University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations

Dissertations and Theses

5-16-2008

Experiencing Higher Education in Louisiana through a Native American Lens

Linda Kelly
University of New Orleans

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td

Experiencing Higher Education in Louisiana through a Native American Lens

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
The University of New Orleans
In partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Educational Leadership, Counseling and Foundations

By

Linda Kelly

B.S. University of Illinois at the Medical Center 1971

M.A. University of New Mexico 1986

May 2008

Acknowledgements

I started on my doctoral journey about ten years ago. After a few bumps and sidetracks I have completed the journey. The end result of this journey - my dissertation - is complete because of the encouragement and work of many individuals.

Dr. Amy Wells commented on one of my assignments in her class, which was about Native Americans, that she believed the topic to be of interest and encouraged me to continue with it and build on the information whenever I could in my other classes. She felt that would be of benefit to me for the dissertation. Her guidance with this direction is much appreciated, as it has helped me with the foundation for the dissertation.

Each of my committee members deserves a special "thank you" for the hours of time devoted to reading, re-reading and editing this document. Dr. C. Jim Killacky, a very patient man, (for which I am grateful) was the chair of my committee. He kept me focused, believed in my topic, and facilitated the progress of each step of the dissertation journey. Dr. Marietta Del Favero provided a multitude of suggestions to enhance the content and clarify my thoughts. Dr. April Whatley-Bedford provided enthusiasm for qualitative research, which was infectious. Her presentation of the use of a data poem and metaphor as data displays for results encouraged me to include these forms. Dr. Bedford encourages creativity and I hope that I met her challenge.

A special "thank you" goes to Dr. Raymond Miles at McNeese State University for assisting me with the IRB at his institution and assisting with the letters to potential participants. His assistance started the process of locating participants in the western part of the state.

doctoral journey. I thank them for the time they gave me in listening and the time I

denied them while I wrote.

Table of Contents

Appendices

List of Figures, Diagrams and Tables

Page

Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation was to capture the voice of the Louisiana Native American students who attend Louisiana institutions of higher education. Native Americans are the least represented minority in colleges. More have entered college in recent years, yet they continue to leave college at a high rate. It is important to understand what motivates Native students to attend college and what keeps them in college. When an understanding of their persistence is achieved, strategies can be implemented to assist others.

Research questions that prompted inquiry relate to a Louisiana Native American perspective. All of the research questions ask about the higher education experience and support the primary question: *How can the higher education experiences of Native Americans be explained in models of persistence?*

This dissertation reviews the literature concerning persistence and departure of minority students. Development of ethnic identity is reviewed. The focus of this phenomenological qualitative research study was to examine the experiences of Native Americans during their collegiate journey. Twelve Native American students who attend five institutions of higher education in southern Louisiana were interviewed with open ended questions about their college experiences. Three participants were male and nine were female. Three tribal groups were represented: Choctaw-Apache, Coushatta and the United Houma Nation.

Responses have been analyzed using the cultural model presented by Guiffrida (2006) and support the need for a cultural perspective, with the addition of the tribe as an

influence. Students were satisfied overall with their experiences. Instances of stereotyping were present that made some students uncomfortable. Intrinsic motivation focused on competency and was frequently coupled with the sense of belonging. Extrinsic motivation came from tribal educational values which provided the cultural capital to pursue a degree. Intended application of the degree was most frequently tied back to the Indian community. Tribal influence was present from intention through to application of the degree. The responses of the participants in this study support a bicultural level and strong enculturation. A model of enculturation is proposed to address the participants' responses.

Key Words: Native American, cultural identity, enculturation, persistence, satisfaction, resilience, higher education experience, motivation

Chapter I: Identification of the Problem

Introduction

Prior to the mid 1960's Segregation and discrimination in the South educationally disadvantaged several groups of minorities. The plight of African Americans during that time has been well documented. Awareness of the affect of segregation laws on Native Americans has been less publicized. American Indians in Louisiana were not allowed to attend public school until the 1960's (Stamey, 2007). Education was provided by missionaries on houseboats until the segregation laws were made illegal (Dardar, n.d.; Stamey, 2007). Even though the civil rights struggles occurred more than forty years ago and Native Americans have access to all levels of education, discrepancies still exist. How these discrepancies are experienced in higher education institutions in Louisiana has not been explored. Entrance into the higher education arena by Louisiana's Native American tribes has not been studied. Many of the American Indian students are first generation college attendees. How Native American culture in Louisiana has influenced decisions to enter and continue in higher education has not been documented.

The majority of Native Americans in Louisiana live on land that they did not historically claim. Colonists forced them to move several times. Native languages were supplanted by French or English. Has the past poverty and geographic isolation continued to affect the present generation in their access and experience at higher education institutions? What are the experiences that Louisiana's Native Americans have while attending predominantly white institutions? Answers to these questions were revealed in this study.

Native Americans comprise one percent of the nation's population (Ogunwole, 2002). Similarly, one percent of those enrolled in institutions of higher education are Native American (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003). In the 1980's Native Americans were the minority with the greatest decline in attendance at higher education institutions (Tijerina & Biemer, 1988). One report indicates that 85% of American Indians who begin college never complete (Tierney & Kidwell, 1991). More recently enrollment numbers have increased to a level that is almost an over representation, yet they continue at the lowest rate of all minorities (Jackson, Smith & Hill, 2003; Larimore & McClellan, 2005; Pavel, 1992). Indeed, of all minorities, Native Americans have the lowest overall education levels (Lin, LaCounte & Eder, 1998; Smith, 1995). Changes in educational attainment for Native Americans have not been updated in the literature in the past two years.

Fifty- five percent of Native Americans who attend institutions of higher education attend two year institutions (Carney, 1999). When statistics concerning minorities are reported, Native Americans are frequently grouped with other minorities because their numbers are too low to be statistically significant (Carney 1999). Consequently, few studies present opinions of Native Americans on choice, retention, satisfaction because of the lack of numbers.

The concern over the low levels of persistence of Native Americans in higher education reinforces the need to study factors that lead to continuation. Satisfying college experiences can influence the decision to stay. Many believe that the contrary is also a consideration. That is, negative experiences may influence a departure decision.

Discovering American Indian perceptions about their experiences in higher education can

illuminate some of the considerations for their decisions to continue in college

In the following paragraphs I review briefly the function of the tribal colleges in

order to place this type of institution in perspective for Native American education. Next

I profile the Native American in Louisiana in order to situate the barriers to degree

completion for this population I then describe the problem with persistence. Information

on persistence will define the problem that Native Americans face as a minority in

completing a degree. How a cultural identity can impact the college experience will also

be described. If one identifies oneself in a way that is not consistent with the culture of

the institution, then satisfaction with the institution may be diminished and may lead to

departure.

Finally, I define the problem, state the purpose of the research, present an

overview of the methodology, and state my research questions and the significance of the

study.

Tribal Colleges

Historically Native Americans have not been successful in mainstream colleges

and universities (DeJong, 1993). One example can be noted at Dartmouth where part of

the founding mission in 1769 included education of Native Americans. Although the

founding mission was to educate American Indians, by 1969 only nineteen American

Indians graduated since the founding of the institution (Garrod & Larimore, 1997). Today

Dartmouth has a Native American enrollment of 3.8 % of its 5, 753 students (National

Center for Educational Statistics, 2006). To attempt to more appropriately meet the

educational needs of Native Americans in rural isolated areas, tribal colleges were

developed. The first tribal college, Navajo Community College, today known as Dine

College, opened its doors in 1968 (Dine college, n.d.). Today 34 tribal colleges are open,

which are located primarily in the North and Southwest, and a few in the Midwest. Tribal

colleges are designed to create learning environments that build self-esteem while

encouraging participation in the educational process. At tribal colleges, traditions are

maintained, essential services provided and communities enriched (Boyer, 1989). Tribal

colleges serve students who live in geographically isolated locations, where access to

other educational institutions is not optional. Curricula are designed to reflect the Native

American perspective along with a typical curriculum that is essential for accreditation in

public institutions (American Indian Higher Education Consortium<AIHEC>, 1999).

Students attending tribal colleges report a satisfaction with the overall college experience,

major courses, class size, contact with faculty and administration (AIHEC, 2000) and that

their academic goals were achieved (Wright & Head, 1990).

