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Native American Students' Experiences of Cultural Differences in College:
Influence and Impact

Leslie E. Clark

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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December 2012

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ABSTRACT

Native American Students' Experiences of Cultural Differences in College: Influence and Impact

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Doctor of Philosophy

The culture of most colleges and universities is very different for Native American students with close ties to their traditional communities. "Traditional," in a Native American sense, means multiple interconnections of emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual identity that combine to define expectations for the Native American way. This traditional cultural perspective is often in conflict with college cultures where typically only the academic or social aspects of identity are addressed. Research on college students of several ethnicities has found that the experience of post-secondary education can change individuals' attitudes, values, and behaviors. However, none of these studies focused on the experience of Native American students. This study attempted to determine how students' with a traditional Native American upbringing feel that their attitudes, values, and behaviors have been changed by exposure to the Western culture of a college environment, and further, whether this potential change was a factor in their academic persistence. In order to begin to explore Native American students' experiences of recognizing and negotiating differences of culture, attitudes, and values, this study analyzed unstructured qualitative interviews of 15 Native American college students. Themes resulting from the analysis of texts that describe the students' experiences included class differences, feeling academically unprepared, lifestyle differences, desire to disprove negative stereotypes, importance of finding supportive others, experiences of greater diversity, experiences of cultural tension, changes in viewpoint, increased independence, and an increased desire to give back to their native communities.

Keywords: Native American populations, college students, academic persistence, cultural differences, changes in attitudes, values, and beliefs

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation could not have been completed without the help of my peers, teachers, mentors, and colleagues. I would like to thank my committee: Aaron Jackson, Steve Smith, Rachel Crook-Lyon, Timothy Smith, and Mark Beecher. Thank you for your support and insight, and for challenging me to give my best. I would like to give a special thanks to my chair, Aaron Jackson, and to Steve Smith. Thank you both for your help and your connections, and for modeling the sincerity and patience necessary to do this work well. I would also like to thank Virgil Caldwell and Jim Slaughter, for offering friendship and help from the first moment we met. Without you, I wouldn't have been able to meet and learn about so many good people.

Sincerest thanks are due to the participants of this study. I truly enjoyed getting to know you all a little bit better, and I hope that my work can in at least a small way share your strength with others. I would also like to thank Curt Hill, Jennifer Ellsworth, and the wonderful staff of Southern Utah University Counseling and Psychological Services. They have been friends, colleagues, and cheerleaders every step of the way. I feel privileged to have spent a year of my life with you all.

From the bottom of my heart, I would like to thank my husband, Matt. When I decided to get my Ph.D. five years ago, I don't think either of us quite knew what we were in for. Throughout the years of work, you have been by my side, offering love, encouragement, commiseration, and support. You have pushed me when I needed it, and you have helped me pick myself up with I encountered roadblocks and obstacles. Most of all, you have watched over our daughter with amazing care and devotion, and I have never worried about her for a moment knowing she was in your hands. Thank you for believing in me and for coming with me on this crazy ride.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
INTRODUCTION OF STRUCTURE	vi
Article Abstract.....	vii
Background.....	1
College Experience and Changes in Attitudes, Values, and Behaviors	3
Purpose of the Study	4
Method.....	5
Participants	5
Procedure.....	6
Data Collection.....	7
Data Analysis	7
Trustworthiness of Themes	9
Investigator Assumptions.....	10
Findings	11
Perceived Differences between Culture of Origin and Culture of Institution.....	11
Class differences	12
Academic preparation	13
Lifestyle differences.....	13
Distance from family.....	14
Differences in goals/motivation	14
Differences of religion	15
Students' Efforts to Address Cultural Differences.....	16
Desire to disprove negative stereotypes	16
Importance of finding supportive others.....	17
Impact of Cultural Differences on Students' Experiences in College	17
Experiences of greater diversity	17
Experiences of cultural tension	18
Changes in Students' Attitudes, Values, and Behaviors Due to Their College Experiences....	20

Change in viewpoint.....	20
Increased self-confidence	20
Increased sense of opportunity	21
Placing higher value on education	21
Increased independence.....	21
Increased desire to give back to native communities	22
Advice to Other Native American Students.....	22
Discussion.....	23
Reflection on Themes and the Current Literature.....	25
Implications.....	28
Limitations	31
Recommendations for Future Research	33
References.....	34
APPENDIX A: REVIEW OF LITERATURE	39
APPENDIX B: ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR THEMES.....	50
APPENDIX C: GUIDING QUESTIONS.....	79
APPENDIX D: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE	80
APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORMS	81
DISSERTATION REFERENCES.....	85

INTRODUCTION OF STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

This dissertation, *Native American Students' Experiences of Cultural Differences in College: Influence and Impact*, is written in a hybrid format. This hybrid format combines traditional dissertation and journal publication formats. The preliminary pages of the dissertation reflect requirements for submission to the university. The dissertation report is presented as a journal article and conforms to length and style requirements for submitting research reports to psychology and education journals. An expanded literature review and additional support for the findings sections of the dissertation are included in Appendix A and B respectively.

Article Abstract

The cultural setting of most colleges is very different from the background of Native American students with close ties to their traditional communities. In order to begin to explore Native American students' experiences of recognizing and negotiating differences of culture, attitudes, and values, this study analyzed unstructured qualitative interviews with 15 Native American college students, 8 male and 7 female. Themes resulting from the analysis of texts that describe the students' experiences included class differences, feeling academically unprepared, lifestyle differences, desire to disprove negative stereotypes, importance of finding supportive others, experiences of greater diversity, experiences of cultural tension, changes in viewpoint, increased independence, and an increased desire to give back to their native communities.

Background

The number of Native American students enrolled in higher education began to increase sharply in the late 1960s and early 1970s, spurred by the growing availability of scholarships and funding and the emergence of tribally controlled colleges and universities (Szasz, 1999). The past two decades, however, have seen smaller gains in Native American enrollments.

Although the number of Native American students enrolled in higher education increased more than 90% between 1976 and 1999, the growth in Native American enrollment as a percentage of total enrollment has been more modest (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2001).

Even though progress has been made in aggregate Native American enrollment over the past twenty years, little has changed with respect to the types of institutions at which Native American students are enrolled. Data show that Native Americans continue to be underrepresented both in the more prestigious private and four-year sectors of higher education and overrepresented in the less prestigious public and two-year sectors (Lowe, 2005). Native Americans are also noticeably underrepresented among college degree recipients (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001), and this underrepresentation occurs at all degree levels (Lowe, 2005). Only 9.3% of Native Americans hold a bachelor's degree or higher, as opposed to 20.3% of the general population (Jackson & Turner, 2004). Despite evidence of academic ability, postsecondary dropout rates are higher for Native Americans than for any other minority (Reddy, 1993). Native Americans are also under-represented in graduate programs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001).

One way to explain the underrepresentation of Native Americans in higher education is the demand placed on Native American students to adapt to a different culture when they pursue postsecondary education (Jackson, Smith & Hill, 2003). College students are encouraged (often

indirectly) to develop professional goals and personal aspirations as individuals, often separating social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. This is in keeping with Western cultural traditions which emphasize independence and making life decisions based around career and job-related factors (Sue & Sue, 1999.) Being traditional, in a Native American sense, is to have multiple interconnections of emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual identity that combine to define expectations for the Native American way (Montgomery et. al., 2000). This traditional identity is often in conflict with cultural expectations at college, where only the academic or social aspects of identity are addressed, and often in separate, discrete ways (Bray, 1997).

Jackson, et al. (2003) conducted qualitative interviews with Native American students that identified several themes associated with persistence in college. Among these themes are (a) reliance on spiritual resources, (b) nonlinear path, and (c) paradoxical cultural pressure. Hill (2004) gave three measures of cultural identity to students on a rural high school in the Navajo Reservation. Hill completed canonical correlations between these measures and measures of academic achievement (GPA and school attendance). Results showed that these students' cultural identity was related to academic achievement. The students fell into three groups: bi-culturally identified, single cultural identified (traditional Navajo or European American), and culturally marginal. Academic achievement was highest among the bicultural group, next highest among the single cultural group, and lowest for the culturally marginal students (Hill, 2004).

Taken together, this research indicates that those Native American students who became "bi-culturally identified" and were able to integrate traditional ways and family values within their educational life despite conflicting cultural pressures were most likely to persist in higher education. The high dropout rates of Native American students may be related to the difficulty of

achieving this cultural balance. Therefore, understanding what becoming “bi-culturally identified” involves at the level of personal change may help researchers to identify why this cultural balance is a struggle for many Native American students.

College Experience and Changes in Attitudes, Values, and Behaviors

Some research on ethnic minority college students has found that the experience of post-secondary education can change an individual’s attitudes, values, and behaviors (Harding, 2003.) Cuellar et al. (1995) examined the relationship between a behavioral measure of acculturation and five scales that measured Hispanic cultural cognitive constructs: machismo, familialism, folk beliefs, fatalism, and personalismo. The sample consisted of Hispanic college students in Texas. Items related to the machismo construct attempted to measure positive and negative aspects of the assumed Hispanic male role (e.g., womanizer, brave, courageous). Familialism items examined the size, relationships, and emotional support of the family, whereas folk beliefs were measured by identifying the acceptance of folk illnesses and supernatural influences on health and treatment of health problems (Cuellar et al., 1995). Fatalism items measured the extent to which respondents believed that their behavior and future were beyond their control, and personalismo items measured the cultural construct of a warm and personal way of relating to an individual. Results showed that with the exception of the personalismo construct, acculturation, in the form of attendance at a university, decreased the personal significance of the four remaining cultural constructs so that as individuals became more assimilated, they tended to report lower personal significance of the values of the culture of origin (i.e., familialism, fatalism, machismo, and folk beliefs) (Cuellar et al., 1995).

Harding (2003) pursued this type of cultural transition research further by conducting qualitative interviews in an attempt to learn why students’ religious beliefs and values changed

during the course of their college education. Examining the themes of these interviews revealed that all the students who participated mentioned that the influence of friends and professors they associated with during their college experience was a significant reason that they changed their beliefs (Harding, 2003). However, though various ethnicities were represented, none of the students interviewed for this research were Native American.

Research has demonstrated that the cultural setting of most colleges and universities is very different from the background of Native American students with close ties to their traditional communities (Garrod & Larimore, 1997). Therefore, an investigation of how cultural differences encountered at post-secondary institutions may influence Native American students to change any of their attitudes, values, and behaviors, could yield important information.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to, via qualitative interviews, determine how students with a traditional Native American upbringing feel that their attitudes, values, and behaviors have been changed by exposure to the Western culture of a college environment. It was hoped that this research would help us determine whether Native American students' feel pressure to change in some way in order to fit into the culture of a university environment, and furthermore, whether this potential change is a factor in their academic persistence. The following are research questions designed to investigate different aspects of each student's college experience related to changes in attitudes, values, and behaviors:

Research Question #1: What differences does the student perceive between their culture of origin and the Western culture of a post-secondary institution?

Research Question #2: What meaning did these cultural differences have for the student, and how did he or she work with them?

Research Question #3: How did those differences impact the student's experiences in college?

Research Question #4: How might the student's attitudes, values, and behaviors have changed as a result of their experiences in college?

Method

The philosophical foundation for the method of this study was based in a relational ontology (Schwandt, 2000). Therefore, the fundamental assumption of the research design is that relationships are primary and necessary to understanding human experiences. In keeping with this philosophy, Kvale's (2009) approach to interviewing was incorporated. This approach includes the following aspects: attention to the everyday "life world" of the participants; effort to understand meanings and themes in the dialogue; openness to new perspectives; use of non-restrictive questions, and awareness that new insight could come to the researcher and the participant during the course of the interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Additionally, the interviewer encouraged detailed descriptions of specific experiences, and acknowledged possible ambiguities and contradictions in the dialogue (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Participants

Participants were recruited through contact with participating college personnel (faculty, administrators, multicultural center staff), and informal contact with the investigator. No compensation was provided for participation. Participants in this study included 8 male and 7 female college students who attended one of three four-year public colleges or universities located in central, southwest, and southeast Utah. Participants included Native American men and women from three tribes (Navajo, Choctaw, and Zuni). Participants had lived on or near a reservation or reserve for a majority of their lives—a few participants were born off reservation

but then moved to the reservation in infancy—and had attended secondary schools where Native American students were the majority (85% or more of the student body). The men’s ages ranged from 20 to 36 (mean age = 28), and experience in post-secondary education ranged from 2 years to 7 years (mean = 4.5). The women’s ages ranged from 18 to 24 (mean age = 21), and experience in post-secondary education ranged from one year to 6 years (mean = 3.5).

The criteria outlined for participation in the study were based on several assumptions. First, it was assumed that students would be “traditional” in the Native American sense, if they had spent the majority of their lives living on reservation, were first-generation college students, and identified as “traditional” through self-report. Previous research has clarified that Native Americans who identify as traditional not only participate in ceremonies or rituals but also share similar perspectives or outlooks on life, such as placing high importance on family and community relationships (Montgomery et. al. 2000).

Second, it was assumed that the colleges where the research took place are representative of the typical “Western” college environment, both academically and culturally, and that therefore the cultural norms and expectations at these institutions would be quite different from those found in traditional Native American communities (Garrod & Larimore, 1997).

