on me that maybe my attempts to fortify the client’s ego is in fact is an attempt to put the person’s identity outside of the their original culture? I believe that my approach will be to engage in de-colonialization education and therapy. Anything less be dishonest interaction, a failure to take into full account White Privilege. This decolonization education would

help to justify such participant experiences “They win a little when we think something’s wrong with us.”

Many White therapists and educators are quick to try to defend against the notion that they are racists or engage in racist thought. Their attempts to demonstrate how their difficult White upbringing is analogous to the struggles of Native Americans can be harmful for students. The participants in this study would likely hear these analogies as defensiveness against the label of “racist.” This implies that the therapist or educator is more interested in said defense against the label put on them than the actual racism felt by the student. Much of higher education and counseling attempts to help students and clients to return to who they are as individuals without taking into account race within a holistic context. These attempts assume there is no such thing as race, and that students only exist in a universal context.

Much of the assistance offered to students assumes a fully integrated fair non-violent civil society. It assumes that a good relationship with a therapist and hard work will facilitate the client’s capacity to overcome the alienation they experience in regard to their true self. The problem is that Native Americans have no or little cultural capital to engage in a democratic relationship with the White therapist. They cannot even engage in therapy in their own tribal language, and as such are at an immediate impasse in terms of power dynamics.

Respect between people cannot begin until each party has a deep understanding of their differences. Psychology in general has not probed the depths of structural positioning and racism. There is a systemic interdiction against the recognition of Native Americans that is not acknowledged by the Ivory Tower. Counselors are at risk of

engaging in this kind of violence when operating without knowledge of the Native American experience. They actually are unintentionally working to extend Whiteness and disavow the matrix of racial violence structures, when working only from a Euro-American context.

For the participants above, the worst enemies of Native Americans are those who universalize all people as the same, ignoring the history of suffering and its reenactment, which is a hidden way of monumentalizing Whiteness as supreme and superior. If counselors do not have the good fortune to interact with a Native American who questions fundamentally the institution, the counselor is likely to work with Native Americans, such as the participants in this study, as an integrationist. At times, integration and universalization can hurt students in more ways than the direct disdain of Native Americans, expressed by some groups. Teachers and counselors who work to get Native Americans to fit into these corrupt "civil" structures are engaging in acts of violence. Speaking of a universal "us" ignores the senseless gratuitous violence done to Native Americans. As a result of the oppressive system, those that ascribe to White majority culture often do not consider this issue as Settler/Savage, as they no longer see themselves as Settlers.

The participants introduce the notions of policing more than once. The police they speak of are not simply men and women in blue with their guns and jail keys. There is policing going on in every classroom by those who have assumed White-dominating epistemologies. The institution polices students to be "nice" and not cause too much disagreement in classroom settings. Even persons who could be allies such as Asian people, Black people, etc. can act as police. White feminism polices Native Americans by

steering the conversations to wage relations or by calling attention to Native American men's' absences from the family without directly calling into the question the larger forces that create relations. This is why professors and counselors must begin to build relationships with Native American students with the positioning of non-existence that the Native Americans find themselves in.

The participants felt as though they were othered not only by the system and non-natives but natives as well. Participants reported his otheredness came from natives that are more assimilated and less in touch with their tribal cultures. Some participants expressed that these Natives were assimilating in order to survive the system and express disdain for rocking the boat, or activism, as it is a direct threat to their well-being and their assimilated selves. Most participants seemed to, at times, embrace the otheredness they experienced and sought a deeper connection with their own cultures as a response to feeling colonized within the university setting. Any attempt to force assimilation upon them is met with a brilliant resilience and resistance to institutionalize colonization. This resistance helped them to connect better with their own culture and aided in navigating negative responses to their indigeneity while operating within the university setting and majority culture at large.

To concluded with some very specific suggestions. Counselors would do well to attempt to gain a deeper understanding of their Native American clients, while being profoundly aware of White privilege hovering in the counseling room. This entails developing an understanding in all the ways in which Native Americans may engage in resistance. They might show an appreciation of Native American epistemologies, respecting Native Americans focus on the earth and place as being elemental for mental

health. They may appreciate the use of stories in session. Further, they may advocate for incorporating Native spaces into the institution. They may also learn deconstruction techniques to implode myths and clichés about American meritocracy.

How do we as clinicians, educators, and advocates for Native American students assist them in excelling in educational settings? Sometimes this looks like taking a step back and letting them mold their experience with indigenous ways of thinking and learning. This study provides a glimpse as to what Native American graduate students are experiencing while providing them the voice they have been lacking within the realm of academia. Native American graduate students are vastly underserved and underrepresented within research and counseling settings. Clinicians and educators focused on providing culturally sound support to Native American graduate students may find some understanding of their graduate school experience within this manuscript.

Limitations

The information, results, and discussion provided in this manuscript should viewed within the context of the limitations of this study. This study consists of a small sample size and thus cannot be representative of the thousands of Native American graduate students found on this campus and other institutions within the United States. This study also only consists of Native American graduate students on one campus, and as such limits the generalizability between education institutions. Further, the participants in this study associate with various indigenous tribes. This limits the generalizability even between tribes, as each tribe consists of its own cultural and spiritual influences. While each participant identified tribal affiliation with a different tribe than the other

participants, this cannot be held as a representative sample for the over 500 federally recognized tribes within United States.