American Indians who attend predominantly white institutions (PWI) report

experiencing discrimination and alienation (Jackson, 2003; Jones, Castellanos & Cole,

2002; Lin, LaCounte, & Eder, 1988). Satisfaction with the college experience under such

circumstances might therefore be an issue for some students insofar as environment does

affect satisfaction of the college experience. What would be of interest is to note the

relationship between satisfaction and persistence. Which factors make a difference to

students when making a decision to stay in school while they are engaged in their

education? During the 1990's tribal colleges experienced a higher increase in enrollment

than Native American enrollment at PWIs (AIHEC, 1999). A survey of graduates of

Tribal Colleges indicated that 88 percent were satisfied or very satisfied with their overall

college experiences and 79 percent were satisfied or very satisfied with the contact with the faculty and administrators (AIHEC, 2000). Other aspects in which satisfaction was felt were the class size, major courses and overall instruction (AIHEC). Eight percent of American Indians enrolled in institutions of higher education attend tribally controlled colleges. That means that 92 percent of all Native Americans attending institutions of higher education are attending PWIs where they are a minority (Pavel, Skinner, Farris, Cahalan & Tippeconnic, 1998). It is at these PWIs where many feel isolated and experience discrimination. Which successful aspects of education at tribal colleges could be useful to enhance enrollment and satisfaction at PWIs? Educators and administrators could benefit from this information when planning recruitment and retention strategies.

Louisiana's Native Americans in higher education

No tribal colleges are located in the South. The only local choice for Native Americans in Louisiana is to attend predominantly white or historically black (HBCU) institutions. During the 2000 census, the U.S. Census Bureau included multiple boxes for choice in race for the first time. Individuals could claim more than one race with which they identified. Factoring those who chose Native American as the sole race as well as those who chose Native American and another race, the population of Native Americans in Louisiana is approximately one percent (42,500) (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2002). Total enrollment of Native Americans in postsecondary education for the 2005-2006 school year was 1,198, or 0.6% of the total enrollment (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2006). Two hundred and one were awarded degrees, which was 0.48% of all degrees. Native American participation in Louisiana's higher education is not proportionally representative of their numbers.

Eleven groups of American Indians are recognized by the state of Louisiana. Four of these tribes are also federally recognized: the Chitimacha, Coushatta, Jena band of the Choctaw and the Tunica-Biloxi (Louisiana Office of Indian Affairs, n.d.). Three institutions have an enrollment of over one percent of Native Americans enrolled: Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Nicholls State University and Louisiana State University at Alexandria. The largest group of Native Americans is the United Houma Nation, which is only state recognized and is located in Terrebonne parish. This group is closest to Nicholls State University. Several of the tribes, mostly state recognized, are located in the middle of the state and toward the West. Northwestern University is located closest to these groups.

What is yet to be documented is how American Indians in Louisiana view themselves in the institutions where they are the minority. Native Americans comprise 1.9% of the student population at Nicholls State, which is approximately 156 students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2006). At Northwestern State University Native Americans comprise 2% of the students or approximately 197 students (National Center for Educational Statistics). These universities have a larger than average enrollment of American Indians when compared to the national average. Whether or not students find these institutions supportive of their culture or whether they view them as providing a satisfactory student experience has not been explored. Whether or not these institutions employ strategies to compel Native American students to persist at these institutions has also not been investigated. With a large enrollment of the state's Native Americans at these institutions, it would be of interest to present their voice to educators.

Student Persistence

The student departure model described by Tinto (1993) suggests that a lack of academic and social integration into the college culture is critical when analyzing student departure. Guiffrida (2006) adds that cultural variables need to be included in the departure model when minority students are described. Motivation to attend college and continue with that decision, whether intrinsically or extrinsically driven, can be driven by culture. Motivation for academic achievement is one of the most important factors for success at the college level (Jackson, Smith & Hill, 2003). Motivational orientation can determine the intensity of the commitment to continue in school and subsequent success in the postsecondary arena (Guiffrida). Minority students may have a different orientation to motivation than their white peers which can influence overall persistence (Guiffrida).

Another potential contributing factor to postsecondary persistence is role conflict. Role conflict can be defined as a situation in which two equally important roles in life place demands on an individual and acting in one may interfere with success in the other. This may be noted when the role of mother is challenged when a sick child demands the mother's attention when at the same time the mother must be punctual for work. This is particularly true in urban colleges where nontraditional students are increasing in numbers (Hammer, Grigsby & Woods, 1998). Adult students have multiple roles which may include being a parent, worker, volunteer, community leader or some other type of caretaker (Fairchild, 2003). When an overload is perceived in one role, the overload can also be perceived in other roles, which has been termed role contagion (Home, 1998). Depending on the demands of these other roles, a student may stop out or discontinue their education altogether.

Cultural Identity and the American Indian

Cultural identity has also been presented as a component related to successful experiences in higher education (Ting & Bryant 2001). When a Native American organization was available on campus, students were able to identify with their culture and the institution. Ting and Bryant's study also found that a student was better adjusted to college when they demonstrated biculturalism. Biculturalism is defined as an individual's ability to be socialized into two cultures simultaneously, such as a minority culture and the majority culture (Rendon, Jalomo & Nora, 2000). Biculturalism was investigated in relation to stress (Griffith, 2000) and in response to the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale III (WAIS–III) (Ducheneaux & Teton, 1999) with Northern Plains Indians and has been found to have an effect. A bicultural identity allows for development of the ability to navigate in two worlds. This navigational ability has been reported to relate to persistence (McLeod, 2002). How acculturated a group is to the dominant culture is a factor when attempting to understand the cultural impact on specific experiences. Whether or not Native Americans who identify with both cultures have a more positive experience in college has not been studied in Louisiana.

Acculturation is a term used to describe the amount of behavior that is congruent with the dominant culture by a minority culture. It is more likely that a range of integration into the dominant culture is present. If acculturation is used as the measure to determine whether or not a student is successful in college, then the students' perceptions and definition of their ability to integrate into the environment is ignored (Rendon, Jalomo & Nora, 2004). A counter theory of biculturalism is described that illuminates the fact that many people adequately move between more than one culture (Rendon, Jalomo

& Nora). How a bicultural identity is consistent with the Native peoples in Louisiana has not been described.

Race and ethnicity play a significant role in college experience. Minority students have described experiences of racism, hostility, and isolation when attending predominantly white institutions (Jones, Castellanos & Cole, 2002; Loo & Rolison, 1986). Native Americans have expressed similar concerns (Lin, LaCounte & Eder, 1988). Pride of ethnic group had been correlated with a higher GPA for one group of American Indians in North Carolina (Ting & Bryant, 2001). Minority students indicate that the most positive as well as negative early college experiences were social (Stewart & Post, 1990). When discrimination is present on campus, negative experiences ensue. When acceptance and culture are respected, positive social experiences can emerge. When negative encounters occur, a felt disconnect between the individual and the environment ensues. A disconnect between the experience of Native Americans in predominantly white institutions has been explained through cultural discontinuity theory (Inglebret & Pavel, 2000; St. Germaine, 1995). This disconnect happens when the individual feels that they must choose one culture over the other. Success in school may be perceived to happen only when denial of a traditional culture is made. How cultural identity and satisfaction with the college experience connect is partly what this study investigated.

Defining the Problem

The culture of predominantly white institutions (PWI) is antithetical to Native American culture. When Native American students attend tribal colleges, an atmosphere of support and cultural validation contribute to social integration and overall positive experiences. Yet at PWIs minority students often report experiences of racism, alienation

9

and isolation from their majority peers (Jackson, Smith & Hill, 2003). Given the cultural issues described, the absence of such support poses a risk of departure for many of these students. What we have yet to understand are the experiences of Native Americans that may result in their perceived cultural disconnect from the student majority at PWIs. I believe that student perceptions of their higher education experience can offer insight into this cultural disconnect. The cultural disconnect is important because it can inform our understanding of the levels of academic and social integration for Native American students at PWIs.

Tinto's student departure model (1993), which focuses on academic and social integration, has ignored the cultural experiences of Native Americans that may be explanatory in Native American higher education decisions. Guiffrida (2006) offers an expanded model that adds cultural factors. Neither of these models describes satisfaction with the experience as a contributing factor to a departure decision. How role conflict affects the decision to stay in school or not is not part of either model specifically. Both of these models fail to incorporate a cultural identity into the perception of one's collegiate experience. A new model that includes the student perception of satisfaction of the experience as well as cultural identity as a filter of these experiences will be proposed as the cultural framework for this study. How the actual experience of Native Americans fit into this model is addressed in this study.

Purpose statement

The purpose of this study is to understand how Louisiana's Native Americans in PWIs perceive their educational experience. This study attempts to elaborate on the academic and social integration models presented by Tinto (1993) and include cultural variables proposed by Guiffrida (2006). A new model is suggested that includes how identity filters the perception of all experiences. Positive and negative experiences are examined as to their influence on academic and social integration into the institution and how they affect persistence decisions. How role conflict can be added to the external influences affecting persistence was investigated.

Overview of methodology

The nature of the inquiry requires reflection, which made this subject suitable for qualitative research methods. Answers to the questions that inform this study allowed for an understanding of the human experience of attending college as a Native American. With this description, this study is best described as phenomenological in design (Creswell, 2003).