Finally, it was assumed that participants who have grown up on reservations and have chosen to attend college would be engaged in the process of navigating the demands of living in two cultures (Jackson, Smith & Hill, 2003).

Procedure

After being given a brief overview of the purpose of the study and discussing informed consent, participants were asked to complete an informed consent form and a brief demographic questionnaire (see Appendices E and D, respectively). Confidentiality was enhanced by issuing

each participant an identification code that was recorded on the demographic questionnaire in lieu of the participant's name. Interviews for this study took place on three campuses, all in the state of Utah. Participant names were tied to their identification code only in instances where participants elected to provide their email addresses, and consented to be contacted in the future to act as participant-reviewers of the results of the study. After analysis was completed, all identifying information was destroyed.

Data Collection

Unstructured, qualitative interviews were conducted one-on-one and in person by the principle investigator. A list of guiding questions (see Appendix C) was used to assist the interviewer to avoid leading questions and to maximize the depth and breadth of interviewee responses (Patton, 1990). Guiding questions were developed through collaboration with a research team familiar with Native American issues, and by consulting the current literature. The initial set of guiding questions was tested in one pilot interview. Then, over the first few interviews, the guiding questions were refined to better articulate and clarify their meaning. Interviews averaged 30 minutes in length and were audio recorded. Interviews were transcribed by the principal investigator. Each transcript was then interpreted by the principle investigator using a hermeneutic interpretive method (Gadamer, 2004; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Kvale 1987; Packer, 1985; Polkinghorne, 1984, 1991).

Data Analysis

The interpretation of the transcribed interviews subscribed to the same philosophical and theoretical assumptions as were used in conducting the interviews. The post-interview interpretive process is described by Jackson and Patton in three steps, summarized below:

1. An unfocused overview of the text. The goal of this initial reading is to study the text with limited presuppositions and to begin to illuminate the meanings set forward in the interview dialogue.
2. Interpretations through successive readings. Using what has been called the hermeneutic circle, this is a process of engaging with the text at increasingly deeper levels by identifying themes and then circling back to the text searching for disconfirming statements.
3. Finding language to accurately convey meanings. Having compiled valid interpretations, the final task is to strive to communicate the findings in a way that precisely represents the meanings and themes of the study. (1992)

Following this process the primary investigator conducted several successive reviews of the transcripts in order to identify an initial set of themes. This process of identifying meaning in a section or statement, and returning to the text looking for meanings that either confirms or disputes the identified theme is the essence of the hermeneutic circle. Jasper (2004) describes this process as follows:

In order to gain an overview of the text in its completeness, we must give proper attention to the details and particulars. But we cannot appreciate the details and particulars without a sense of the whole work.... Interpretation, therefore, is not a process along a linear trajectory from ignorance to understanding via the medium of the text (p. 21).

In addition to the analysis conducted by the principle investigator, a male psychology professor trained in qualitative methods, who has extensive experience conducting research with Native American students, audited initial themes by conducting an independent, unfocused overview of sections from each of the transcripts. The auditor identified initial themes and

meaningful components similar to those that the principle investigator had identified. The principle investigator then continued to analyze the text. Themes that continued to be supported in successive readings of the transcripts were retained, and those that did not have broad support in successive readings of the transcripts were discarded. Once a coherent set of themes was defined, the themes were evaluated by three of the initial participants. Each auditor participant was sent a copy of the theme analysis, which included the de-identified quotes from participants relevant for each theme. Participants were asked to provide feedback about whether the themes and quotes were an accurate way to represent the conversations that took place during their interviews. The participants did not provide extensive feedback, but each one of them agreed that the themes and quotes defined by the researchers were an accurate representation of the content and meaning of the interview dialogue.

Trustworthiness of Themes

The trustworthiness of the themes was enhanced in several ways throughout the study, primarily through the use of auditors. First, the trustworthiness of preliminary themes and of the principle investigator's process was assessed through consultation with the senior auditor, a male psychology professor who is trained in qualitative methods and who has extensive experience in research with Native American students. This auditor independently read sections from each of the interviews and identified meaningful statements and preliminary themes. The meaningful statements and themes found by the auditor matched those that had been identified by the principal investigator. In addition, the trustworthiness of the final themes was assessed by three additional auditors, all of whom were participants in the study. The list of themes was finalized after receiving auditor feedback.

Investigator Assumptions

Though the researchers attempted to limit their assumptions in conducting the interviews and analyzing the data in this study, several implicit assumptions should be acknowledged. First, the researchers assumed that higher education is valuable and that there are factors that facilitate or detract people in the process of higher education. Second, it is assumed that these factors are cultural, social, institutional, and familial. Third, while it is possible that being in a different location during the interview (such as at the work place or on the reservation) may have produced different results, it was assumed that by virtue of their role as students, interviewees were comfortable enough on a college campus to be self-reflective and frank in their comments. Finally, the researchers assumed that they can gain insights into Native American students' college experience by conducting empathic interviews and faithfully analyzing the transcripts of those interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The researcher became interested in this topic through her experiences with students in counseling. She engages in counseling from the perspective that for every student, regardless of racial and ethnic background, the transition to college is a time of identity development and change. Students in college start to ask themselves questions about who they want to be and what is important to them in life. She acknowledges her assumption that for minority students this process can be particularly difficult, because these students are also struggling with the acculturation and assimilation processes. Going into this study we assumed that Native American students from a traditional background encounter a university environment that is quite different than their native culture, and that this difference is a potential reason for the high dropout rates of Native American students.

Findings

Analysis of participant interviews produced several themes, which will be discussed below according to the research question that elicited the responses relevant for each theme. It should be noted that the quotes cited below generally represent ideas and comments made by the majority of the participants, but some themes were included because both the primary investigator and the faculty auditor viewed them as significant even if they were not mentioned by all participants. The minimum criterion used by the primary researcher was that a theme or idea needed to be mentioned by at least seven participants in order to be considered for inclusion in the final results of the study. The themes are illustrated below using quotes from individual participants that most effectively convey the meaning of the theme. The primary researcher acknowledges that because she is a European American woman, there is a potential for bias in the selection of representative quotes or stories, because certain participants may have expressed themselves in ways that were more meaningful from a European American point-of-view. It is hoped that this potential bias is mitigated by the participant auditors' agreement with the themes identified by the primary researcher and faculty auditor. These themes are interconnected, as will be evidenced in the participant quotes that support them. Because the themes are interconnected, in some cases one quote was used to illustrate one theme, and in other cases one quote or story was used to illustrate more than one theme.

Perceived Differences between Culture of Origin and Culture of Institution

Three primary themes emerged in relation to the first research question: class differences, feeling academically unprepared, and differences in lifestyle. It should be noted that the participants from two of the campuses that have predominantly white students described experiencing and perceiving more dramatic differences than the students at the third campus,

which is located near a large reservation and has about 50% Native American students. However, students from the third campus did still perceive and react to differences they encountered in coming to college, although these differences seemed to be less dramatic.

Class differences. Several participants described class differences as one major distinction they perceived between their native culture and the cultural environment of their college.

Participant 1: I mean the, the high school I graduated from was probably about 85 percent Native American students....And so, you know there was, there was that Caucasian culture that was there, but was also having a lot of the Native American culture that was there as well, and so, I kind of, even before college I kind of saw both, um, when I went to college though, I saw a little bit different, I saw probably more of, I don't know if you would say upper class, you know higher educated students that came from higher educated families that had more, compared to the Native American people that I grew up with.

In the case of Participant 1, the class differences were noticed because of his perception that other students at his college had more material goods and came from families with more education.

Participant 2: We're more of the middle class people, I consider myself middle class but then comparing with other people around here in [city], I consider myself low... This is like urban to us, really suburban, and were more of, like this is like the higher class, and we're more the low class, we see ourselves that way.... Yeah that's how we felt.

For Participant 2, the experience of class differences was more in the form of self-perception when compared to others.

Academic preparation. Another difference participants noted and discussed was the higher academic standards they encountered at college, and their own sense of feeling unprepared academically. Some participants discussed this theme in connection with their experience of class differences.

Participant 11: Jumping here to the big, you know, 30,000 students, mostly white. I really felt inadequate, you know, I really felt, I guess you could say vulnerable, you know. It really kind of scared me. I got lost, you know. I got lost right off the bat. I thought I was ready for this but then I was really like second guessing myself, you know. And I found myself, you know, getting behind on the courses that I had to take.

Participant 11 attended a large, predominantly white campus and his experience of academic unpreparedness was closely tied to the size and demographic composition at that university. Yet a feeling of academic unpreparedness seemed to be experienced to the same degree by students regardless of the university they attended. This is illustrated in the following quote by a participant who attended the third campus:

Participant 14: Yeah, I think I finally matured because when I first came I didn't really do my homework or anything. Now I really do my homework and I'm on top of things and these freshmen that come in and I see them and I'm like, oh I used to be like that....When I first came they just gave out syllabus and you had to follow those and do your own homework and everything. I didn't know that, I kind of got behind when I first came. So once I started to do my homework and everything, that's when it started to change and I did better.

Lifestyle differences. The third primary theme that emerged as participants discussed differences they perceived as they transitioned from their native communities to college was one

of differences in lifestyle. Participants described these differences in lifestyle as secondary themes of (a) distance from family, (b) differences in goals/motivation, and (c) differences of religion.

Distance from family. Participants discussed distance from family and their resulting feelings of isolation and lack of emotional support as one aspect of the different lifestyle they encountered at college. This theme also emerged in the majority of interviews, even though students attending the third, smaller campus were considerably closer to the reservation and their families than the students at the two larger universities. This suggests that distance from family was experienced not only as physical distance but also as emotional distance, which is indicated in the following two quotes: Participant 3 attended one of the larger colleges and Participant 13 attended the smaller college.

Participant 3: Cause its, when we left the reservation, it was hard at first, It's scary cause in my experience I cried the first, few months, I cried the first few months and....Your family is not around to help you, support you, and, when....You always grew up on the reservation.

Participant 13: Yeah, it was tough to leave home. There was a loss in family so I felt like my mom needed me, it was hard to leave my mom, but I knew I had to do this for me, so...

Differences in goals/motivation. Some participants discussed their perception that people they associated with at college had different goals and were motivated to achieve different outcomes than people in their native communities.

Participant 5: Uh huh, I don't know if most natives will ever think about their future ahead of time, but I kind of do, as long as I know that I get benefits and retirement then

that's what I'm going for....Because in high school just rolling with the punches, living day to day and trying to get out of high school to get the diploma... Then you're like, what's next? Do I get a job or do I go back to school?... The thoughts come to mind, well, it comes to my mind now.

For Participant 5, planning for the future and having long-term academic and career goals was something that he perceived was more common among the people he interacted with at college than among the people in his home community.

Differences of religion. All of the participants attended universities in Utah, where the Latter-Day Saint (Mormon) religion has a dominant influence, even on college campuses, and therefore participants also encountered religious differences when they came to college.

Participant 2: When people ask us what our religion is, we hold back, we don't, were scared to say it, because... they'll stereotype us, they're not gonna talk to us, they're gonna be mean to us, you never know what will come out of their mouth, it might be negative, it might be positive, so it's like flipping a coin what they'll say, and if you say it, you're gonna have to take it with dignity and pride because at first, we're like, we're Native American's, my church is Native American church....And then they ask you, what is that, what do you do, are you, like, then, you get asked, oh, so do you guys still like live in teepees, or do you guys like, ride horses, do you guys not have electric, do you not have running water or plumbing... We get really strongly stereotyped so we just, we don't answer, but we'll say, oh, ok, well, like, tell me about yours, we don't mind them telling us about their religion, or if we open our apartment or if we open our door into, Mormons, saying, do you believe in god, or... Yes, and sometimes we're scared to answer our door because of that, because it happened several times, and we tried, to, we tried to

say no thank you to them, ok we understand, we respect it, but, um, I'm better off just learning it myself.

The primary themes of (a) class differences, (b) feeling academically unprepared, and (c) differences in lifestyle, that emerged from participant's responses about the differences they perceived between their culture of origin and the Western culture of a typical college environment, seem to indicate that participants did indeed encounter differences as they made the transition to college; the second research question attempted to explore what these differences meant for participants and how they managed them.

Students' Efforts to Address Cultural Differences

Interview dialogue intended to explore research question two elicited two primary themes: a desire to disprove negative stereotypes and the importance of finding supportive others.

Desire to disprove negative stereotypes. Participants described a desire to disprove negative stereotypes about Native American people through (a) personal success and triumph, and (b) representing their native communities. Both of these secondary themes are illustrated through the following quote.

Participant 14: Yeah, it actually motivates me to be Native American to finish school, because not many finish school. And I really notice that. It was pretty good to know that there's a lot of scholarships out there for students and the Native Americans... I looked at, when I was looking at college in high school the, what is it called, the rate where they measure the ethnicity, there's usually less than 5% of Native Americans in the whole school, so I guess that's just, it made me feel good that I finished and it gives me

motivation to know that I'm going to be successful and show what Native Americans can do.

Importance of finding supportive others. The second primary theme that emerged as participants described how they worked with the cultural differences they encountered was regarding the importance of finding supportive others.