While each participant hails from a different indigenous background, there is a shared experience of colonization within the context of a pan-cultural Native American identity. This shared identity allows participants to relate to one another in a meaningful way within the institution. Further, the participants are able to relate each other's experiences within the graduate school, as all participants actively chose to continue education within an institution they feel is not accepting of them.

The English language and White epistemology, which are often required by the institution, with which this information is needs to be conveyed is a limitation to the understanding and knowledge potentially gained by this study. The participants themselves express the notion that speaking and thinking in the English language inherently changes some of the understanding and meaning of the concepts they present. It is imperative that readers keep this in mind the constructs of Westernized thought when reviewing participant comments.

Future research

Given this study's qualitative nature and intent to begin identifying themes of Native American graduate student experiences, there are many possibilities for future research. There is a lack of prominent existing research for this population, and as such, it is prudent to expand on this research to develop a better understanding of Native American experiences within academia. Potential areas for research following this study could include further development of Native American graduate student experiences across different graduate schools, experiences from alumni students, and differences

between tribal affiliations. Similar studies carried out on other university campuses may also be beneficial in an attempt to identify themes across institutions.

It may be beneficial to examine resistance as it relates to Native American graduate student experiences of systems of colonization. This could help to give insist into distress that Native American students may be experiencing not only within the institution but also on a societal level. Further, it may could be beneficial to develop research looking at the forms of healing that Native American students engage in as a response to experiences of colonization. To understand how this population conceptualizes healing could lend insight to clinicians as to how to best approach counseling with individuals who strongly identify with their Native American culture.

In order for the institution to understand in their own Westernized ways of learning, it may be beneficial to build on this study with the use of quantitate measure. For example, the development and employment of a program evaluation, specifically designed to include Native American students as the primary stake holders, could give voice to issues in a way that the institution will be able to hear.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interviewer outline for semi-structured interview

1. How do you think you are perceived in your Higher Education setting by professors?
    a. How do you think you are perceived by Non-Native American students?
    b. How do you think you are perceived by Native American students?
    c. How do the views of others coincide with your view of yourself?
    d. How do you think you are perceived by Non- Student Native Americans?

2. How have you expressed Native American ideas, feelings, and communication styles in the context of you Higher Education setting?
    a. How do your expressed Native American ideals, feelings, and communication styles manifest in the classroom setting?
    b. How do your expressed Native American ideals, feelings, and communication styles manifest in university social settings?
    c. How do your expressed Native American ideals, feelings, and communication styles manifest in Native American student social settings?

3. If you have had to hide your tribal/cultural self while at college, how has it impacted you psychologically. Can you provide examples?
    a. To what extent has your resistance to higher education impacted your Indian identity?
    b. What spaces and opportunities have you experienced within the university setting that have impacted your Native American Identity?
    c. Is higher education something that promotes your Indian identity?
    d. What aspects of your Native American Identity have you been able to maintain within the university setting?

4. What aspects of a Native American identity do you feel are of value in Native Americans getting college educations?
    a. How do Native American values impact your college education?
    b. How congruent is your native beliefs values and ideas with what is taught in your classes?

5. How has your education in college effected your views of yourself as a Native American?
    a. How has your native identity been impacted in the university setting?
    b. To what extent have your initial expectations about college impacted your experience here?

Appendix B: Subjectivity Statement

The research topic that I intend to work on is Native American graduate student experiences within an institutionalized campus. I intended to explore how Native American cultural values impact their experiences in graduate school while they attempted to gain knowledge from their respective programs. My personality, history, and world view are all inherently intertwined with my current research focus and population. My identity is fundamentally connected as a Graduate student at the same institution as the participants and as a member of the Comanche Nation. My research will focus on individuals that are from various tribal nations, and as a member of a pan-cultural racial identity, I have a significant level of interest in the population. My interest in the research population is derived from my personal experience as a Native American graduate student. Historically, my people have had a troubled relationship with the United Stated education system, dating back to imprisonment in the reservation system. Listening to family stories about attending Ft. Sill Indian School had a great impact on me when deciding to research this topic. Watching ceremonies specific to healing the wounds of colonization was also very.

For this study, I inferred from my experienced as a Native American student who initially dropped out of college in response to systems of colonization, that I could not at the time articulate. My goal is to give voice to Native American graduate students to develop a better understanding of the impact of the institution on their decision to return to the institution to gain further knowledge. Additional goals are to explore how cultural shapes the views of Native American Graduate student as they experience colonization in the moment as to provide future research direction. I am certainly influenced by my

cultural perspectives while conducting this study, in that my cultural is central to my own identity, thus giving the study population very important status in my eyes, which may create research bias. Additionally, many of the experiences that the participants may express may be experiences of my own. While my cultural heritage is a great strength in terms of understanding the comments that participants may make, it may also be a weakness with regard to bias in this study. I am inherently invested in what the participants have to say as a member of the graduate school community, and even more so as a Native American (Comanche) Graduate student.