In-depth interviews with students were conducted. Demographic questions were asked, as well as open-ended questions that probed for the experiences of the student, cultural identity and motivation. Twelve participants are the core of this study. Three tribes are represented among the participants. The Choctaw-Apache and the United Houma Nation are both state-only recognized tribes. The Coushatta are both state and federally recognized as a tribe. The study participants attend five different institutions of higher education in Louisiana, which represent different Carnegie classifications. Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College (LSU) is a

11

doctoral/research university—extensive. Nicholls State University and McNeese State University are Masters Colleges and Universities I. LE Fletcher and Louisiana State University-Eunice are both Associates Colleges. These five institutions allow for a variance of opinion that could exist from one part of the state to the other. Specific college culture of any one institution was not investigated. Entry into these environments was made through a faculty connection at McNeese and personal contacts at Nicholls. After the initial contacts were made, snowball methods were used to increase the number of participants to achieve the desired number.

Research questions

The primary question that drove this study was:

- How can the higher education experiences of Native Americans be explained in models of persistence?

  Related which also guided this study were:

  o How do Louisiana's Native American college students perceive the higher education experience?

  o How does being Native American in a predominantly white institution affect one's higher education experience?

  o How is satisfaction or dissatisfaction perceived by Native American students during the college experience?

  o How can motivation of Native Americans towards education be described?

  o What are the expectations and goals that the Native American student has when entering the higher education environment?

- o How does role conflict contribute to persistence decisions for Native

  American students?

Answers to these questions have begun to inform administrators, educators and

students about the experiences that Native Americans have while attending higher

education institutions in Louisiana. How these experiences influence their decision to

continue in school is highlighted. How cultural identity influenced student perceptions of

satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the experience is described. Development of the

interview protocol utilized open ended questions that probed for information that

answered the research questions.

Significance

Campisi and Starna (2004) have examined the unique challenges to tribal identity

that is experienced by Native Americans in Louisiana. Only one of the eleven state

recognized tribes in Louisiana, the Chitimacha, are living on land that was historically

their land (Goldsmith & Mueller, 2003). All of the others have been relocated to their

present locale through colonial policies that included relocation and buying of land

through laws that were not understood thoroughly by the American Indians. Colonists,

including the French, Spanish and English, have had influence over the tribes in

Louisiana at various points in history. Campisi and Starna comment that tribal languages

have been lost in Louisiana. These authors note as an example that in the bayou area in

the south of Louisiana, French became the predominant language. Discrimination and

separatist policies further challenged the Native peoples in Louisiana. Maintaining an

identity has been a continual struggle. As an example, the United Houma Nation has

been seeking federal recognition for decades and continues to be denied (Campisi & Starna; Dardar, n.d.).

Struggles have been perpetuated through the educational system. Native Americans in Louisiana have not had a voice concerning their higher educational experiences. Although educational experiences have been reported from tribal colleges that are located primarily in the North and West and Midwest parts of the country (AIHEC, 2000; Boyer, 1989; Wright & Head, 1990) and American Indian experiences in Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) have been described from institutions in the North, Northeast, East and West (Griffith, 2000; Jones, Castellanos & Cole, 2002; Lin, LaCounte & Eder, 1988; Stebbins, 1998; Ting & Bryant, 2001)., no attempt has been made to report Native educational experiences from the South. This study begins a new dialog. It enhances the literature base on experiences of Native Americans in higher education.

A need exists for higher education representatives to acknowledge, regard and support the resources that contribute to the enhancement of the higher education experience and retention for ethnic minority student populations (Jenkins, 1999; Jones, Castellanos & Cole, 2002). Retention is affected by satisfaction and participation in the higher education environment (Astin, 1996; Bean & Metzner, 1996; Chang, 2002).When a more comprehensive understanding of the needs of the American Indian students exists within the local context, appropriate recruitment and retention strategies can be devised.

Results from this study can contribute to appropriate planning for curriculum, institutional policies, student support services and faculty development that will support persistence of Native American students in Louisiana's higher education institutions.

14

This study can also be useful for parents and prospective students who are seeking institutions that will be supportive of their culture while addressing academic goals.

Strategies have been suggested in other institutions such as using various mentors that include faculty, peers and community resources to contribute to retention of Native American students (Fant, Betz & Leftwich, n.d.). Incorporating these factors in planning can assist in retention of Native Americans in Louisiana. These and other strategies have a role in this state and can be pinpointed from this study. When alterations are made in the campus environment to meet the needs of diverse students, academic performance also improves (Lin, Lacounte & Eder, 1988). Identification of these areas is an important contribution in improving the college experience and retention of Native American students in Louisiana.

Definition of terms

1. **Acculturation** refers to the degree that people from a specific cultural group demonstrates behaviors that are congruent with the dominant culture.

2. **Assimilation** is when the minority culture has been subsumed by the dominant culture. Individuals may only embrace values of the mainstream culture (Herring, 1998).

3. **Cultural capital** can be defined as the familiarity of and access to the forms of communication, school-related information, social networks, and an internal system of attitudes, beliefs, actions and fundamental values that are acquired from the immediate family, school and community environments of the student that can enhance or constrain patterns of college-going decision making (Paulsen, 2001).

4. **Culture** has been defined as the "sum total of a way of living, which includes values, beliefs, standards, linguistic expression, patterns of thinking, behavioral norms and styles of communication that influence behaviors of a group of people and are transmitted from generation to generation" (Wells & Black, 2000, p. 279).

5. **Departure** refers to the student behavior that removes the student from the institution before obtaining a degree.

6. **Enculturation** refers to identification with the Native American culture, the involvement of traditional activities and traditional spiritual involvement.

7. **Ethnicity** is frequently interchanged with culture. Ethnic groups have a subjective belief about a common descent which relates to similar physical types, customs or both and/or have memories of colonization and migration.

8. **Native American**- This term along with American Indian, Indian and Native will be utilized to add variety to the vocabulary. Different groups prefer different descriptors. No intent to be disrespectful is intended.

9. **Persistence** refers to the student behavior that keeps the student in the institution to meet educational goals.

10. **Retention** refers to the institutional marker that refers to student outcomes. Student retention is the desired state until the student graduates.

Organization of the study

Chapter one has reviewed Native American involvement in higher education and has presented the problem of the lack of a Native American voice in higher education in Louisiana. Chapter two reviews the literature highlighting the concepts pertinent to the study of the higher education experience. The student departure model that includes the

concept of academic and social integration described by Tinto (1993) as well as cultural variables described by Guiffrida (2006) are reviewed. The student departure framework provides a vehicle to present concepts related to student satisfaction. Other bodies of literature that are reviewed address Native American persistence, cultural identity, and college experiences. The section on the college experience covers topics such as alienation, family, student life, role conflict and the tribal college experience.

Chapter three outlines the steps that were taken to select the sites for the study, selection of subjects, how the data were collected and how the findings were recorded and analyzed. Chapter four presents the findings from the study. Chapter five discusses the findings and compares them to the literature. Implications of the study and suggestions for further research are addressed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter examines the literature that describes the experiences of minorities as they travel through the higher education process. First, a brief explanation of the history of Native Americans in higher education is provided to ground the discussion. Identified conceptual models of departure contribute to a delineation of the issues that contribute to students' college departure decisions, thereby framing the larger research question which asks how experiences of Native Americans can be explained in models of persistence. A review of the literature that discusses Native American persistence develops a structure for understanding Native Americans and their reasons for departing or persisting in the higher education environment. How being Native American in a predominantly white institution affects college experiences can be grounded in the literature on identity. Literature surrounding minority perceptions of higher education is reviewed to develop the Louisiana Native American higher educational experience, which can be satisfying, dissatisfying or both. The concepts in the literature review related to Native American student persistence are presented at the end of this chapter as a conceptual framework for examining cultural identity, satisfaction and student persistence.   How students experience their college education will contribute to both their level of satisfaction and their decision to either persevere or give up. A theory for student departure is examined to gain a perspective from which to view student higher educational experiences. An evaluation of the literature surrounding departure helps to isolate the influences that are perceived to push the decision to leave the college environment. Literature describing

identity is examined to note how this concept may be connected to students' college experience. Lastly literature that describes the student experience is examined to highlight the obstacles encountered and the aspects that contribute to satisfaction. Areas of interest in this section are the experiences of alienation and discrimination that are commonly felt by minority students. These topics, taken together, offer a better understanding of the context within which Native Americans interpret their higher education experience. How Native Americans interpret their experience is thought to impact their decision to persist.