Participant 2: At first we were so happy to come, and then later, it well, the first year we lived here it was ok, it was good, it was kind of lonely... Yeah, and so, and then, we as Native Americans we're, in our tradition, we're not the kind of people who just, go out there and friend people, and so we kept to ourselves, and then we found that there was a club here, so we joined the club, and we made friends, and that slowly helped us regain our, happiness, I don't know... Yeah, thanks to Tina, she's like a parent to us. Yeah, so that's what helped us keep coming and keep in school.

The primary themes of (a) desire to disprove negative stereotypes, and (b) importance of finding supportive others, give some insight into how the participants coped with the cultural differences they encountered in coming to college. The third research question explores the impact these differences had on the participant's experiences in college.

Impact of Cultural Differences on Students' Experiences in College

Two themes emerged in connection with the third research question, one which participants viewed as positive and one viewed as negative: experiences of greater diversity, in contrast with experiences of cultural tension.

Experiences of greater diversity. Participants described a primary theme of experiences of greater diversity as a positive way that the cultural differences they encountered at college impacted them.

Participant 4: Probably, um, the people that I've met ,um, like the people that I've met in the multicultural center, like the Polynesians, the Asians, that's been a fun part like, um, it's kind of like stepping outside of my comfort zone a little, like always being used to being around like Native Americans, and now I'm like hanging out with the Polynesians, and getting used to like the Korean culture, and chatting with them and studying with them, it's kind of hard because they're, English is their second language, whereas it's my first language, so when you're sitting with them, ...they ask you question but you don't really know what they're saying so... but I like that, I like helping people.

Participant 11: And then not only that, but you know like, relating to other cultures too, you know.....Oh yeah, you know, like I hadn't ever, you know, like been around Asian people, or some like African American people, and yeah that was interesting, you know, and I got to be friends with them.

For both Participant 4 and Participant 11, the opportunity to interact with and learn from people of other ethnicities and races was perceived as a positive experience and a benefit of the university environment.

Experiences of cultural tension. In contrast to the positive impact of experiencing greater diversity at college, participants also described the negative impact of experiences of cultural tension, which emerged as a primary theme composed of three secondary themes: (a) experiences of racism and discrimination, (b) rejection by other Native Americans, and (c) hiding of native identity. All three of these secondary themes can be illustrated through one participant's story.

Participant 6: I worked at a restaurant here in town about four years and starting out it was, you know, I just felt like constantly I was being discriminated against. And like I,

I've always felt discriminated against on both sides. By my own Native American people and by you know, other races, I guess you could say like, I don't want to say like primarily Caucasians but you know....And working there it just, beginning there it was difficult for me, because like I'm very light complected, and so, uh you know people say, oh he's half native American, and he must be half native American so you he must have like some kind of white person in his family that helps provide the resources that we struggled to get...whereas, you know, I'm still Native American, you know I still have that, you know, look, and so I always felt discriminated against on the white, you know again by the Caucasian people, and so, you know, I guess you know to cope with it I got light colored lenses, these are colored.... I'm full Native American but it just, you know, I just said why not give it a try and so I did and I did notice the differences in the way that people treated me. I felt like I was treated better, you know, I was respected I guess you could say. Because I was a busser, but then I was also the cashier, so I was like out and open and had to maintain everything. I was the host, busser, cashier and then just sort of like a supervisor sort of. I oversaw everything so I was always in the restaurant, you know where the customer could see you and everything, and I just felt like I was treated better, they weren't, you know like the eye rolls and anything like that anymore. I mean there was still some, I was still discriminated more by my own Native American peers just because, you know I decided, you know to get colored lenses and the primary question that was always asked to me by the native Americans are you half Navajo... And then they'd ask, they'd come up to me and they'd ask me questions in Navajo like, oh you're living in the city now so you know you've probably forgot your Native American values, cultures and traditions and you know just those kind of assumptions.

The combined primary themes of (a) experiences of greater diversity, and (b) experiences of cultural tension, illustrate that participants were impacted both positively and negatively by their experiences in college. The final research question addressed whether the ways students coped with cultural differences, and the ways they were impacted by these differences, caused any personal change.

Changes in Students' Attitudes, Values, and Behaviors Due to their College Experiences

Three primary themes emerged that describe the way students experienced change as a result of their experiences in college: change in viewpoint, becoming more independent, and an increased desire to give back to their native communities.

Change in viewpoint. Participants' descriptions of their changes in viewpoint as a result of their experiences in college emerged as three secondary themes: (a) increased self-confidence, (b) increased sense of opportunity, and (c) increased value placed on education.

Increased self-confidence. Participants discussed how an increased confidence in their own abilities is one way their college experience has created personal change.

Participant 1: And so personally there's a lot more drive, there's a lot more, I think, motivation, there's a lot more confidence, there's never been a time that I, well I guess, you know, right now, I feel like there's nothing that I can't do, if there's something that I want to do, I can work for it, I can achieve something, I can accomplish whatever I want to do, and so, I think it's just a higher level of self confidence in myself and my own personal ability and what I, what I can do, even things that are hard, before I used to think that I can't do hard things, now I think, yeah, hard things, they're hard, but I can do them, I know how to do them, I know how to get through things.

Increased sense of opportunity. Another aspect of the change in viewpoint that participants described was an increased sense of opportunities available to them.

Participant 6: I ask them [other native students] what are they doing, and like, the primary response for Native American students is like, I can't do it because I'm Navajo. That's always been the response, "...well, I wasn't accepted because I'm Navajo." You know like, they, as a Native American, you can't help but get the sense that because you're a minority that you're not going to get some of the opportunities that some other students get. I always tell them that, well, I got it. And it's not because I'm light complected, and it's not because I have blue eyes. It's because I'm educated and determined.

Increased value placed on education. Many participants discussed how their experiences in college have led them to place a higher value on education.

Participant 10: Well, like I said, you're given such a great opportunity to go to college to further your education. I feel like it's just such an honor, such a blessing. It really stresses to me to the importance of college, right. The importance of getting an education. I mean, my parents understand that now. That's why my mom got her masters just a few years ago. I still can't believe how awesome it is to be aided so well.

Increased independence. A second primary theme that emerged as participants discussed the ways they feel they have changed as a result of their college experiences was one of becoming more independent.

Participant 4: And, just the whole learning to be away from home kind of thing, like not trying to go home all the time because if I go home all the time, I'm just going to want to go back and just stay there, and I'm not going to want to go back to college, and not

going to want to go out and explore the world and experience new things, and all that stuff so that I've learned to kind of stay away from home a little bit...

Increased desire to give back to native communities. The final primary theme that emerged as participants described how they have changed during the course of their college experience was an increased desire to give back or to help their native communities.

Participant 10: In terms of, I guess, my personality, it's helped me to be more humble, to be more grateful for what's given to us and to take advantage of those opportunities. It's helped me to understand the importance of the culture, the heritage and how I need to be more engulfed in it and to keep it alive and to help.... Yeah, in my case in order to be a doctor and to go back to the reservation and help out the best I can, so.... And especially, you know, like with some of the funding I get here, I just feel like it's my obligation, you know, I guess you could say to reach out to people and educate them, you know, on the Native American culture. I just feel it's something that, you know like, is built in. I guess you could say, to the scholarship rather than just, you know, shy away from it and not raise awareness but you know just to be, I guess you could say, be an instrument.

Participants discussed their experiences of personal change as a result of their time in college as three primary themes: (a) change in viewpoint, (b) becoming more independent, and (c) increased desire to give back to their native communities. As the researcher discussed these changes with participants, the interviews led naturally into a conversation about what advice participants would give to other Native American students.

Advice to Other Native American Students

While not a specific research question at the conception of the study, participants' responses during the interviews included many suggestions to fellow Native American students

who are beginning their college experience. Analysis of these responses produced three primary themes: take advantage of your opportunities, believe in your own value, and the importance of persistence. All three of these primary themes can be illustrated through a brief quote from one participant.

Participant 11: I mean, I'm usually, like for kids you know, I just wish that when I was down at [school], you know, I saw how like, you know, how terrible some kids were doing. I just thought to myself, man, if they would have only known. 'Cause I was in that boat, you know. I mean, and I had told some of them before, like, don't do this, you know. Do good in school, you know. Just keep on going. You don't have to attend Harvard University. Just go somewhere you can attain that degree. I guess that like me, that they just, you know like, have their thoughts elsewhere, you know. It is sad, you know, I guess it does bug me because I think that the Navajo people and all Native American people are worth a lot more than what they realize. That's just something that they have to, you know like, I guess you could say have instilled in them, you know.... I just wish it was something that they would realize.

The three primary themes of (a) take advantage of your opportunities, (b) believe in your own value, and (c) the importance of persistence, that emerged from the suggestions and advice participants offered to fellow Native American students, clearly illustrate the interconnected nature of the themes. Participants consistently described how these themes had influenced their own personal decisions to remain in college.

Discussion

The culture of most colleges and universities is very different from that of Native American students with close ties to their traditional communities. Some research on college

students of several ethnicities has found that the experience of post-secondary education can change an individual's attitudes, values, and behaviors (Harding, 2003). This study used qualitative interviews to explore whether traditional Native American students encountered cultural differences as they made the transition to college, and whether those potential differences influenced them to change in any way. Participants discussed their experiences in an interconnected, holistic fashion. This was reflected in the themes that emerged, which built upon and mutually influenced each other. Prominent themes arose in relation to each research question that was investigated. Questions which explored the differences participants perceived between their culture of origin and the culture they encountered at college elicited themes of (a) class differences, (b) feeling academically unprepared, and (c) differences in lifestyle. Building upon this, the second research question investigated what meaning these differences had for students and how they worked with them, which prompted themes of (a) desire to disprove negative stereotypes, and (b) the importance of finding supportive others. The third research question examined what impact these differences had on the students' experiences in college. Two themes emerged in connection with this research question, one which participants viewed as positive and one viewed as negative: experiences of greater diversity, in contrast with experiences of cultural tension. The fourth research question attempted to learn whether these cultural differences influenced participants to change any of their attitudes, values, or behaviors, and illuminated themes of (a) change in viewpoint, (b) becoming more independent, and (c) an increased desire to give back to their native communities. Finally, while not a specific research question at the conception of the study, participants' responses during the interviews included many suggestions to fellow Native American students who are beginning their college

experience. Analysis of these responses produced three primary themes: (a) take advantage of your opportunities, (b) believe in your own value, and (c) the importance of persistence.

The following sections will discuss the findings in light of the current body of literature, highlight implications of the results, review the limitations of the study, and provide suggestions for future research.

Reflection on Themes and the Current Literature

Themes that emerged from this study both support and build upon the current body of research. The participants in the present study indicated that class differences was one difference they perceived between their native culture and the culture they encountered at college; this finding is similar to the findings of Canabal (1995) and Laanan (2000) that financial concerns constitute one of the greatest barriers to minority students attending college, and furthermore, that many minority students frequently come from families with lower incomes. The theme of feeling academically unprepared, which also emerged in the present study, is reflected in the results of Wright (1989) and Boyer (1997), who noted that like many minority students, Native American students are usually unprepared academically and struggle to meet the expectations of a university environment. Finally, one of the most widely mentioned factors in research on Native American students' poor academic success in higher education is geographic isolation, which leads to underdeveloped economies and limited job opportunities on reservations (Bowker, 1992; Simms, 1999). This factor was illustrated in the present study in both of the themes previously mentioned: class differences, and feeling academically unprepared due to lack of a complete understanding of the demands of post-secondary education.

The literature suggests that family and academic support factors play an important role for minority students, not only in learning about the possible career choices but also in

facilitating or enhancing academic success (Laanan, 2000; Saenz, Wyatt, & Reinhard, 1998). Rindone (1988) conducted a study with Navajo students who had attained at least a four year degree to ascertain the factors most influential in their academic persistence and success. Parents and family members were found to be the “driving force” behind the respondents’ desire to achieve (as cited in Belgarde, 1992, p. 11). The present study supports these conclusions through the emergent theme of the importance of finding supportive others. Many of the participants discussed how the encouragement they received from family, peers, and academic advisors was a critical factor in their decision to persist in college.

However, the literature also demonstrates that strong family and cultural connections can create a complexity of pressures. As indicated in the study by Wilcox et al. (2005), the ability to adequately negotiate between the old life students left behind (family, home and friends) and the new life ahead of them was imperative in their ability to persist in college. This process was often more difficult for most Native American students, considering the increased pressure related to cultural identity, which often includes questioning the degree to which one maintains close family and cultural ties (Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003; Jackson & Smith, 2001; Simms, 1999; Tashakkori & Thompson, 1991). Jackson and Smith (2001) found that students reported feeling pressure in a number of ways. Students reported feeling pressure to perform academically, to stay close to home, or both. They also reported feeling pressure to be able to return home to help with family conflict or trauma. This complexity was discussed by participants in the current study through their comments on the difficulty of being distant from family, combined with the negative experiences of feeling rejecting by other Native Americans because of their decision to pursue higher education, and the hiding of native identity which some participants described as a way they managed the conflicting pressures.

The challenges of navigating two cultures are further described by Cuellar, Arnold, & Maldonado, (1995) who examined the relationship between a behavioral measure of acculturation and five scales that measured Hispanic cultural cognitive constructs. Results showed that acculturation, in the form of attendance at a university, decreased the personal significance of the four cultural constructs so that as individuals became more assimilated, they tended to report lower personal significance of the values of the culture of origin (Cuellar, et al., 1995.) This finding suggests that the acculturation process, or becoming “bi-culturally identified” involves some degree of change at the level of attitudes, values, and behaviors.