Historical Influences on Native American Education

Education of American Indians has been controlled by the various attitudes and beliefs shaping decisions, policy and laws throughout the centuries since colonization. An era of self-determination has only recently been entered with the establishment of the Navajo Community College (now Dine' College) in 1968, the first tribally controlled college (Carney, 1999), the passing of the Indian Education Act in 1972 and the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act in 1975 (Reyhner, 2002). Prior to this era the educational focus of the federal government was on complete assimilation of the American Indian into the dominant society and their language was stripped away, their hair cut and their cultural traditions forbidden (Szasz, 1999). Over time, attitudes waxed and waned in regard to what should be done with the Natives, which influenced the direction of their education. Schools such as Harvard, Princeton, Dartmouth and William and Mary were the first to include education of Native Americans as part of their mission. Their goal was to educate and Christianize the Indians (Carney, 1999). Carney continues to demonstrate how these original intentions were forgotten. He explains that Harvard, as

an example, had set up a school just for Indian education in 1656. By 1693 the building was torn down. Only six students were enrolled during that time and five of them died. Success at any of the original colonial institutions was minimal in these endeavors, and this mission was forgotten (Carney).

Some of the policies that impacted Native American education were the Indian Removal Act of 1930 that forcibly relocated American Indians to reservations in Oklahoma and other states, the 1887 Allotment Act where Federal law forbids Indian languages in schools and the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 where tribal governments are re-established and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) supports Indian education (Carney, 1999). Brown vs. Board of Education in 1954 and the civil rights movement of the 1960's ended segregation in the schools. Integration was able to begin in earnest which would end years or even centuries of discrimination. Or would it? Evidence indicates that Native Americans still feel the affects of discrimination in the educational environment (Garrod & Larimore, 1997; Lin, LaCounte & Eder, 1988; Stewart & Post, 1990; Taylor, 1999).

Departure and Persistence Models

The following section reviews two models of departure. The first is Tinto's (1993) model of departure, which has been widely referenced in scholarly journals. The second is a model that has been proposed by Guiffrida (2006), which adds a cultural component to Tinto's framework. Ultimately I briefly describe a model that focuses on successes of students rather than failures. Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez and Trevino (1997) present their

research to understand the factors that contribute to resilience, or persistence, by minorities in higher education.

Tinto's Model of Departure

Tinto (1993) has designed a model of departure that is referred to frequently in the literature to explain student attrition. According to Tinto, integration into two major components of the student's environment at the college-academic and social- is critical in the student's decision of whether or not to voluntarily leave the institution. In both the academic and social components there are formal and informal aspects. Within the academic area the formal aspect includes the actual scholastic performance of the student. The informal academic aspects relate to the interactions that the student has with the faculty and administrative staff. Student services personnel, counselors and advisors are part of the administrative staff that can influence a student.

Included as the formal social component of the college environment are the extracurricular activities that are organized through the college. This includes dances, clubs, organizations and sports activities. The informal aspect of the social environment includes the peer interactions that occur on campus. Both the academic and social experiences at the college are influenced by the goals and commitment of the students. When students have a strong commitment to earn a degree to meet their career goals, students are more likely to put in the effort to succeed. How a student perceives the academic and social experiences is influenced by family background, skills and abilities of the student, as well as the student's prior educational experiences. When family members have attended college, the student may have more of an idea of what is expected in the college environment. Parents pass information to their children in formal

and informal ways throughout their daily experiences in the home environment. High school course expectations also vary between schools. Those high schools that have courses for college preparation may better prepare the student with skills needed for the college environment. These influential components may be described as the cultural capital needed for higher education.

Tinto (1993) recognizes that each student enters college with individual circumstances that contribute to the continuance decision. Tinto argues that in addition to the educational environment, the students are involved in the community. The external communities that Tinto refers to are the family, work and community. When living at home, influences from the home environment can affect the student. If the student engages in employment, especially outside of the campus environment, there can also be a detrimental influence on the student's time. The community around campus may also engage the student in social, civic or other activities. Friends can be a part of either the outside or inside community of the college. Any of these communities also shape the students commitment to college. Students may be pulled away from their educational goals by these communities. Tinto agrees that these communities can also be a support system to the students and have a positive effect on educational goals.

When taking into consideration all of the influences that can shape a student's commitment, Tinto (1998) still firmly states that involvement with the institution is of paramount importance. The strength of Tinto's beliefs leads him to advocate for learning communities where groups of students take several courses together to support each other through their learning experiences.

What is implied in Tinto's (1993) model is that one's own culture must be left behind for a true integration into the college culture. His model has been criticized because of the lack of consideration for cultural impact and the variance in outcomes it is likely to influence (Rendon, Jalomo & Nora, 2004). These researchers also suggest that biculturalism and belonging to more than one social group will also influence the students' choice. Tanaka (2002) states even more strongly that Tinto's theory on departure advocates assimilation of minorities to the dominant culture and that a new theory needs to be developed that allows for intercultural influences. Tanaka further argues that instead of a neutral cultural perspective, one needs to be created that is inclusive of others to facilitate meaning across groups of people.

Murguia, Padilla & Pavel (1991) found Tinto's model incomplete when considering minorities. What these researchers found was that much of the social integration that took place on campus for minorities happened in ethnic enclaves. Enclaves assisted the student in managing the academic environment more effectively by allowing them to integrate socially. Another aspect of their research indicated that social integration for minorities was limited from majority enclaves because of either self-selection or enforced segregation. These researchers concluded that a restructuring of Tinto's (1993) model is important for understanding minority social integration. An operational definition of social integration needs to include a measurement of ethnicity and enclave efficacy when describing the socialization of minority students. The impact of this restructured concept can contribute to understanding the variance between minority and majority culture in relation to social integration.

Research to determine the validity of Tinto's (1993) model with an American Indian population is almost non-existent. Pavel and Padilla (1993) attempted to correct this imbalance by conducting an analysis using a method called structural equation modeling using longitudinal data with Native Americans to observe the fit of Tinto's model with this population. Results indicated a weak fit. One example of the variance is that Tinto assumes that prior schooling has a direct impact on academic integration. Pavel and Padilla found that Native students with poor performance in high school were still likely to receive a degree. Those Native students who performed well in high school did not always complete their degree. Factors not addressed in Tinto's model may explain this variance, but have not been explored. The most important variables in this study that contributed to completion of a degree were family background, postsecondary intentions and academic integration. These researchers also found that academic integration was most important, which in turn influenced social integration. Postsecondary outcomes for American Indians are influenced by factors that are not part of Tinto's model. Pavel and Padilla suggest that policy environments and organizational characteristics, financial assistance and external commitments may be some of the factors involved. These researchers provide a starting point in trying to uncover factors that are more salient for departure from education by Native Americans.

Tinto's (1993) model of departure has been briefly discussed. Difficulties in using this model with minority populations have also been presented. What is needed next is to view a model that utilizes cultural variance as part of the structure. Douglas Guiffrida (2006) allows us to visualize this change.

Guiffrida's Cultural Departure Model

Douglas Guiffrida (2006) has put forward a model of departure that expands on Tinto's earlier departure model by incorporating cultural considerations. Guiffrida's model includes cultural norms, values and motivation that significantly enhance the original model. Values include the variance between an individualistic and collective perspective. Motivation includes intrinsic and extrinsic orientation. Another variant within the model is what he calls the home social systems, which includes family and friends outside of the college experience. Guiffrida's cultural component supplements the pre-entry attitudes, goals and motivation, experiences at the institution, and motivational components that contribute to departure. By including the home social systems component, he implies that the social support systems outside of the college can influence the higher education experience as well as decisions to continue or to leave.

Within the cultural norms and values component that Guiffrida (2006) proposes, individualistic and collectivistic orientation is included. Guiffrida's justification for inclusion is that the majority of the American society has individualistic values. Individualistic societies value independence and competition. There is an emotional detachment from the family or one's specific group. This is in contrast with a traditional Native orientation where collectivism is more valued. A collectivist society values interdependence, harmony and is strongly emotionally attached within the group, mostly notably the parent and child. A mix of these two orientations is most likely present as Native Americans take on values of the dominant culture. For this reason Guiffrida suggests that an orthogonal approach to this component is a better approach than a dichotomous approach.

To the goals and commitment area Guiffrida (2006) added a section on motivational orientation, which is from either an intrinsic or extrinsic perspective. Intrinsic motivation has three components: autonomy, competence and relatedness. A need for autonomy can be noted when learning is occurring because the material is connected to values and interests of the student. Competence is that need to be effective when engaging with the environment. Students challenge their abilities and learn new ways of doing things. Relatedness refers to the need to be able to develop close satisfying relationships with other people.

Guiffrida (2006) describes extrinsic motivation also as having three components: external regulation, introjected regulation and internalization. Guiffrida explains that in the external regulation component the student is motivated by external rewards and punishments. An example of a student exhibiting this type of motivation might be when grades are achieved to please parents or the requirements of financial aid. In the introjected component, the student is still motivated by rewards and punishments, yet begins to internalize the pressure to learn. In the internalization component the pressure has been completely internalized and the motivation is from within. The values are congruent which influences motivation.

The last additional component that Guiffrida (2006) presents is the home social system which is placed under the institutional experiences area. His reasoning is that the family is the formal system which the student interrelates with which can impact their collegiate experience. In addition the informal part of this component refers to the friends from outside of the college that can influence the collegiate experience. Friends can be either supportive or distracting to the academic goals of the student.

Both Guiffrida (2006) and Tinto (1993) offer a structure to view the components of influence in a student's decision for departure. All of the components described in these models are also factors that can contribute to persistence. What is not included in either model is the importance of cultural or ethnic identity in the decision process. Students chose to either stay in school or leave. A decision to leave may occur at more than one point in their academic career, suggesting that a departure decision is a process. The developmental level of an ethnic identity has not been presented as a factor in this decision. An ethnic identity model has been described by Phinney (1990). This model will be described below when discussing cultural identity. How these students view themselves as a minority in a majority institution may be influenced by their stage of ethnic development. What is also not included in either of the departure models is how satisfaction with the college experience influences the decision process. Satisfaction with the higher education trajectory may influence whether or not a student stays committed to a degree completion goal. In both Guiffrida (2006) and Tinto's (1993) models integration at both the academic and social level are discussed, but not the response to the integration at the college. It may be implied that when a lack of either academic or social integration into the institution has taken place, there is a lack of satisfaction. My question then is whether or not satisfaction will lead to persistence, or the contrary-- if there is a lack of satisfaction will there be more of a likelihood that the student will depart? What may be of interest to explore is whether or not satisfaction can be assumed when academic and social integration has occurred. A discussion of the literature on satisfaction with college is included in this review.

The Expertise Model of Success

The expertise model focuses differently on the student experience (Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez & Trevino, (1997). These researchers divide the barriers that minority students face which they must overcome to be successful into four areas; discontinuity, lack of nurturing, lack of presence and resources. When the barriers are overcome, success ensues. This model focuses on the successful experiences of these students. The model suggests that successful students are the experts at being successful at the specific institution which they attend. Two components comprise the total knowledge that students possess: theoretical knowledge, or the knowledge that is learned on campus through coursework. and heuristic knowledge which is acquired through experimentation, and is defined in the individual setting.

Students will have a certain amount of both heuristic and theoretical knowledge as they arrive on campus. Theoretical knowledge is expanded upon and challenged throughout a student's college career. The practical knowledge, the heuristic component, is learned as one goes along. When to drop a course, change majors, being cognizant of deadlines for financial aid, etc. are forms of heuristic knowledge that are learned less formally. Some students never receive the information they need to be successful and end up leaving college. Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez and Trevino (1997) use the heuristic knowledge in two ways, one as an indicator of the barriers which students must overcome on their campus and second as being able to identify the specific knowledge and actions that successful students use to surmount the barriers.

Padilla, Trevio, Gonzalez and Trevino (1997) describe the discontinuity barrier as the difficulty with the transition from home to college. This barrier requires students to negotiate the value of a job and the value of education. Also with this barrier they must learn to be on their own (Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez & Trevino, 1997). Students need support as well as information about negotiating the campus environment to overcome this discontinuity barrier.

Another of the barriers is the lack of nurturing that minority students experience as they enter the college environment. Padilla, Trevino, Gonzales and Trevino (1997) describe this barrier as the lack of family understanding and support. Many minority students are first generation college attendees. The family is not on campus on a daily basis to provide the support a student may need with new challenges. Another strategy to address this barrier would be to identify counseling and advising services. A lack of role models is also a part of this barrier, as there are few minority faculty on campus with whom the students can identify. Lower expectations of minority students by the faculty and staff further contribute to this barrier. .

 An overall lack of presence is the third barrier identified. This is noted by lack of minority views within the curriculum, lack of programs for minority study, and few minority students on campus. With this barrier the student may feel a cultural and racial isolation, a lack of role models or mentors, lack of visibility of a minority support program and lack of materials and minority issues presented as part of the curriculum. Lastly, they describe resource barriers as the lack of money and the financial aid system that the student must negotiate (Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez & Trevino, 1997).

How students gain knowledge concerning the barriers that they face and the actions that they take to deal with the barriers are what comprise success for the student. The end result is that the student persists in college. Examples provided by the researchers (Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez and Trevino, 1997) can be noted with the barrier of lack of nurturing that minority students feel from the institution. Action taken may be to seek out nurturing persons, create a family on campus or involve their own families. Students may also seek involvement in ethnic events to receive the nurturing that they need.

Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez and Trevino (1997) propose this model as adaptable to the local environment. Local educators and administrators can use the model as a guide to improve the campus environment for minority student success. It would be useful to note if this model is used and what level of success might be forthcoming. A review of the current literature has not presented any articles that discuss the use of this model at any location. If it is being used, there is no available documentation. Student success when it involves overcoming multiple barriers can be described as resilience. Resilience is an attribute that is worth developing to keep minority students in college.

Summary

The use of a model can be informative for college administrators and policy planners to guide intervention strategies that will keep students in college. The departure models focus on the components of the model that are highlighted for the student that leaves the institution. Research with this focus can inform areas that are highlighted as problematic for the student. Intervention around these problematic issues can lead to solutions that may encourage a student to stay.

Using the expertise model focuses on the strengths that a student brings to college. With a focus on persistence rather than departure, the strategies that may evolve to promote student involvement in the institution will encourage the use of the strengths of the student to promote resilience.

College Experiences

Introduction

Whether a student is attending a two or a four year institution, a substantial period of time is being devoted to pursuit of a degree. Because of the factor of time, a myriad of experiences will be lived through; some positive and some negative. Perceptions of the college experience are important as they can influence future outcomes (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen & Allen, 1998). How these experiences are perceived can influence a student's commitment to persist at that institution. Dissatisfaction with the higher education process can lead to departure. What, then, are some of these experiences that comprise a negative experience? Episodes of discrimination, alienation, isolation, lack of support, lack of involvement and poor academic preparedness are obstacles that influence the overall experience of the student as they journey through higher education. Another problem with the college experience is balancing the various roles that the student values. Role conflict can also lead to departure.

Positive experiences can influence persistence. Involvement in college life activities, family support, supportive faculty and staff, and a perceived welcoming campus climate can be influential for students in their decision to persevere in higher education goals.

College does influence the student in many dimensions. Self identity increases, as does critical thinking and moral development (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). When students perceive that diversity is supported at their institution, more positive effects on racial-ethnic attitudes can result (Pascarella & Terenzini). Social integration is related to persistence at residential institutions, but appears to be inconsistently correlated at two year institutions (Pascarella & Terenzini). Pascarella and Terenzini also note that academic and social integration may reinforce each other. Commitment to the institution may be the key factor that influences engagement (Pascarella & Terenzini). Many changes occur within the student while they attend college. As indicated above, there is some evidence that their involvement on campus is related to persistence. Involvement can be related to their perception of support from the institution. Exposure to faculty and interaction with other students does impact the college experience (Astin, 1996). It is of interest to educators to understand the impact of the college experience on students in general as well as minorities, as perceptions may vary.

Many factors influence what happens to a student while they are in college. These influences come from the institution, the classroom, the campus environment, the family, as well as other outside influences. What happens upon entering to the end of institutional involvement, whether it is leaving or graduating, can be considered the college experience. What happens during this experience may contribute to persistence or departure. Influences from the institution, the classroom, the campus environment, the family, as well as other outside influences are all factors in what happens to a student while they are in college. This study captures the voice of American Indian students in Louisiana as they experience college life and how it influences their commitment to

persist. The first topic that is discussed in this section is satisfaction with student life.

Following topics are divided into the areas of experience that are suggested in Tinto's

(1993) and Guiffrida's (2006) models which include the academic, social and home

systems that influence integration into the college environment. Lastly, tribal college

experiences are described.

Satisfaction with Student Life

Several factors appear to be critical for students to feel satisfied with their college

experience. These include a supportive home environment, supportive faculty and staff

and involvement in campus activities (Dodd, Garcia, Meccage & Nelson, 1995), In

addition these researchers noted that when students were satisfied with themselves, they

met their own goals. These factors contribute to the academic and social integration of

the student at the institution.

Accomplishing one's goal of success may also be a source of satisfaction. Strategies

to stay in school and succeed may be conscious or unconscious. In Pottinger's (1989)

study he describes one Dine student as using a traditional metaphor- surviving a series of

storms to explain how he dealt with his college experience. Through contextualizing a

familiar story, he was able to connect tradition to the current hurdle of negotiating

through college. This student continued in college in spite of perceived adversity.

Another component of satisfaction is presented by Oishi (2000) who links a deep sense of

satisfaction with intrinsic goals. Oishi noted that students who were engaged in activities

for intrinsic reasons were happier. When there was a community feeling and affiliation

there was a positive association with self-actualization. Another cultural influence that

was noted by Oishi was that in collectivistic cultures, parental expectations were internalized expectations. Culture influenced the types of goals that individual had.