The results of the present study demonstrated that participants did indeed experience change through the theme of changes in viewpoint, which emerged as three secondary themes: a) increased self-confidence, b) increased sense of opportunity, and c) placing higher value on education. The language participants used to describe this change in viewpoint indicates that some of their new attitudes are the result of influences they encountered at college; often participants would share stories of experiences they had during college which led to these personal changes. However, none of the participants in the present study reported lower personal significance of the values of the culture of origin; on the contrary, one theme which emerged as participants described how they felt they have changed was an increased desire to give back to their native communities. This suggests that while the experience of recognizing and negotiating the cultural differences these students encountered in the college environment did create change, in the case of these participants, while it did involve some loss (as indicated in the themes of rejection by other Native Americans and hiding of native identity) it also involved an increase in their sense of connection to their heritage and native culture.

The themes which emerged as participants shared their advice to other Native American students represent an important addition to the current literature on Native American student persistence in higher education. Participants not only described the importance of persistence directly as its own theme in the present study, but also through the themes of taking advantage of your opportunities and believing in your own value. These themes support the conclusion of Kawulich (2000) which found that education is seen as desirable and helpful for many Native American students.

Implications

As has been mentioned, individuals who come into contact with another culture clearly vary in how they construct their identity and in how much personal change they experience in terms of attitudes, behavior, and values (Bichsel & Mallinckrodt, 2001, Harding 2003). This holds true for the Native American college student who is transitioning from his or her native culture to the typical culture of a college environment. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that each Native American student will face the exact same pressure, or negotiate cultural differences they encounter in exactly the same way. However, understanding that there is a myriad of factors that influence these Native American students may assist college personnel, counselors, and career advisers through knowing which questions to ask in order to better understand the needs, goals, and decisions of the individual with whom they are working.

Facilitating the students' connection to their native culture is highly recommended. As has been mentioned in the literature (c.f. Thomason, 1999), provision of a Native American Student Center has been paramount in assisting students in their transition to the college or university, and in providing the support and connection that participants identified as crucial in fostering academic persistence. These native student centers could possibly initiate orientation

activities, during which Native American students who are further along in their education could provide information, advice, and support to new native students; the participants of this study had many insights about how to successfully negotiate cultural differences and the college experience which would be invaluable to other Native American students.

In addition to providing opportunities for Native American students to interact directly with other native students while on campus, colleges may find it beneficial to design programs that connect students with opportunities to be of service to Native American communities. The themes illustrated in the current study demonstrate that many Native American students feel an increased desire to give back to their native communities and improve the living standards and environment they perceive as part of life on the reservation. Programs which allowed Native American students to offer this assistance as part of their educational experience may encourage these students to persist in their education, because they could begin to make an important difference even before their education is complete.

Furthermore, this study suggests that another critical support may be facilitating contact with career counselors and academic advisors who can act as guides as students adjust to the academic demands placed upon them. This might be accomplished by encouraging advisors to make direct and frequent contact with Native American students at the beginning of their college experience, rather than waiting for students to seek assistance on their own, at a point when it may be too late to correct academic concerns.

This study also provides valuable information for university administrators and staff. The experiences of greater diversity described by participants suggest that providing Native American students with chances to spend time with other students from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds allowed them to gain a greater appreciation for the similarities and

differences found among different cultures. Further, the cultural tension—in the form of experiences of racism, experiences of discrimination, rejection by other Native Americans, and hiding of native identity—which was also discussed by participants, could possibly be alleviated if all incoming students participated in an orientation which included accurate information about different cultures, promoted and celebrated diversity, and encouraged students to be multi-culturally sensitive and willing to learn.

Implications for personal counselors from the present study are equally important. With relatively few role models to guide them, Native American students are faced with reconciling the values of receiving an education, carrying on Native American traditions, and performing family-related duties. These students may feel pressure to do and be everything for their families and for their culture. It may be helpful for counselors to assist the student in exploring roles that they currently fill, those they anticipate filling in the future, and those that they may experience as competing (c.f. McCloskey & Mintz, 2005).

In addition to exploring the roles that Native American students fill, assisting these students to identify which ideas or perspectives within the native and white cultures seem to compete, and ways that they themselves would like to reconcile the tension, may also be helpful. For example, the role of Native American tradition in the student's life may be an important aspect of the student's identity. The counselor's demonstration of cultural competence, respect, and openness to the integration of native traditions in the student's life will help establish necessary trust (Trujillo, 2000). In addition, exploration of the attitudes, values, and behaviors a Native American student perceives as part of their native culture, in contrast with the attitudes, values, and behaviors they see as part of the white culture, may be helpful. The opportunity to clarify and discuss how these different influences are impacting the development of personal

identity and worldview would likely benefit Native American students, based on the results of this study.

Limitations

There are limitations of the current study. First of all, while interviews can be expected to vary in length and depth of content, it is possible that the interviewees from one of the larger campuses felt more comfortable discussing traditional values, roles, and influences with the primary researcher because of contact and connections made with the researcher prior to the interviews. The primary researcher was an intern on one of these larger campuses during the data collection period, and therefore had the opportunity to attend several Native American student club meetings and introduce herself to the students before beginning recruitment for the research. In contrast, participants interviewed at the other campuses only met the primary researcher on the day of the interview, and because of time constraints were only engaged in brief social conversation prior to the interview. This may have contributed to the differing lengths and depth of interviews. However, the primary researcher is a trained therapist and endeavored to use these therapeutic skills to make the dialogue of the interviews as accepting, friendly, and open as possible.

Additional limitations may have resulted from the location of the interviews and the nature of the interview questions. With respect to location, some interviews were conducted in a private counseling office, and others were conducted in generic office spaces. The more private, relaxed environment of the counseling office may have affected how the participants from this campus responded, in contrast to the more academic, public location of the offices at the other two campuses. Further, the fact that the research took place on college campuses in the first place could have affected the information that participants were willing to share.

A significant limitation of the study is the limited geographic region in which it took place; since all three research locations are in the state of Utah, the participants only represented three tribes and the majority of them grew up on the same reservation, although in a variety of locations on that reservation. In addition, the large population of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS or Mormon) present at each of these campuses may create a cultural environment with some characteristics that are unique to that particular religion, and therefore the experiences of the participants at these campuses may not be as generalizable to the experiences of Native Americans on campuses without this religious influence.

Another limitation that should be noted is that the implications and recommendations outlined above are fairly generic in nature and therefore, while helpful, there may still be students whose concerns might not be addressed by implementing these recommendations. Future research could address this limitation by directly asking research participants during interviews what their suggestions would be regarding how administrators, advisors, and personal counselors could assist them in creating a positive college experience.

Finally, the fact that the primary researcher, who conducted all of the interviews, was a European American female represents another limitation of the study. It is possible that students would have felt more comfortable discussing their experiences with a researcher who was also Native American, and that their responses may have contained more detail and depth if the interviews were conducted by a person who shared a similar racial and cultural background. However, this perspective of being a “cultural outsider” may also have been an advantage for the researcher in some cases because it led her to encourage students to elaborate more regarding the cultural norms and expectations of their home communities.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study both confirmed findings of existing research, and lends direction for further inquiry into Native American students' experiences of the transition to college. Many participants expressed interest in using their degrees to build their communities on the reservation/reserve. However, most Native American college graduates do not actually end up working long-term on the reserves/reservations (Milligan & Bougie, 2006). Follow-up studies that investigate factors playing into college graduates' decisions about where to live and work would be valuable. Furthermore, investigating how the transition to the culture of a college environment is experienced by students who drop out and do not continue their education would likely lead to great insight. The current study was done with students who were successfully able to negotiate this transition, and therefore while it provides some information about reasons a student may decide to leave school (excessive cultural tension, lack of support, academic difficulties) it cannot provide a complete picture. Finally, studies exploring how Native American people still living on the reservation feel about other Native American's who pursue higher education and adopt more of the "white culture" in terms of attitudes, behaviors, and values, could be enlightening.

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Appendix A:

Review of Literature

Caveat

Researchers studying Native American student performance and persistence have generally espoused positivistic approaches, which were primarily developed to study general student populations (Larimore & McClellan, 2005; Belgarde, 1992). That is, much of the limited research exploring Native American academic persistence has been quantitative studies, espousing Euro-American theoretical frameworks for retention (Larimore & McClellan, 2005, Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008).

While this body of research has been informative, the use of Euro-American populations as the primary reference group for studying the education and persistence of Native American students, is quite disparaging. It would seem obvious that knowledge of the worldview of whatever population a researcher was studying would be of particular importance, especially when seeking to understand the behavioral phenomena of that population (Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008). Native American studies are not exceptional to this.

Theoretical frameworks utilizing the perspectives of Native Americans to study academic persistence and retention are beginning to emerge, including the use of resiliency theory (Clark, 2002) and the Family Education Model (Heavyrunner & DeCelles, 2002; Heavyrunner & Morris, 1997). Research focusing on Native American populations is also beginning to utilize methodological practices, primarily qualitative methods, which more fully consider and include the perspectives of Native Americans (Jackson & Smith, 2001; Garrod & Larimore, 1997; Dodd, Garcia, Meccage, & Nelson, 1995; Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman, 1993). Benjamin et. al. (1993) suggest the interview allows researchers to better account for differences in persistence

and educational attainment of Native American students not readily apparent through quantitative, statistical analysis. The effect of such research approaches has been an increased consideration for and understanding of the subjective educational experience of Native American students. However, it should be noted that much of the research cited in the following literature review comes from this quantitative Euro-American framework, and may therefore be somewhat biased in its representation of the Native American student experience.

Background

The cultural setting of most colleges and universities is very different from the background of Native American students with close ties to their traditional communities (Garrod & Larimore, 1997). College students are encouraged to develop professional goals and personal aspirations as individuals, often separating social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. Traditional, in a Native American sense, is considered to mean multiple interconnections of emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual identity that combine to define expectations for the Native American way (Montgomery et. al., 2000). This tradition is often in conflict with attending college where only the academic or social aspects are addressed and often in separate, discrete terms (Bray, 1997). Dropout statistics (Bowker, 1992; O'Brien, 1990; Tierney, 1993) and low enrollment data (Sandefur, 1998) verify the continued reality of the dilemma Native American students face to remain in college. Meyers (1996-1997) reports the following Native American student performance rates: 52% finish high school; 17% attend college; 4% graduate from college; and 2% attend graduate school. Recent statistics on the percentage of minority students age 25-29 holding a bachelor's degree show that only 9 percent of Native American students attain this level of education, compared to 58 percent of Asian Americans, 17 percent of African Americans, and 11 percent of Hispanics (Ryu, 2009).

Financial concerns constitute one of the greatest barriers to minority students attending college (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1997; Canabal, 1995). Furthermore, many minority students frequently come from families with lower incomes and consequently struggle to balance a job with the demands of school (Laanan, 2000; Canabal, 1995). Additionally, not only are students unable to call upon family for financial assistance, but are noted as having to contribute financially to their family's finances while attending college (Laanan, 2000). Thus is apparent the necessity of financial aid in the enrollment and persistence for many minority students (Andrieu & St. John, 1993; Langdon & Clark, 1993; Wallace, 1993).

The literature suggests that family and academic support factors play an important role for minority students, not only in learning about the possible career choices but also in facilitating or enhancing academic success (Laanan, 2000; Saenz, Wyatt, & Reinhard, 1998). In a study of almost 3000 Latino and non-Latino college students, Longerbeam, Sedlacek, and Alatorre (2004) found differences in the perception of the likely causes for leaving college, specifically lack of finances, academic stressors, and family obligations were cited as reasons for Latino students' premature college departure. Similarly, in a study examining the extent of family influence on occupation and career choices between Mexican American and non-Mexican American students, Clayton et al. (1993) found that Mexican American students perceived their parents to have a greater influence on occupational and education decisions than non-Mexican American students (as cited in Laanan, 2000). Furthermore, Laanan (2000) compared two groups, white and nonwhite, and found that most nonwhite students were likely to be first-generation students, suggesting an added amount of pressure to succeed and a decreased amount of first-hand guidance from parents.

These findings give us some indication of the types of difficulties we might expect Native American students to encounter as a minority group, but leaves questions about why the difficulties often seem exaggerated in Native American student's experiences.

Native American Students

Wright (1989) and Boyer (1997) note that like many minority students, Native American students are usually unprepared academically, have many family responsibilities, and cite home responsibilities and insufficient funds as reasons for degree non-completion (Pavel, Skinner, Cahalan, Tippeconnic, & Stein, 1998). Native American students tend to enroll at an older age, and usually have the added responsibility of family and financial pressures to contend with, along with adjustment problems engendered by the university and the majority cultures (Pewewardy & Frey, 2004).

In recent years an abundance of research has been conducted on understanding why many Native American students have difficulty completing requirements for not only high school diplomas, but also have trouble completing postsecondary degrees (Benjamin, 1993; Brown & Kurpius, 1997; Bryan, 2004; Downs, 2005; Gritts, 1997; Hill, 2004; Jackson & Smith, 2001; Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003; Lin, 1990; Ortiz & Heavyrunner, 2003; Reddy, 1993; Simms, 199; West, 1988). Some researchers have sought to identify external factors contributing to poor persistence rates among Native American students (Benjamin, et al., 1993; Bowker, 1993; Hoover & Jacobs, 1992), while others tried to identify individual student characteristics (Bryan, 2004; Downs, 2005; Jackson & Smith, 2001; Lin, LaCounte, & Eder, 1988; Rindone, 1988; West, 1988).