Cultural Capital

When cultural capital is described in the literature it usually refers to the accumulative affects that surround the student while growing up in an environment where parents have a college degree and provide the encouragement and expectation of the children to also attend college (Paulsen, 2001). Parents who provide emotional support for their children often prepare to provide financial support through savings accounts. In addition the high school environment supports students by providing expectation, courses, information, counseling services and transition assistance. Tierney (1999) notes that cultural capital is often inherited, but it can be learned through the family and the neighborhood. Tierney states that for college to be accessible, more than just money is needed. Educational organizations must accommodate and recognize students' cultural differences.

Academic Integration

Grades. Tinto (1993) and Guiffrida (2006) indicate that academic integration is one of the most important components in student departure. If the student is not integrated academically into the institution both formally and informally, the student is more likely to terminate their education pursuits.

A study focusing on Native Americans by Benjamin, Chambers and Reiterman (1993) found contradictory evidence to the assumption that a high ACT score and high grade point average in high school predict who would be successful in college. One hundred sixty six students from a variety of tribes in the Southwest participated in this

34

study.   These researchers found that ACT scores were not predictive of which students would persist in college. Also, those students who had a high grade point average in high school were not necessarily the students who continued through to graduation. Average and marginal students in high school were also among those who persisted in college.

Pottinger's (1989) study of 660 Anglo, Hispanic and Native American students in the Southwest found differences between the groups. More Indian (27%) students who earned at least a 2.0 GPA still did not persist in college compared to Anglo (18%) or Hispanic students (19%).

Faculty. When at least one faculty member is viewed as supportive it contributes to satisfaction of the experience for both white and minority students (Loo & Rolison, 1986). In Loo and Rolison's study this supportive faculty member tended to be of the same race as the student. In a different study, Native American students indicated a more positive attitude toward their professors than their white counterparts (Lin, LaCounte & Eder, 1988). A study by Cole and Denzine (2002) compared dimensions of student academic engagement between Native American and white students in post secondary institutions and found that both were satisfied with their collegiate experience, yet Native Americans were slightly more positive. Support from one faculty or staff person can make a difference to students (Lowe, 2005; Reyhner & Dodd, 1995; Stebbins, 1998). Persistence has been connected to the students' own determination, supportive instructors and advisors and parents (Taylor, 1999). Yet public colleges have been cited as perpetuating policies that are not productive for Native American students (Carney, 1999; Tierney, 1992).

Campus Climate

    Felt Difference. Minorities perceive their difference from the dominant culture in several ways. Each ethnic group may experience differences in intensity or type of response. Responses to behavior directed toward a minority will elicit a variety and range of feelings. Minorities have experienced feelings of isolation (Lin, LaCounte & Eder, 1988; Loo & Rolison, 1986), alienation (Taylor, 2000), aloneness (Taylor, 1999), discrimination (Murguia, Padilla & Pavel, 1991), hostility (Taylor, 1999), stereotyping (Castagno, 2006), racism (Garrod & Larimore, 1997; Huffman, 1991; Jackson, Smith & Hill, 2003) and hatred (Perry, 2002). These feelings stem from comments or actions from other students, faculty, staff or institutional policy. The whole institution may be structured for the dominant culture which can leave the minority student feeling like a visitor or even a trespasser. Coping strategies to deal with those feelings are also varied. This section will briefly discuss several of the types of behavior that leave minority students uncomfortable while they are attending college. The focus will be from the Native American student's perspective.

    Each ethnic group may experience different intensities of responses. In a study conducted by Suarez-Balcazar, Orellana-Damacela, Portillo, Rowan and Andrews-Guillen (2003) emphasize this point. Surveys were filled out by 322 undergraduate students and interviews were conducted with 30 students from a private Midwestern university. Responses included experiencing differential treatment in social situations, and in student faculty academic situations. Each minority experienced some degree of offensiveness in depicted situations and some degree of discrimination in situations.

Results of this study indicated that African-American students experienced more incidents of differential treatment than Caucasian, Latin or Asian classmates. No Native Americans participated in this study. This study points to the fact the different ethnic groups may perceive events, situations and behavior differently.

A less discussed issue is raised by Castagno (2006), who noted that race has more than a black-white paradigm for Native students. They are always the 'other'. Non-Native people will describe Native students as white 'others'. From the white perspective they are racialized others. Often they felt classified as other whites by black students, yet were students of color when with white students. This black- white paradigm, according to Castagno, reinforces stereotypes. One of the ways that Native students in Castagno's study felt stereotyped was when they had either long hair or wore turquoise. These Native students also described harassment and verbal assaults. Professors were also described as being insensitive to Native culture. Students in Castagno's study were more likely to explain behavior that was directed at them as more ignorant than racist.

Alienation. Alienation is felt by minorities through ethnic isolation and cultural domination (Loo & Rolison, 1986). Lack of resources for diversity initiatives was a complaint voiced by minority students at a PWI in the Northwest (Jones, Castellanos & Cole, 2002) in a study to discover their experiences. All minorities indicated that ethnicity played a significant role in their college experience. In particular, Native American students felt a sense of alienation and discrimination and felt lack of cultural support (Jones, Castellanos & Cole). Differential treatment was noted. Native Americans who had more pronounced Native features indicated they perceived a greater amount of discrimination and prejudice than their lighter skinned colleagues (Murguia, Padilla &

Pavel, 1991). Minority students did not feel safe in voicing their opinion when overt racism was expressed. When overt comments were made, students felt isolated. Jones et al. note that perceptions of racism were different between white students and students of color. Native American students have indicated that they have experienced racism on campus both as individual affronts and general negative comments about Indians (Huffman, 1991). The Northern Plains Indians who participated in Huffman's study felt pervasive verbal racism which in turn made the students feel isolated and that they didn't belong at college. Different ethnic groups perceive the same situation differently. This point makes a strong case for continuing to document the Native American experience in various contexts. Few studies document the Native American voice in higher education.

Aspects of the environment support alienation, such as insensitive logos, a curriculum that doesn't include Native American authors, and the red tape which impedes successful completion of paperwork (Taylor, 2001). Students also identified that a sense of alienation was enhanced by the absence of openness to the Native culture at the institution (Taylor, 2000). Institutional support of Native Americans could address these concerns. Experiences of alienation can be felt through loneliness, a lack of role models and overt or covert racial hostility (Taylor, 1999). Taylor (2000) also identified that Native students felt a sense of alienation from a lack of respect from other students. Taylor cites an example where a Native student indicated that other students felt that the student making the comment was only in college because the student was given a scholarship, not that it was earned. Another student stated that the professor ignored her opinion on an issue and moved on to another student. This student continued to explain that when she discussed issues relating to Native Americans that she felt as though her

opinion was not valued by her professor, as she was the only one that had that particular opinion, and no one else shared that view. She felt that her outlook on the subject was inconsequential. Student opinions in Taylor's (2000) study expressed perceptions that an inequality existed between the Native and non-Native students. Feelings of isolation had a doubled effect on Native Americans in comparison to whites in the expectation of obtaining a degree (Lin, LaCounte & Eder, 1988). Lin, LaCounte and Eder also found that feelings of isolation were strongly correlated with a negative attitude toward college and a poor grade point average. Feelings of isolation are related to Native American students' perception that the campus is hostile towards them.

One of the most reported negative aspects on a Midwestern campus by minorities was racism (Stewart & Post, 1990). Stewart and Post noted two other aspects of campus life that were reported as negative: the size of the university and the life in the residence halls. These three components comprise the experienced feelings of depersonalization while attending college. The authors argue that feelings of depersonalization, racism and adjustment should be addressed early by the University to counteract these experiences. Minorities agreed that the most negative, as well as positive experiences were social. Native Americans were a small percentage of this study which did not allow for any patterns unique to this group to be noted. This sentiment is not uncommon. Racism is cited as an obstacle with which Native American students have to navigate while on college campuses (Garrod & Larimore, 1997; Jackson, Smith & Hill, 2003; Reyhner & Dodd, 1995). Dodd, Garcia, Meccage and Nelson (1995) found in their study of thirty eight seniors at a four year state college in Montana that prejudice was felt by all but one of the students. Of these students twenty indicated that this prejudice did interfere with

success and four of them felt that it did not. Prejudice continues to impact students on campus.

In Jackson, Smith and Hill's (2003) study, passive racism was experienced by students either by being ignored, or singled out as being a representative of their race. This type of racism made students feel more isolated. Active racism was felt in discussions about history. Open degradation of the Native peoples was presented in class by instructors. According to Jackson, Smith and Hill, this type of situation made the students feel that the environment was hostile towards them.

An individual Native American student describes how she felt discrimination since first grade. In college she experienced isolation by not being included in social gatherings and through policies which were unsympathetic to her needs. No blatant negative episodes occurred, but there was always a difference in her experience (Curran, 1995). Curran's descriptions of this difference include instances where she wasn't selected as a lab partner or to be included in study groups. Curran noted that students were polite, but that positive social interaction ended there. Curran stated that she felt that college would have been less stressful if she had been able to intermingle more with other students.