Several external factors have been identified as contributors to poor academic success. One of the most widely mentioned factors is geographic isolation, which leads to

underdeveloped economies and limited job opportunities on reservations (Bowker, 1992; Simms, 1999). Another environmental barrier that has been found is that some Native American students experience difficulty assimilating into the dominant culture after leaving the reservation (Jackson, Smith & Hill, 2003; Simms, 1999; Tashakkori & Thompson, 1991). An additional possibility is that Native Americans students' spiritual values and belief systems may give individuals a sense of duty to remain tied to traditional lands coupled with family pressure to stay home (Jackson & Smith, 2001; Jackson, Smith & Hill, 2003), and limited access to career information services such as counseling (Simms, 1999).

Other external factors include content of curricula used in public schools. Matthews and Smith (1994) gave mention to curricular materials having little relevance to Native American students, and indicated that more culturally relevant topics and material could increase motivation and self-esteem of Native American students. Additionally, Suina (2000) created a philosophy of educating indigenous tribes of Native American through their methods of obtaining wisdom in conjunction with their spiritual backgrounds. This spiritual educational model could potentially link students to their culture and their heritage (Suina, 2000). Manuelito (2005) conducted ethnography of Navajo educational patterns, and concluded that it was of vital importance to incorporate Native American epistemologies in the education of students from this population.

Other researchers have focused on personality characteristics of individuals contributing to poor academic performance and low persistence rates. Lin, LaCounte & Eder (1988) found that reported feelings of isolation and negative attitude toward college were significant predictors of poor college GPA (cumulative GPA < 2.0). Low career maturity has also been associated with low academic achievement in Native American college students (West, 1988). Another factor

contributing to achievement was family support (Jackson & Smith 2001; Jackson, Smith & Hill, 2003; Rindone, 1988). Several studies have added to the findings of the importance of family support as a contributing factor to achievement and have demonstrated a relationship between family support and academic self-efficacy (Fernandez, 1997; Lotta, 2001; Turner & Lapan, 2003).

Family Factors

Rindone (1988) conducted a study with Navajo students who had attained at least a four year degree to ascertain the factors most influential in their academic persistence and success. Parents and family members were found to be the “driving force” behind the respondents’ desire to achieve (as cited in Belgarde, 1992, p. 11). Similarly, Benjamin et al (1993) utilized a combination of statistical approaches and qualitative interviews with Native American students and found a higher tendency to go home and help their families or attend traditional ceremonies, even when it meant missing classes or assignments. Furthermore students reported knowing their absence would disrupt their education, but did it anyway, almost as if school were of little consequence in comparison. Finally, Rindone (1988) asked 107 Navajo students to list the single factor that contributed to their high academic achievement (all participants had attained at least a four year degree): “Thirty-four percent responded that it was their own motivation, and 45% reported that it was encouragement from parents and other family members” (p. 6). These studies seem to suggest the strength and support received from family and cultural heritage not only matters, but plays a significant role in academic persistence.

Recent studies of academic persistence among Native American students have identified several barriers to success (Jackson, Smith & Hill, 2003; Jackson & Smith, 2001). Reemerging themes found in this body of research suggest a complexity of family pressures. Jackson and

Smith (2001) found that students reported feeling pressure in a number of ways. Students reported feeling pressure to perform academically, to stay close to home, or both. They also reported feeling pressure to be able to return home to help with family conflict or trauma. Participants were less hopeful when they received a mixed message about education from their families. Jackson, Smith, and Hill (2003) found the following themes: (a) family encouragement was positively related to academic achievement or success, (b) a propensity for students to leave school immediately to assist with family conflict at home, and (c) the paradoxical imperative to find a field of study that is practically, personally, and culturally relevant. Similarly, Hund (1993) found unqualified family support may negatively affect academic persistence, i.e. a student in difficulty may be encouraged to come home with or without a degree. Additionally in Steward's (1993) qualitative case study of two successful Native American students, one participant stated "family problems and/or financial difficulties would be the only legitimate reasons to discontinue his education" (p. 193). These studies and others (Pewewardy & Frey, 2004; Saenz, Wyatt, & Reinard, 1998) have identified general themes suggesting the importance of understanding family and cultural pressures among Native American students.

Cultural Pressures and Conflicts

As indicated in the study by Wilcox et al. (2005), the ability to adequately negotiate between the old life students left behind (family, home and friends) and the new life ahead of them was imperative in their ability to persist in college. This process was often more difficult for most Native American students, considering the increased pressure related to cultural identity, which often includes questioning the degree to which one maintains close family and cultural ties (Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003; Jackson & Smith, 2001; Simms, 1999; Tashakkori & Thompson, 1991).

The question of acculturation influencing Native American student persistence has been addressed by various researchers, albeit limitedly so. As noted in Belgarde (1992), early studies suggest students have a better chance for achievement in college when socialized to the Native American tradition, when compared to their non-traditional counterparts (Rindone, 1988; Huffman, Sill, & Brokenleg, 1986). Furthermore, in a U.S. Office of Education study cited by Belgarde (1992) the most successful Native American college students were not the ones who came from the most acculturated environments, but were from homes where no English was spoken and where traditional Native American roots were firmly established.

Additional studies have found similar results (Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman, 1993; Schwartz, 1985). Schwartz (1985) looked at cultural identification, namely the extent to which Native American students identified as “traditional,” “bicultural,” or “acculturated” and how it influenced academic success. She found the most successful students were those who identified as “traditional,” followed by “bicultural” and those students who identified as demonstrating “varying degrees of acculturation” respectively. Those who identified themselves as “acculturated” experienced the least academic success. Similarly in Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman (1993), they found the role of traditional cultural identification and continued ties being more of a positive factor for persistence than acculturation.

Results of these studies raise questions regarding what is required of Native American students as they enter post-secondary education. Native American students with a traditional background and upbringing (i.e., students who were raised on the reservation) seem to perform better when they are able to find a balance between the cultural attitudes, values, and behaviors of their own culture and the attitudes, values, and behaviors of the culture they encounter at a

college or university. The research on cultural identity seems to indicate that the better balance these students can achieve the better chance they have of persisting in post-secondary education.

However, as yet there has been little research on what this process of becoming “bicultural” involves at the level of individual changes Native American students’ feel they have experienced as a result of their exposure to a college environment. The research on acculturation focuses largely on how students incorporate and accept new values and beliefs, not on how old belief systems and worldviews are influenced and potentially altered.

Acculturation and Changes in Values

One of the first attempts to identify changes in cultural values and beliefs was carried out by a team of researchers in Miami, Florida, while studying the acculturation process among Cuban Americans (Szapocznik, Scopetta, Kurtines, & Aranalde, 1978). In the study the authors included a section containing questions about language, daily customs and habits, and idealized lifestyles, whereas another section of the survey contained problem situations centered on relational style, the person-nature relationship, and beliefs about human nature, time orientation, and activity orientation. The data showed a change in the type of preferred values underlying problem-solving strategies as a function of length of residence in the United States (Szapocznik, 1978).

An additional finding of the study was that Cuban Americans with longer residence in the United States tended to respond similarly to non-Hispanic, White respondents. Respondents were found, therefore, to change from a more Hispanic orientation as acculturation was assumed to proceed. Subsequent research with Cuban adolescents and their parents in Dade County, Florida (Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1980), showed that large intergenerational gaps on acculturation scores were associated with drug abuse, and drug abuse was significantly

correlated with changes in value orientation but not with behavioral changes. These patterns of generational differences and conflict have also been found recently among Russian immigrants to the United States (Birman & Trickett, 2001), although in this case, adolescents tended to identify more with Russian culture than their parents.

Cuellar et al. (1995) examined the relationship between a behavioral measure of acculturation (Cuellar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995) and five scales that measured Hispanic cultural cognitive constructs (i.e., machismo, familialism, folk beliefs, fatalism, and personalismo). The sample consisted of Hispanic college students in Texas. Items related to the machismo construct attempted to measure positive and negative aspects of the assumed Hispanic male role (e.g., womanizer, brave, courageous). Familialism items examined the size, relationships, and emotional support of the family, whereas folk beliefs were measured by identifying the acceptance of folk illnesses and supernatural influences on health and treatment of health problems (Cuellar et al., 1995). Fatalism items measured the extent to which respondents believed that their behavior and future were beyond their control, and personalismo items measured the cultural construct of a warm and personal way of relating to an individual. Results showed that with the exception of the personalismo construct, acculturation, in the form of attendance at a university, decreased the personal significance of the four remaining cultural constructs so that as individuals became more assimilated, they tended to report lower personal significance of the values of the culture of origin (i.e., familialism, fatalism, machismo, and folk beliefs) (Cuellar et al., 1995).

Harding (2003) conducted interviews with college students of several ethnicities in an attempt to learn why, and in what ways, a student's attitudes, values, and behaviors were changed during the course of their college education. Among the findings of this research was

that during the course of their experience in college, students experienced an increased clarity of beliefs—specifically their moral and spiritual beliefs (Harding, 2003). Students reported that this increased clarity was influenced by a variety of factors, including classroom discussions, interactions with professors, and interactions with other students (Harding, 2003). However, Native American students were not among the minorities included in this research. Further study is needed to determine whether Native Americans experience a similar changing of attitudes, values, and behaviors during the course of their college education, and furthermore, whether this potential change is a factor in their academic persistence.

Appendix B:

Additional Support for Themes

The following sections contain participant quotes that further support and explain the themes identified in participant interviews. Selected quotes may be additional quotes or expanded sections of quotes previously cited in the body of the text.

Research Question #1

What differences does the student perceive between their culture of origin and the Western culture of a post-secondary institution?

Three primary themes emerged in relation to this research question: class differences, feeling academically unprepared, and differences in lifestyle.

Class differences. Several participants described class differences as one major distinction they perceived between their native culture and the cultural environment of their college.

Participant 1: Um, to an extent, I mean the, the high school I graduated from was probably about 85 percent Native American students....And so , you know there was, there was that Caucasian culture that was there, but was also having a lot of the Native American culture that was there as well, and so, I kind of, even before college I kind of saw both, um, when I went to college though, I saw a little bit different, I saw probably more of , I don't know if you would say upper class, you know higher educated students that came from higher educated families that had more, compared to the Native American people that I grew up with.

Participant 6: Well, for me there were so many things different. Umm, well the living environment like I said, umm, right now Monument Valley, they do have like a place

where you can get, you know, not exactly running water but you'd have to have like barrels and stuff like that and you have fill them up with water and take them home.Yeah and we didn't have electricity so, so you know we had to like find the basic necessities, we had to have like heat in our homes and stuff like that, so we had, you know get woods and my family didn't just, you know go find a tree and chop the down tree and make woods.....They purchase it from people and that's what we had to do and being in that sort of setting, you know there's no jobs or anything, so like how do you get the resources to buy the resources, and, umm, and the living environment again is extremely different. When we moved here we lived in an apartment, we still live in an apartment. I feel like my sense of living is so much better than it was then. In my home we lived in a trailer, and the trailer was just not in proper conditions. The roof was literally coming in, and like, when it rained it'd pour in like our living room I guess you could kind of say.

Participant 6: Ok, well the reservation is really like so spread out. You're going to have like homes there and there and it's just and if you don't have a vehicle or anything you have to walk, if you don't have running water then you're gonna have to go find some place to getting running water, so I guess like the living environment is completely different, the sense of community was really different because when there, just because people there are so much easier to relate to, like, as I saw growing up adults would communicate with each other so easily, but then like when I moved here it just, it was so different you literally felt like the minority.

Academic preparation. Another difference participants noted and discussed was the higher academic standards they encountered at college, and their own sense of feeling unprepared academically. Some participants discussed this theme in connection with their experience of class differences.

Participant 1: Um, yeah, really big shock for me, big eye opener, not at all what I had expected. I think, I think, um, just my education up through high school , um, the schools that I had gone to had been, um, academically not very challenging, and not really requiring lots of study, lots of in depth research, paper writing, you know the real academic aspects of an education.... And so when I first went to college, I was completely lost, I had no idea how to study, prepare for tests, I had no idea how to write papers, um, I had very little idea of even how to use internet to, to find resources.

Participant 1: And so, I had, I had really not, not a great idea of what an education meant and how it would make a difference in my life, and so I was always looking for the easy road or the easy way to get through it, and I didn't really have any teachers that, that ever told me hey this would me a good course to prepare you for college, I had, no counselors ever sat down to talk to me about going to college or getting scholarships, or looking around, or anything like that, and so I was, I was always, not that I was lazy, but I would just look for the easy way to get out of things and the easy way to get things done, my parents encouraged me to do well in classes and I did, I always had pretty decent grades....But, the, I think, I think the mentality of me and my peer group that I, that I graduated with, it was almost like, um, once you get out of college that's it, that's, that's, you know graduation, you're done, you've completed your education and you're out, and , and so I was, I guess just, just didn't at all know what, what I should've done to prepare

or had the, had the right idea or mentality to help me to be prepared for a college education.