Similarly at Dartmouth, a university with a Native American mission, Native American students still felt racism and discrimination. What was most surprising for some of these students is that it also came from other Native Americans (Garrod & Larimore, 1997). Garrod and Larimore describe comments in which levels of being Native American were discussed. One student who was native Hawaiian was not considered really Native by some of the other Native students.

Perry's (2002) study of students from Northern Arizona University was more explicit in describing ethnoviolence on campus. Incidents ranged from harassment, daily verbal assaults, jokes, leaflets or posters, graffiti, articles or cartoons in campus publications, and comments that students have heard about. No actual physical assaults were depicted. Only 5% of the incidents described in Perry's study were reported to a person in authority.

On the social side, one study found that when Native American students had more white friends, which may mean more acceptance in the environment, a higher academic performance was present (Kerbo, 1981).The researcher concluded that socialization may have provided the student with confidence in one's ability, which was reflected academically. When the students felt that they fit in, they may have begun to feel that they were equal to whites in the ability to succeed in college. It may be the contextual identity of self that led to a better performance. Kerbo had assumed that the cultural value which de-emphasizes competition could have been a factor in poor achievement. This factor proved to be insignificant in this study. Another component, that of non-recognition or invisibility of Native American students was noted as an obstacle at a college in New York (Stebbins, 1998). Students in this study indicated that in the large classes they felt lost in the crowd and were not able to establish relationships with their professors or the other students. Stebbins further explains that invisibility is noted in such forms as others assuming that there are no American Indians in attendance at the college and not recognizing that Native Americans lived in the area.

Differences in perceptions between various ethnic groups have been noted. Feelings of isolation, discrimination, hostility and racism have been described by

minorities in predominantly white institutions. Differences in patterns of experience by

Native Americans have not been established. How supportive influences outside and

within the institution have been utilized to balance perceived obstacles has not been

highlighted. How a cultural identity alters, supports and or hinders the experience has not

been explored adequately.

Social integration. Involvement in student organizations facilitates the social

integration of the student into campus life. For minorities, it is often student organizations

that support their cultural values that hook the student into feeling that they belong on

campus. An example can be noted in the study by Montelongo (2003). Satisfaction with

the college experience was influenced through the participation in minority student

organizations for over 300 students from Latin American backgrounds from two

institutions. African Americans felt more comfortable on campus went they participated

in African American student organizations (Guiffrida, 2003). Nagasawa and Wong

(1999) describe social networks as serving several important functions for minority

students, including reinforcing excellence in academic subjects, providing social support

and information to others trying to work through the college maze and increasing

solidarity and pride among the group. Academic achievement was also a factor that was

positively correlated with involvement in minority student organizations. Involvement in

organizations can affect more than satisfaction with college, it also influences success in

that environment.

Home System

Family. Family support is a major contributor to academic determination

(McInerney, 1998), and has been linked to success for the student (Dodd, Garcia,

Meccage & Nelson, 1995; Reyhner & Dodd, 1995). Family has been listed as one of the factors for a student that influences persistence. When family members are supportive, a decision to stay is more likely. Family obligations can also be the determining force that leads the student to stop the educational path. Native American students describe their parents and other relatives as being important in providing needed encouragement for success in school (Jackson, Smith & Hill, 2003; Willeto, 1999). This section will review some of the studies that indicate that family support is critical for students.

A study by Saggio and Rendon (2004) found that the family provides support in several ways including by engaging in validation, academic supports, spiritual encouragement and setting an example. As an example of academic support, Saggio and Rendon cite the instance of one mother who assisted in filling out the paperwork for the college application. Validation was provided when a parent would encourage the student to make something out of the lives and cheer them on to continue to succeed. Saggio and Rendon described being an example as having family members who also graduated from college.

Lin (1990) postulated that there would be differences in academic behavior in students who belonged to families that might be considered modern from those in families that were more traditional. He defined the traditional family as one who is more authoritarian, parent-oriented and used more discipline. A modern Native family is one who is more permissive and child-centered. Eighty seven Native students from a predominantly white institution in Montana were the subjects of his investigation. What Lin found was that there was a strong correlation between those students who come from a traditional family with task and achievement orientation. The students who came from

more modern families cared more about their professor's opinions, yet skipped more classes. Students from more traditional families had higher GPAs and spent more time doing homework. The traditional students outperformed their modern peers. Lin's study contributes to information about academic integration and Native American students.

Families are not always supportive to students. Family obligations are important and can pull the student away from the academic demands of the college routine and eventually interfere with academic success (Minner et al, 1995). Students can come from families that are not intact, which interferes with adjustment (Herring, 1998). Students with unsupportive families may receive support from counseling services. These obstacles reflect the difficulty that students can face when balancing the various roles in their lives. Thayer (2000) reports that students who are first generation and low income do not persist in college.

Tribal colleges recognize that the family can be pivotal in determining the success or failure for students. The Family Education Model (FEM) has been created to incorporate the family as part of the holistic approach to education which has been incorporated into the structure of some of the tribal colleges (HeavyRunner & Decelles, 2002). HeavyRunner and Decelles describe the three premises which are the foundation of the program. First is the assumption that that many of the students and their families need the college to be a liaison between the social and health services that are in existence during times of crisis. The second assumption is that the college needs to support the family members so that they will be able to provide the necessary support to the students' efforts in college. Lastly is the assumption that the tribal college must engage the family members as partners and include them in cultural and social activities.

The assumptions of the FEM are enacted in several ways. One is that social events, such as dances, sports and outdoor activities, include the family, thereby generating a sense of belonging. Families are provided access to the same resources that the students have. An approach of this nature reinforces the mission of supporting the students by nourishing their support systems. Counseling services utilize a family-support model to assist in empowering the whole family. Since tribal colleges are typically located in rural areas, this approach makes it workable to meet these student's needs, which supports retention.

Spirituality. Relying on spiritual resources such as prayers and ceremonies helped some students get through the educational process. Cultural traditions provided support for some students (Jackson, Smith & Hill, 2003). General report of religious faith was also considered a support (Dodd, Garcia, Meccage & Nelson, 1995). Spiritual encouragement and support was reported as an important factor for Native American students to continue their education while attending a bible college in Arizona (Saggio, 2001; Saggio & Rendon, 2004).

Role Conflict. Role conflict is used to describe academic procrastination (Senecal, Julien & Guay, 2003) and satisfaction with the university experience (Hammer, Grigsby & Woods, 1998; Swanson, Broadbridge & Karatzias, 2006). Research conducted by Hammer, Grigsby and Woods indicates that the more hours that a student works and the higher number of hours that they take are correlated with dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of student services at the college and the students report a lower level of satisfaction with the higher education experience. Stress and role conflict appear to exacerbate the effects of multiple roles (Home, 1998). When roles are perceived to be in

balance, there is less conflict (Swanson, Broadbridge and Karatzias, 2006). However, in this review of the role conflict literature, there has not been a link between role conflict and the intent to terminate the college experience.

Working, per se, does not put the student at risk for a role conflict. What appears to be important is the students' perception of their roles. When students perceive that the two are congruent, a conflict is not present (Swanson, Broadbridge & Karatzias, 2006). Another study found that there was an increase in role conflict with the more children the student had and the more credits that they took (Hammer, Grigsby & Woods, 1998). Other areas of conflict for Native students are obligations related to traditional cultural roles and ways of life (Waller et al, 2002).

Balancing the many roles that are important to the student is probably one factor that influences persistence decisions. Priorities and values of each role will contribute to the decision to leave or stay in school. The value of the role of student will need to be strong when another role, such as the role of being a parent, is also valued and the demands of that role conflict with school requirements. Since the student role is only one of the many roles that are part of the student's life what value students place on the other roles in their life will affect the priority placed on the educational role demands. A family member role may take priority, or a worker role may be more important. Prior literature only addresses roles as other obligations which the student may have. Since family is a strong value for Native Americans, role conflict may be present at a level that can negatively impact college persistence. Roles that are valued and are priorities will be stronger in the decision making process. It may be of interest to incorporate roles and their value in the persistence decision.

Tribal College Experiences

Tribal colleges are designed to address the multitude of needs of Native American students. Several concerns are addressed in the mission of these institutions. They are focused on individual student development as well as preserving tribal culture (Krum, 1995). Many students cannot leave their communities, yet want to improve their lives and find employment on the reservation, so they choose the tribal college (Hill, 1994). Students often enter a tribal college after failure in a mainstream college. They look for more emotional and academic support in these environments to counteract a negative experience from other types of institutions (Boyer, 1989). Students who attend tribal colleges relate satisfaction to smaller class sizes (Cunningham & Redd, 2000; Hill, 1994), contact with the faculty and administrative staff, the instruction and courses. In addition, traditional values are integrated into the curriculum (AIHEC, 2000). Others use the tribal college as a bridge between high school and a four year institution (Hill). Tribal colleges have a dual role in promoting American Indian self-determination and at the same time integrate knowledge explicit to disciplines that are necessary in mainstream society (Badwound & Tierney, 1988).