Lifestyle differences. The third primary theme that emerged as participants discussed differences they perceived as they transitioned from their native communities to college was one of differences in lifestyle. Participants described these differences in lifestyle as secondary themes of (a) distance from family, (b) differences in goals/motivation, and (c) differences of religion.

Distance from family. Participants discussed distance from family and their resulting feelings of isolation and disconnection as one aspect of the different lifestyle they encountered at college.

Participant 2: It was kind of like a life changing...because the climate changed, when we travelled here, the distance... How long it was going to take, how much money are we going to spend, our housing, how far away we're going to live from home, And how much we are gonna not be around our family, and we're still trying to get used to it.

Participant 2: Ok so I came from a big humongous family, I have 5 brothers and two sisters, and so my dad was like, since I was the fourth oldest, and oldest from my sisters, I was sort of like, like a mom to my brothers and sisters, and so I wanted to continue school, make a difference, and my, to myself to my family, and to my community, because most people around my community, they give up. Once it gets hard, my dad, gives me these long lectures you should stay strong, just keep going, and at the beginning he didn't like it that I was coming out here to Utah, because its, he said that just the surrounding areas the community is going to be different from where you're from, from

how you were raised, and your color is different, your tradition is different, the way you talk is different, and then, you just can't speak like, you just can't talk to anyone, because it's different there, there's not the religion that you think, that you were growing up with, it's going to be different, so you're gonna be judged upon that. And so you're gonna have to, and you'll be criticized and by just the way you look, and all this stuff, and he was telling me, and so my mom was saying, well if this is what your really want, then you should just go, and then so, I came, and, and to this day my dad still disagrees with it, but he's slowly getting used to it, to me, living here now, but then, for my whole family I think I'm the one that really lives far.

Participant 3: There's some natives that joke saying that if you leave the reservation you need to get, like a new passport....It's like a whole new country compared to back home.

Participant 13: Yeah, it was kind of tough to leave home. There was a loss in family so my mom, it's kind of hard to leave my mom, but I knew I had to do this for me, so.

Differences in goals/motivation. Some participants discussed their perception that people they associated with at college had different goals and were motivated to achieve different outcomes than people in their native communities.

Participant 1: Okay, yeah, I grew up either on or around the Navajo reservation my whole life, and, I think, I don't know if it's just peer influence or what, but it was almost like in school, the, the main goal was to try to figure out the easiest way to get through, ah, you know what was the easiest class, what we're going to be the easiest classes to get an easy A or an easy grade, there was not a lot of, I guess incentive or even encouragement to take upper level classes, AP classes, honors classes, there were kids that did take them

but I had no idea why, I'd always thought, well, why would you want to take that, it just sounds so tough, when you could take something else like PE, or you know, you could take like, a fun class.

Differences of religion. All of the participants attended universities in Utah, where the Latter-Day Saint (Mormon) religion has a dominant influence, and therefore participants also encountered religious differences when they came to college.

Participant 2: Ok so I came from a big humongous family, I have 5 brothers and two sisters, and so my dad was like, since I was the fourth oldest, and oldest from my sisters, I was sort of like, like a mom to my brothers and sisters, and so I wanted to continue school, make a difference, and my, to myself to my family, and to my community, because most people around my community, they give up. Once it gets hard, my dad, gives me these long lectures you should stay strong, just keep going, and at the beginning he didn't like it that I was coming out here to Utah, because its, he said that just the surrounding areas the community is going to be different from where you're from, from how you were raised, and your color is different, your tradition is different, the way you talk is different, and then, you just can't speak like, you just can't talk to anyone, because it's different there, there's not the religion that you think, that you were growing up with, it's going to be different, so you're gonna be judged upon that. And so you're gonna have to, and you'll be criticized and by just the way you look, and all this stuff, and he was telling me, and so my mom was saying, well if this is what your really want, then you should just go, and then so, I came, and, and to this day my dad still disagrees with it, but he's slowly getting used to it, to me, living here now, but then, for my whole family I think I'm the one that really lives far.

Participant 11: Maybe it was just like the culture, you know, the LDS culture, the white society more or less, you know. Coming from the reservation atmosphere, you know, you come up here, there's hardly any Native Americans, so you, I guess I was; that was a big shock to me. Uhhuh, but I guess you could say, you know like, going from a high school where, you know like, half of the population is, you know like, Native American to coming up here and it's like very, very, very few, I mean, yeah that was, that was different, so....

Participant 2: It's pretty hard to make friends around here....It, yeah, I have to say it is, because, oh and the other thing is, since we're not married status wise, we get judged by that, because I have before, because all of my student teacher friends, my colleagues, um, they, when they ask me they say it to get to know me, and later, a couple weeks later, they ask me, so are you married, and so they see me with J, and they're like, is that your husband, how come you don't have a ring, or how come you didn't get married in a church, or all this stuff, they start saying it to you, and you're like, what's wrong with just being a boyfriend or a girlfriend you don't have to get married, but then to them, and then they start judging you, and they say, well in our religion this is what happens, and they tell you, then they lecture you, and then , they're not your friend the next day just because you said to them you're not married and that's not my religion.

Research Question #2

What meaning did these cultural differences have for the student, and how did he or she work with them?

Interview questions intended to explore this research question elicited two primary themes: desire to disprove negative stereotypes, and the importance of finding supportive others.

Desire to disprove negative stereotypes. Participants described a desire to disprove negative stereotypes about Native American people through (a) personal success and triumph, and (b) representing their native communities.

Personal success and triumph. Participants discussed achieving personal success and triumph as one way of disproving negative stereotypes about the abilities of Native American people.

Participant 1: And so personally there's a lot more drive, there's a lot more I think motivation, there's a lot more confidence, there's never been a time that I, well I guess, you know, right now, I feel like there's nothing that I can't do, if there's something that I want to do, I can work for it, I can achieve something, I can accomplish whatever I want to do, and so, I think it's just a higher level of self confidence in myself and my own personal ability and what I, what I can do, even things that are hard, before I used to think that I can't do hard things, now I think, yeah, hard things, they're hard, but I can do them, I know how to do them, I know how to get through things.

Participant 6: Umm, I have no idea exactly. I just, you know, came to terms that I need to grow up, um, one of my primary motivations have been my family because, yes we are off the reservation now, but we grew up in our entire life in an apartment and you know, having friends come over during my childhood and say, you live in an apartment and you know, I was embarrassed. You know, I'm not ashamed of where I come from anymore. I'm proud because I can say that I came from a meager living standard and now, you know, I'm so much better, and I'm going to get my degree.

Representing their native communities. One way that participants discussed how they dealt with the cultural differences they encountered was by attempting to educate others about the Native American culture by acting as a representative of their native communities.

Participant 6: I ask them [other students] what are they doing and like the primary response for Native American students is like, I can't do it because I'm Navajo. That's always been the response; well, I wasn't accepted because I'm Navajo. You know like, they, as a Native American you can't help but get the sense that because you're a minority that you're not going to get some of the opportunities that some other students get. I always tell them that, well, I got it. And it's not because I'm light complected and it's not because I have blue eyes. It's because I'm educated and determined.

Participant 11: And even now, you know like, we talk about, the class I'm taking right now is about addiction, talking about drugs and so forth, you know. It's interesting how a lot of it is geared towards Native Americans and so, rather than be like shy and be like wow they're talking about my people; I kind of stand up and say well yeah, it is a problem, I've seen it there, in certain issues it is, you know. I guess it's something that people really can't understand unless they live it, you know....And I said, I was telling them and you know you take people from here, growing up here their whole life and they learn about what's going on down there, I said, I said I think it's pretty easy to like stereotype, you know, but they don't really know unless they go down there, you know.

Importance of finding supportive others. The second primary theme that emerged as participants described how they worked with the cultural differences they encountered was regarding the importance of finding supportive others.

Participant 1: Uh, standards were a lot higher, expectations were a lot higher, um, I mean, just from roommates that I had and people that I interacted with, I saw, all these students that would study for hours and hours and hours, and being like, yeah, these guys are really different, it's weird, it's crazy, I don't even know, I don't even know how to do what they do, so.....It was an eye opener for me to, to see a different approach to education and see how other people kind of approached their classes, and their grades, and what they wanted to accomplish, for a lot of them it wasn't just hey all I got to do is pass this class, it's like, you know, I got to get this degree, but they actually strive to excel and to get the highest grade possible and to, do their best regardless of what anybody else said or thought or did, it was, the students were very much self-motivated, um, the professors were, you know, really encouraging, and they gave me advice and tips on how to study best or how to prepare best for, exams, and things like that.

Participant 1: Yeah that, and there was a lot of other resources as well, at the college level, that helped me find scholarships, to help pay for tuition, uh, I had a counselor in the multicultural office, who kind of, uh, helped me get a vision of what I was really, I didn't even know what I was doing when I went to college I just thought ok I'm gonna go to college and I guess I'll just take whatever classes they ask me to take..... I didn't understand a whole lot about picking and choosing whatever classes you want and because of that I took a lot of classes that I probably never should have, I just thought it would be fun, kind of that high school mentality what my first, probably two semesters I was just taking whatever, I didn't have I didn't know what it meant to, to complete certain requirements to working toward this degree or that degree; I didn't know about applying to different majors and so having that counselor in the multicultural office to

kind of help me map out what I wanted to do, what classes I needed to take, when I should take them, that that really helped kind of get me in the line to prepare myself for graduation, otherwise I'd probably still be taking classes wondering why I hadn't graduated yet.

Participant 11: Yeah, I was a shy kid, more or less, when I first came here, I guess I had social anxiety issues, more or less, you know like, um being away from home for the first time, you know, like really attached to my family, didn't really get to know a lot of knew people when I moved into DT towers, you know, I had my private room, you know, it was a private room that I had, so I didn't have like a roommate or anything, you know, but I realized as I was going that, you know like, I was kind of like, shunning myself, you know. I was only in that uh private room for one semester and then I moved in with a roommate, you know, actually he was from back home and he was Navajo too, so him and I are pretty good friends, you know, and we got to know like quite a few people on the floor, so I guess it kind of helped me get out of my shell a little bit.

Participant 1: And so that made a big difference, um, cause I, I actually started during the summer term right after high school, and I had a friend that I went to BYU with, and we just lived it up, and we went to dances every night and we were up late, and we were really not organized with our time schedules, we were not efficient with the way we used our time.....Yeah not at all academically focused, it was just fun, we were out on our own, so I think having a counselor in the multicultural office to kind of help me get set straight made a really big difference for me.

Participant 1: Um, well one thing I really liked was the I think I just really liked the social aspect of the college experience I had I think I had a really good group of friends that I

that it got with when I first got to school, and, the, so I lived with three other roommates there was four of us in the apartment , two of them were in graduate programs at the time that I started, one of them was an undergrad, and you know these were just fun guys to hang out with and they had been through a lot of different things and they had gone through the same experience that I had and they encouraged me to continue to work hard to do well, to strive for success and not to give up on things when they were tough or when they were difficult.

Participant 2: And, it, it was sad, but, um, I wanted to transfer back to New Mexico but, um, my dad has this saying like, if you want to go far, to succeed in it, don't just come back and give up on what your goal was at the beginning, and so I decided to live far, and keep going, and so now, today, I feel like I've made a huge difference to my family and to myself.

Participant 4: So I was kind of nervous, but I kind of, knew kind of what to expect academically, but not as far as like social atmosphere, and like the whole culture and the yeah, the environment kind of thing, so I was scared...But once I got here it was so different than what I expected because there was some native students who I kind of got to know and hung out with them a lot and so that whole, my, the whole view that I had kind of changed because, I'm like ok, I have friends here were all native, and we all have the same kind of goals, we get along fine, and so...

Research Question #3

How did those differences impact the student's experiences in college?

Two themes emerged in connection with this research question, one which participants viewed as positive and one viewed as negative: experiences of greater diversity, in contrast with experiences of cultural tension.

Experiences of greater diversity. Participants described a primary theme of experiences of greater diversity as a positive way that the cultural differences they encountered at college impacted them.

Participant 4: Um, well it, everyone was friendly here, it was diverse it was a whole bunch of like Saudis and Koreans and like it was a whole bunch of people and the college I went to before was just kind of like majority of them were like Native Americans, and like, a few like white people, but it was majority of them were Native American so I kind of like knew the people.... Just like just because I was Navajo and they were Navajo too, so, but then coming here it was kind of it was different there was a lot of different people and I felt like um, just like one like I was a minority here, where back home I was the majority.

Experiences of cultural tension. In contrast to the positive impact of experiencing greater diversity at college, participants also described the negative impact of experiences of cultural tension, which emerged as a primary theme composed of three secondary themes: (a) experiences of racism and discrimination, (b) rejection by other Native Americans, and (c) hiding of native identity.

Experiences of racism and discrimination. Participants described events or interactions which they perceived as racist or in which discrimination occurred.

Participant 11: In a way, I mean a, I guess you could that uh, most people, like didn't know that I was Native American, you know, and to myself, you know like, you, I

remember the dorms specifically, um, people would make like certain jokes or references, you know, about native Americans and I guess you could say just coming from that uh, you know, atmosphere where I was kind of like a shy kid, whatever, I never did speak up and let them know that I was, so that was something that was kind of like hard to, you know, get over.

Participant 3: A lot of the staff treated us like equal, and like we were welcome to be here, but then when classes started and students came in, different students look at you different ways....Yeah, more of the stereotypes than how we're, becauseYeah and so after that we just kept to ourselves and just went to class and we would just leave right after because we don't live on campus, we live off campus.

Participant 6: Umm, now I don't really, well, sort of I feel like that. Uh, like growing up in my classes, you know, again I felt like the minority and it was just so, I just felt like, you know, I would say like pity was my friend, because then like, the only reason like people want to talk to me or ask if I needed help with anything was because I felt like people pitied me.

Participant 2: It's pretty hard to make friends around here....It, yeah, I have to say it is, because, oh and the other thing is, since we're not married status wise, we get judged by that, because I have before, because all of my student teacher friends, my colleagues, um, they, when they ask me they say it to get to know me, and later, a couple weeks later, they ask me, so are you married, and so they see me with J, and they're like, is that your husband, how come you don't have a ring, or how come you didn't get married in a church, or all this stuff, they start saying it to you, and you're like, what's wrong with just being a boyfriend or a girlfriend you don't have to get married, but then to them, and then

they start judging you, and they say, well in our religion this is what happens, and they tell you, then they lecture you, and then , they're not your friend the next day just because you said to them you're not married and that's not my religion.

Participant 6: Yes, whereas you know, I'm still Native American, you know I still have that, you know, look and so I always felt discriminated against on the white, you know again by the Caucasian people, and so, you know, I guess you know to cope with it I got light colored lenses, these are colored.... I'm full native American but it just, you know, I just said why not give it a try and so I did and I did notice the differences in the way that people treated me.

Rejection by other Native Americans. Participants described feeling rejected by other Native Americans in some situations.

Participant 6: Yes, extremely. I worked at a restaurant here in town about four years and starting out it was, you know, I just felt like constantly I was being discriminated against. And like I, I've always felt discriminated against on both sides. By my own Native American people and by you know, other races, I guess you could say like, I don't want to say like primarily Caucasians but you know....And working there it just, beginning there it was difficult for me, because like I'm very light complected, and so, uh you know people say, oh he's half Native American, and he must be half Native American so you know, he must have like some kind of white person in his family that helps provide the resources that we struggled to get.

Participant 2: Yes, because when we finally went home a month ago, we were considered like we act, in our terms, family terms, to other Native Americans we're um, we were like, we act like white people, that's what they say just because of how we adapted here

in Cedar City, and we were different when we left New Mexico and then we started living here for three years, for three and a half years now, and now we talk very clear, it's different, and... Yes, I have to say that we did, we did change a lot. Kind of, about half way.

Participant 2: And also I don't want to be labeled as a white Navajo, which is like, you're just too perfect, you don't have that bad language, you don't have those slangs, you don't, you talk clearly, you do stuff right, you're dressed professional, like because when you're back on reservation, and you're dressed professional, you're already judged because you're like, who are you trying to impress, or who are you trying to, like, be, impressing someone, what are you the president, or like, you get stuff like that, but then you're ok with it, but then at some places it's hard to take, it's hard to take in.

Hiding of native identity. As a final aspect of the cultural tension described by participants, hiding of native identity emerged as way that some participants were negatively impacted by the cultural differences they encountered at college.

Participant 3: We have to like hide ourselves, and then like, start a new, start a new identity.... You have to start, I guess we just have to keep refreshing ourselves...

Participant 2: We have pictures of our culture, in our apartment, and they'll just stand there and look at it.... They'll look at it, so when they're talking to you they're looking in your apartment like, oh, I'm skimming through that, and ok, and, we just don't want that...and [J] doesn't wear turquoise jewelry on campus anymore because people will be like, why is a man wearing jewelry?

Participant 12: Um, no, say like you're a Navajo kid, a Navajo teen or adolescent, or whatever, young adult coming to the college world, you're not, I mean you were raised

on the reservation cause that's where the high school is and everything, and then come to the school with us and you like try to tuck away some of your cultural identity into a corner or into a closet and say that you don't have, you never showed yourself I guess that you were Navajo.

Research Question #4

How might the student's attitudes, values, and behaviors have changed as a result of their experiences in college?

Three primary themes emerged that describe the way students experienced change as a result of their experiences in college: change in viewpoint, becoming more independent, and an increased desire to give back to their native communities.

Change in viewpoint. Participants' descriptions of their changes in viewpoint as a result of their experiences in college emerged as three secondary themes: (a) increased self-confidence, (b) increased sense of opportunity, and (c) placing higher value on education.

Increased self-confidence. Participants discussed how an increased confidence in their own abilities is one way their college experience has created personal change.

Participant 1: Uh, uh yeah, I think that, I think that um, I've come to realize that I can do so much more than I used to think I could. I can, I can excel in things that I used to never think that I could, I can compete with, I can compete with people for jobs, where before, I thought that I wouldn't even have a chance, and so I think that it's kind of increased my, my self-confidence or just my ability to go out and to be in the workforce and to go out and into you know a certain market and have opportunities that I used to think only came to other people.

Increased sense of opportunity. Another aspect of the change in viewpoint that participants described was an increased sense of opportunities available to them.

Participant 1: Yeah, I think that, like I, I think I kind of talked about earlier how in the Native American culture a lot of people feel like the government and the white culture owes them so much because of the history of the Native American's and the white settlers and being put on reservations, and, I think it's, there's still some animosity and some, uh, I guess you could say some racial anger, there, and I see that with I see that with people that I interact with almost daily as far as the Native American culture that people there are still having a hard time to accept this white culture, and they, they feel like well, I'm a Native American so I can't do things like the white people do because of this, and I don't like them because of this, whereas now I feel like, I don't know that I ever really had that feeling, but I feel now that, you know, their culture is their culture, that's where they came from, my culture where I came from is where I came from, we don't really control where we come from, but we do have a lot of control on what we do with our lives and what we want to accomplish, and, I think that, any person regardless of race, background, culture, ethnicity, I think everybody especially in this country has just as much opportunity as the next person, to accomplish whatever they want to do they can make as much money as they want to do, or at the same time they can be as lazy as they want to as well.

Participant 5: Born on the reservation, ok, what I've seen is that most people, the jobs that they get are usually iron working, or just recently oil rigging and you don't really get any benefits out of those, right. But they do get higher pay which is pretty good. The only downfall to that is what happens when the jobs over, you're done with what you're doing

and you get laid off. It might be months and months at a time before you get a job. That new vehicle that you bought could get REPO-ed any time. You wouldn't have the money to pay for it and keep having that nice ride and to keep your insurance going and what not, so it's like what's the point of having a high paying job if you're not able to keep it. If it doesn't give you benefits what happens when you get hurt on the job then it'd be out of my pocket. For something, like most people who doesn't insurance or anything like that it's kind of hard for them to get the medication or go see a doctor without having to pay out of their own pocket... Pretty much, I try to shoot for having a great career, something I can look back and say, yeah. I'd have a good job, look at my nice vehicles that I have, the things that I need is right here provided for myself. So continuing my job I want to have a great retirement at this starting point in my life. That's what I'm looking forward to and what not.

Placing higher value on education. Many participants discussed how their experiences in college have led them to place a higher value on education.

Participant 5: Pretty much, since you have all this freedom, just don't take advantage of it; turn around, yeah, like karma kind of a thing.... Yeah, totally, coming of age you have to actually have a higher degree than high school to get a decent job nowadays. To me, kind of, in a way I see it as a high school diploma don't mean anything anymore and an associate's degree is like a high school diploma. You have to keep going furthering education to something better. If you find a major firsthand, great because then you have a direction to go. You keep following that direction and you can get your bachelors and that's your major, masters, doctorate and so forth. So, it'd be great as for me, if it's kind

of like, find out where I want to go and slowly make my way towards it and after three years still continuing my education.

Participant 1: Uh, seeing, I mean seeing now, yes, now yes, I mean there's obviously I went on to graduate school is one way for me to continue to excel and to develop myself, and to advance my education so I'll have more opportunities to you know, move up I guess you could say the social ladder....Whereas before it wasn't, I didn't have any type of mentality like that so I guess you could say I kind of have adopted that, the white or the Caucasian viewpoint on, on a lot of things after going to college so there was some impact there on me.

Participant 1: Um, I think I've I would say I do put a lot higher value on, education now, then before. Um, I see I now I am able to see how a good education can lead to certain areas that otherwise would be difficult to get to, certain jobs without having a good education certain jobs would definitely be very much out of reach or difficult to attain, and so I think I think it puts the higher value on that.

Participant 7: Umm, I think my view of school and education in my family got broader than most because a lot of my friends went to school just so they could follow other friends....And I was the opposite, I wanted to get away. But, umm, a couple of my good friends sitting outside were already planning to come up here, we're pretty good friends. We have the same, uh, expectations of each other. Good grades and going to class, so they really helped, their families are their main priorities too so they understand when we have things to do.

Participant 11: I feel like as you get older your perspective and everything kind of, you put it in to thought more or less. I guess all things come together and you realize, you

know like, you look back at your life, you know, and hindsight is 20:20, you know. You wish that you could have done things differently but, you know, on the other hand you're thankful for the experiences that you've been through; you appreciate things that much more, you know. I think that's the situation I'm in right now, you know. Granted, you know, I have a job here but it doesn't pay that much, you know. My wife, you know, she's home full-time taking care of my kids, more or less. Just being thankful, I guess you could say, you scholarship and funding that comes through to be able to help us survive, you know, and help me attain this dream of getting this college degree. I guess it's something that, you know, I don't know if words can really, kind of say how much it means to me, so.

Increased independence. A second primary theme that emerged as participants discussed the ways they feel they have changed as a result of their college experiences was one of becoming more independent.

Participant 4: Probably my time management, like making sure that I have all my studying done before I go and like, go to Vegas or somewhere, or like go to salt lake for the weekend, like making sure that I have those all done, that's been a little, like hard, it's been a little difficult, like because you don't have anyone here telling you what to do, and like you're professors will tell you but they're not gonna like be there saying do this, do this, make sure you do this, kind of thing, it's kind of like on your own, so I've kind of learned, that was a little difficult at first but now I'm kind of like adjusting and I'm improving on that a lot.

Participant 8: I'd say I've probably become more responsible, like turning in my homework and at the same time you have to fill out scholarship applications too....Um, I

try to push myself, because remember how you hear like people say, they can't do this, or they can't do that, they're not gonna graduate, that just keeps popping in my head sometimes, and then it like motivates me to, even to just keep going and pass my classes and prove those people wrong I guess.

Participant 14: Yeah, I think I finally matured because when I first came I didn't really do my homework or anything. Now I really do my homework and I'm on top of things and these freshmen that come in and I see them and I'm like, oh I used to be like that....When I first came they just gave out syllabus and you had to follow those and do your own homework and everything. I didn't know that, I kind of got behind when I first came. So once I started to do my homework and everything, that's when I started to change.

Because I just, it's like not as important to have friends as it was in High School, like that social and all that stuff doesn't matter as much, so I think that's what changed for me. So I just started studying.

Participant 15: Um, I feel more on my own...And I don't know I don't really go home, I got to stay out here....I guess it's, I don't really spend time home anymore and I sort of got used to being out here and being with my friends.

Increased desire to give back to native communities. The final primary theme that emerged as participants described how they have changed during the course of their college experience was an increased desire to give back or to help their native communities.

Participant 1: Um, I feel like it's just as much a part of my life as it's ever been, I don't think that I've lost any of my culture or my background and upbringing I think I've I might view things a little bit differently now about the native American culture and the viewpoint that a lot of native Americans have on, just society in general and what they

think, but my wife is also a Native American she's a Navajo, grew up on the reservation in Arizona and so we go back often and we visit there and we still we still are involved with um, various native American gatherings and Pow Wows and things like that, and its something that we think is an important part of who we are and that, I mean that's who I am, that's my ancestors, that was our culture, you know our traditions, our stories, there's just a lot to it. Yeah, and you know I would like to pass down to my children that that same culture because they are also Native American's and I think it's important for them to learn you who they are and, and where their ancestors came from, and just that history and that tradition and the just everything that kind of goes with that....And so, I'm still trying to stay as connected as I can to my Native American culture.

Participant 2: And then later, like, give back to our community, give back to our reservation, and because I want to teach a first grade class at a BI affairs school, which is called Standing Rock, but then in Navajo its Tay Ay (sp?) community school, and there, you get, you have, ok, it's like, growing up, going to school every day but then you have a second teacher that's Navajo and then the main teacher is white, and so you're growing up with that, and then now, today, now I know why there's those white or Caucasian people were teaching because some Native Americans or it's like, ok, that school is majority Native American students, and so the principal would know sort of some stuff about Native Americans, and so that's why I want to give back to the school because when I saw my second grade teacher teach us as if, as if she was Native American, as if she was part of us, she made us feel, equal, she made it, she was like our mom to us, in my second grade, and um, so then that's why I want to go back, later, once I have more

experience in education and teaching, I want to go back to BIA at Tay Ay (sp?) community school, and teach.

Participant 2: Yes, and just to help, for me it's mainly all the abuses going around on our reservation, it's probably known for...I know there's like a lot of people who say they will do it [help], I strongly think I am going to do it, because, since I've been stereotyped coming here in Utah and next year getting a degree in a bachelors degree for education, I will one day teach that to others around my community, and say it's not too late, so don't be afraid to go far and live out, live out of the reservation.

Participant 4: It's sad to go home, like seeing, um, the surroundings kind of thing, the environment that's there, I mean it's always nice to go home to see family and it's a blessing to go home to see my family and everything, but I just don't like, I don't like seeing the people there struggling it feels like they're struggling and there's just not, there's no jobs, there's no economic development there, there's nothing there, it seems like just like entry level jobs kind of thing, I can't really go back like, graduate and go back and say, oh there's a job waiting for me there, cause there's not a lot of those kind of things, so it's sad, but then it's like, but then it's also inspiring, motivating me like well I'm doing something good I'm going out to college and cause I don't want to be like this... And I want to kind of set an example to those, like well, it's not, go to college and you become something, you learn new things, and then you're gonna appreciate the little things that you have just because you, you're going to school kind of thing.

Participant 11: I think my options are open, more or less. Wherever I can find a good paying job to support my family then it, you know, it would be great. We actually own a home, you know. So we got a mortgage and everything and we've been in that home for

like ten years, so, that's like ten years invested in equity in that thing. So I mean if we got that here, you know if I can find something around the Utah Valley area that'd be great. If I can I've always been open to, you know, moving back home, either Farmington area, Kirtland, or Blanding area, you know. I've always thought, you know like with the knowledge and the training that I'm picking up here, to take that home apply it to the Navajo people, you know. I mean, I've lived away from the reservation for quite awhile, you know. When we went back for the first time for me going to school, you know, I loved it down there, Mexican Hat. I thought to myself, wow, you know, I miss all this. I miss talking to all my native brothers and sisters. It's just like a camaraderie I guess, you know, you just have like; it's just nice I mean. I don't know I guess it's just something that mainstream white society can't just understand. I guess as far as the humor, you know, the stories etcetera, you know, that's just something that I just love.

Advice to Other Native American Students

While not a specific research question at the conception of the study, participants' responses during the interviews included many suggestions to fellow Native American students who are beginning their college experience. Analysis of these responses produced three primary themes: take advantage of your opportunities, believe in your own value, and the importance of persistence.

Take advantage of your opportunities. The first primary theme that emerged from participant's advice to other Native American students was an encouragement to take advantage of your opportunities.

Participant 5: Pretty much, since you have all this freedom, just don't take advantage of it; turn around, yeah, like karma kind of a thing.... Yeah, totally, coming of age you have

to actually have a higher degree than high school to get a decent job nowadays. To me, kind of, in a way I see it as a high school diploma don't mean anything anymore and an associate's degree is like a high school diploma. You have to keep going furthering education to something better. If you find a major firsthand, great because then you have a direction to go. You keep following that direction and you can get your bachelors and that's your major, masters, doctorate and so forth. So, it'd be great as for me, if it's kind of like, find out where I want to go and slowly make my way towards it and after three years still continuing my education.

Participant 1: And so I think Native Americans should definitely take advantage of any opportunity that they can, and not, not to get discouraged with it, I think that's one thing too, is in, from my high school experience to college, it was such a shock, the workload was a lot more than I wanted, I struggled in classes, and I thought a lot of times, you know maybe college is not for me, and I heard people say that before too, oh college is not for everybody....I've heard people say that about different jobs, about military it's not for everybody, I think that college can be for anybody that wants it to be for them, If they're willing to work hard and put in the effort I think that anybody can get a good college education it does take work it does take time it takes a lot of effort it takes persistence, um, working towards your goal, and sometimes it is tough, and sometimes it's not fun, but it's worth it when you finally get an education and you have an opportunity to go out and to look for jobs and show your credentials and say I have this bachelor's degree or I have this degree or that degree, and to be more marketable in the employment world.

Participant 10: The paper work can be a pain, all the applications but it's definitely worth it. Definitely take full advantage of getting an education, learn, so... Yeah, it's not an easy road. It's very hard but I think, just going to school it makes you realize, if you're open to it, how many things you don't know and what you want to do, to learn more, so taking all these classes, like I've taken a lot of different classes in different fields. I have a lot of credits but I'm really glad that I took all those because I learned so many different things, being able to become well rounded that way.

Participant 11: I don't know. Overcome their social anxiety issues, more or less. To just, you know like, I guess you could say, like here they have service opportunities, those are like great areas to go out and be involved with other students, you know, community etcetera. Just be able to build that, you know like, bond of trust with other people, you know. And help them, you know, get out of their shell and realize that the world's a much bigger place, and so. I guess you could say, the words like, how to experience new cultures, then that would be.

Believe in your own value. Another theme that emerged from participants' responses was their counsel to fellow Native American students to believe in your own value, and specifically your value as a Native American.

Participant 2: Stay strong and keep your faith....Keep your tradition alive....Don't forget where you came from because that's the strongest word people say around our community because some people out there, When we leave the reservation all the elders usually tell you don't forget about us.

Participant 14: I guess it would be to just to say that you can do anything. You can as long as you put your mind to it and you have. The quote that I always tell my sisters is,

“You have to do what you have to do in order to get what you want to do.” So, like, that meaning that in my general studies I didn’t really want to do them but I have to do them if I wanted to be a nurse. So that’s what I always tell them and they really look up to me because my third youngest sister, she’s six, and then she always comes to pick me up with my aunty and she’s always, I’m going to be in college like you someday. She always says that and she’s always telling my sisters like, I want to finish college like my sister. She says that to her teacher and everything, so I think in terms of giving advice it would be to just do it. Just, we can do anything, because most of my friends haven’t finished college yet either so I think that financially don’t let anything in your way. So who knows, it’s just a big old piece of advice that you can do anything.

Importance of persistence. The final theme that emerged from participants’ advice to other Native American students was regarding the importance of persistence.

Participant 1: And so I think Native Americans should definitely take advantage of any opportunity that they can, and not, not to get discouraged with it, I think that’s one thing too, is in, from my high school experience to college, it was such a shock, the workload was a lot more than I wanted, I struggled in classes, and I thought a lot of times, you know maybe college is not for me, and I heard people say that before too, oh college is not for everybody....I’ve heard people say that about different jobs, about military it’s not for everybody, I think that college can be for anybody that wants it to be for them, If they’re willing to work hard and put in the effort I think that anybody can get a good college education it does take work it does take time it takes a lot of effort it takes persistence, um, working towards your goal, and sometimes it is tough, and sometimes it’s not fun, but it’s worth it when you finally get an education and you have an

opportunity to go out and to look for jobs and show your credentials and say I have this bachelor's degree or I have this degree or that degree, and to be more marketable in the employment world.

Participant 11: I mean, I'm usually, like for kids you know, I just wish that when I was down at CEU, you know, I saw how like, you know, how terrible some kids were doing. I just thought to myself, man, if they would have only known. Cause I was in that boat, you know. I mean, and I had told some of them before, like, don't do this, you know. Do good in school, you know. Just keep on going. You don't have to attend Harvard University. Just go somewhere you can attain that degree. I guess that like me, that they just, you know like, have their thoughts elsewhere, you know. It is sad, you know, I guess it does bug me because I think that the Navajo people and all Native American people are worth a lot more than what they realize. That's just something that they have to, you know like, I guess you could say have instilled in them, you know.... I just wish it was something that they would realize. Whereas with them, you know, just like realize that if they can't hack it at school just go back to the reservation and just live or get some, you know, low paying job or whatever just to make ends meet. I don't think that's, you know, the way to go about things.

Appendix C:

Interview Guidelines and Sample Questions

The interviews will be conducted using an unstructured format. The following questions are typical of those that will be asked in the course of the interview. Reflective listening and minimal encouragers will be used to maximize participant responses and increase the depth of interview content. In each area, efforts will be made to help participants address content relevant to changes in their worldviews/beliefs. The actual wording of the questions will be adapted to be appropriate to context and the flow of the interview.

1. Please describe your experience here at (college name).
2. What differences do you perceive between your culture of origin and the culture you have encountered at college?
3. What meaning do these cultural differences have for you, and how do you work with them?
4. How have these differences impacted your experiences in college?
5. How might your attitudes, values, and behaviors have changed as a result of your experiences in college?
6. What has been the most difficult thing for you in coming to college?
7. What have you enjoyed most about coming to college?
8. What advice would you give to another Native American student who was coming to college for the first time?

Appendix D:
Demographic Questionnaire

Code ID :

Date:

College/University attending now:

Other Universities/Colleges attended:

Major:

Gender:

Age:

Years in College/University:

Home Community:

Years lived on a reserve/reservation:

High school(s) attended:

Band/Tribal affiliation(s):

Parents' education

 Mother:

 Father:

Appendix E:

Consent Forms

Consent to be a Research Subject

Introduction

This research project investigates whether students with a traditional Native American upbringing feel that any of their attitudes, values, and behaviors has been changed by exposure to the Western culture of a college environment. It is hoped that this research will help us determine whether Native American students' feel pressure to change to be more congruent with the culture of a university environment, and furthermore, whether this perceived pressure is a factor in their academic persistence. It is being conducted by Dr. Aaron Jackson and Leslie Clark (faculty member and graduate student at Brigham Young University). You were invited to participate because you are a Native American student either recently graduated from, or currently enrolled, at a postsecondary institution.

Procedures

You will be asked to fill out a demographic questionnaire and then participate in a one-on-one interview. These measures are not lengthy, and you should expect to be done in less than an hour. Interviews will be audio-taped in order to increase accuracy.

Risks/Discomforts

Participating in this study will only pose minimal risk to you, although you may experience some emotional discomfort or embarrassment when confronted with culturally sensitive topics. The investigators will be sensitive to those who may become uncomfortable.

Benefits

There are no known direct benefits to you. However, you will have a chance to describe your college experience and share what you have learned as an opportunity to help other students from similar backgrounds.

Confidentiality

All information provided will remain confidential and will only be reported as group data with no identifying information. All data will be kept in a locked case and on password-protected computers available only to those directly involved in the study. At the conclusion of the study, all study material will be destroyed.

Compensation

You will receive no compensation for your participation in this study.

Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to discontinue your participation at any time. There will be no repercussions to you should you decide not to participate or to withdraw prior to completion.

Questions about the Research

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Dr. Aaron Jackson at (801) 422-8031, aaron_jackson@byu.edu, or Leslie Clark at (801) 663-6419, leslie.clark85@gmail.com.

Questions about your Rights as a Research Participant

If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in a research project, you may contact the BYU IRB Administrator at (801) 422-1461, A-285 ASB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602, irb@byu.edu.

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will and volition to participate in this study.

Name (Please Print): _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Consent to Tape-Record Interview:

I, _____ [print your name] give consent to have this interview tape-recorded for the purposes of accurately, and completely, including my responses in the study. I also understand that I will be given a transcription of the interview approximately one month from now for me to review and approve. At any time during the interview, I can indicate to the interviewer that I no longer wish to have my responses tape-recorded, whereupon I will be given the option of continuing the interview (the interviewer will record my responses manually) or withdrawing my consent to participate in the study. If the latter, all my taped responses will be erased in my presence. Again, there will be no penalty for withdrawing from the study.

(Signature of Participant)

(Date)

Transcript Release: Traditional Native American Students' Experiences of Post-Secondary Education

Thank you again for participating in this project, and for providing us with valuable information!

Before you leave, would you like to read through a written version (**transcription**) of your interview which should be ready approximately one month from now? This gives you an opportunity to review the transcript for accuracy (Were all your responses to the interview understood correctly?), and it also gives you the chance to change, add, or omit responses — or to even completely withdraw your responses from the study. Even if you choose not to do this, you may still contact the researcher later if you change your mind and want to see the transcription of your interview.

- Yes, I would like to review a transcription of my interview.**

Participant's Name: _____

Telephone Number: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

- No, I do not want to review a transcription of my interview.**

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Debriefing Form: Traditional Native American Students' Experiences of Post-Secondary Education

From the literature available on Native American academic persistence, some general factors contributing to persistence have been identified, including support from family, supportive staff and faculty, institutional commitment, personal commitment, and connections to homeland and culture (Jackson & Smith, 2001; Dodd, Garcia, Meccage, & Nelson, 1995; Reyhner & Dodd, 1995; Rindone, 1988). However, there is little information available about whether changes in attitudes, values, and behaviors may influence a students' decision to remain in college.

Some research on college students of several ethnicities has found that the experience of post-secondary education can change an individual's attitudes, values, and behaviors. Harding (2003) conducted qualitative interviews in an attempt to learn why students' religious beliefs and values changed during the course of their college education. Examining the themes of these interviews revealed that all the students who participated mentioned that the influence of friends and professors they associated with during their college experience was a significant reason that they changed their beliefs (Harding, 2003). However, though various ethnicities were represented, none of the students interviewed for this research were Native American.

This study is an attempt to determine whether students' with a traditional Native American upbringing feel that their attitudes, values, and behaviors have been changed by exposure to the Western culture of a college environment, and further, whether this potential change was a factor in their academic persistence. It is being conducted by Dr. Aaron Jackson and Leslie Clark (faculty member and graduate student at Brigham Young University). You were invited to participate because you are a Native American student either recently graduated from, or currently enrolled, at a postsecondary institution.

Thank you again for participating in this project, and for providing us with valuable information! If you have any questions about the study or if you would like a copy of the results, please feel free to contact the researchers, Dr. Aaron Jackson at (801) 422-8031, aaron_jackson@byu.edu, or Leslie Clark at (801) 663-6419, leslie.clark85@gmail.com.

Good luck with all your future plans!

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