In the 1980's and early 1990's, Native Americans were the only minority that increased enrollment numbers, which is partially due to tribal college enrollment (Hill, 1994). Even with support and location on the side of tribal colleges, the majority of students who enter degree programs do not complete them (Hill). Poor academic preparation and family obligations have been cited as the reason for this withdrawal pattern (Hill).

47

Tribal colleges have been created to meet the needs of American Indians in different locations. The curriculum is planned around the needs and values of the community (Inglebret & Pavel, 2000). As an example, some tribal colleges have offered business entrepreneurial courses to ameliorate the stagnant economies on reservations (AIHEC, 1999). At Northwest Indian College in Washington a program in fisheries enhancement is offered to address the need in the local fishing industry. (AIHEC, 2000). Even with this support, departure from the higher education environment continues. Only eight percent of all Native students attend tribal colleges (Pavel, Skinner, Farris, Cahalan, Tippeconnic & Stein, 1998). The majority of Native Americans attend PWIs that do not offer the culturally supportive environment that has contributed to persistence in college. Strategies may need to be more geographically focused to address the description of the higher education experiences by Native Americans in different locations.

Native American Persistence

Introduction

The goal of the institution is to retain the student through graduation. Gene Fields (personal communication), the associate commissioner for information services and data management with the Louisiana Board of Regents, reports the following information on statistics of Native Americans in the higher education institutions in Louisiana. In Louisiana Native American enrollment across the state has declined since 2002. In the 2002 academic year the numbers were 2,008 students, which was 1.08% of the total student population. In 2003 the numbers fell to 1,336 students, which was .63% of the total student population. In 2006 the numbers remained at .63% with 1,245 Native

American students enrolled. On the graduation side, in 2002, 143 Native Americans graduated from Louisiana higher education institutions, which was .47% of the students who graduated. In 2006 167 Native students graduated which was .54% of the students graduating. Fluctuations in enrollment indicate that trends need to be studied. When departure occurs instead of staying, the institution needs to take notice. Intervention can then be addressed though policy and programs to decrease departure decisions, which would therefore improve retention.

Three intertwined concepts of retention, persistence and departure frame the literature about student decisions and their college tenure. I define these terms for clarification. Retention is primarily used by administrators to measure whether or not the student has been successful at the institution. The measure of success is whether or not students graduate, or are retained throughout the educational process. Departure is the term used to indicate that the student has not continued with the educational process and has left the institution. Persistence refers to the student behavior in which they continue with their studies and stay in school. Persistence, then, is a term relevant from the student perspective. Persistence and departure are on opposite ends of a continuum of student behavior; leaving versus staying. Departure models offer an explanation of why students leave college. Persistence addresses the issues that compel students to stay in school whether or not the experience is positive. This study focuses on the college experience from the perspective of persistence. Interview questions attempted to discover what kept Native American students in college. Another concept closely related to student persistence is student satisfaction. Whether or not students are satisfied with their educational experience can influence their decision to continue, or persist with their

college education, or depart, or leave the institution. This study focuses on Native American students' perceptions of their higher education experience. Linking these perceptions and persistence will make this study worthwhile.

As has been noted, Native Americans have one of the poorest retention rates of all minorities (Jackson, Smith & Hill, 2003; Larimore & McClellan, 2005; Tierney & Kidwell, 1991). It will be informative to administrators, educators and student service personnel to understand the Native American students' viewpoints of their college experience and why they choose to stay. Strategies that are viewed as supportive for students can be incorporated by the institution to alter the retention history.

Factors Influencing Persistence

Satisfaction with the higher education experience is influenced by many factors, such as perceptions of the campus environment, academic preparedness (Falk & Aitken, 1984), financial constraints (Falk & Aitken), family obligations (Saggio, 2001; Saggio & Rendon, 2004), a sense of belonging, as well as others. Financial restraints influence where students attend school and may even further restrict students to attend part- time. According to students described in Jackson, Smith and Hill's (2003) study, Native American clubs and multicultural organizations that were designed to provide support for Native American students were particularly positive. These researchers also note that this type of a club can provide role models for which others may strive.

Determining factors related to persistence in higher education may reveal the various influences that affect the student while attending college. Family obligations may influence where a student chooses to attend college. At the same time family obligations

50

may be overwhelming to the student, which will cause them to bend to the pressure and leave college.

College choice and persistence are two separate processes, yet may have strong linkages. An example would be a Native American who lives on a reservation with strong cultural ties who chooses to attend a large Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Although the student may have the academic readiness, if there is not a support system in place, the student may have difficulty adjusting to the social environment. This student may choose to drop out. However if this same student attended a smaller institution with a Native American organization, the student may have the support needed to make the adjustment to the college culture. Choice could then be linked to retention.

Cultural capital may also contribute to attrition. Cultural capital is defined as the familiarity with, and access to, the forms of communication, school-related information, social networks, and an internal system of attitudes, beliefs, actions and fundamental values that are acquired from the immediate family, school and community environments of the student that can enhance or constrain patterns of college-going decision making (Paulsen, 2001). Berger (2000) notes that cultural capital appears to be cumulative. What was gained in the primary and secondary years can be carried forward into the higher education environment. This allows for the ability to navigate through the socialization process in the higher education arena. If the student does not have the cultural capital that facilitates a good college-student fit, then the student may not persist.

Parents may pass cultural capital to their children through the expectation that the children will go to college and describe their own college experiences as valuable. In addition cultural capital may be expressed through values, support and a forward vision.

51

Values, motivation and identity are part of the mix of skills that will allow for a cultural adaptation to the new educational environment. If students have support from their home environment or community in some form, their motivation to continue in school may be enhanced. Persistence may be stronger for students whose community values a college education. The cultural capital of Native American communities in Louisiana has not been explored, which made it an important aspect to uncover in this study.

Tinto (1993) postulates that a student needs to take on the culture of the institution in order to be successful in the higher education environment. If the student is pulled away by influences outside of the college, then there is a greater likelihood that the student will leave. Tierney (1999) strongly argues that a cultural model be utilized to affirm identities. When minority students are on campus it is important to have their identity affirmed. Tinto discusses many students' need to give up their identity to take on the identity and culture of the college in order to succeed. Tierney cites a pre-college program, the Neighborhood Academic Initiative (NAI), which enhanced cultural capital and supported students' identities while they gained the academic support needed to attend college. The NAI targets low-income minority adolescents and their families and provides intervention programs to encourage students to develop college interest and readiness. Students are able to maintain their own cultural integrity and use it to build cultural capital. Jackson, Smith and Hill (2003) identify three areas that affect persistence; socio-cultural, personal and academic factors. According to these researchers, Native Americans have improved in overall enrollment. Further, when the institution of higher education is near a reservation, Native Americans enroll at a higher percentage than the national average for this minority. Jackson, Smith and Hill report that

persistence for Native Americans into the third year is 33%, whereas for the total student population is 49%. Retention becomes a problem, however, as they graduate at a lower rate than other students at the same institution.

The work of Jackson, Smith and Hill (2003) is an important study for understanding many influences that affect persistence of American Indian students. These researchers found that Native American students identified family support as critical for their academic success. Structured social support was also identified as being important. Other factors that were found to impact persistence were Native American clubs, multicultural offices, faculty warmth, and exposure to college experiences prior to attending and having spiritual resources. Students in this study expressed frustration with feelings of racism and isolation. Managing a non-linear path and paradoxical cultural pressure were also problematic and noted in the study.

In another study conducted by Reyhner and Dodd (1995) twenty four Native American students from Montana were interviewed to understand the contributing factors for academically successful students. Ninety six percent of the participants indicated that prejudice existed on campus. Of those respondents, 83% felt that the prejudice that existed interfered with college success. Studies by Jackson, Smith and Hill (2003) and Reyhner and Dodd (1995) indicate that racism, whether overt or covert, provides the background for felt negative experiences. Satisfaction with the college experience will most certainly be colored by these experiences.

Tensions between the university culture and the culture of the student for Native American students have been recognized as a problem at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks as disproportionately higher numbers of Native students leave the university

each year (Barnhardt, 1994). This reflects what Tinto (1993) describes in his original model for departure. Changes in student support services and organizational structure changes were identified by Barnhardt as critical to affect a better environment for the Native student. Since many of the American Indians attending this university are from rural areas, counseling and tutoring services have been created for these students. Barnhardt further explains how orientation, recruitment and bridging activities for the high school student entering the university have been created. Specific remediation courses have been devised to address the needs of the Native students and special housing plans have been created to accommodate specific groups. In addition, multicultural workshops were provided for all faculty members to address culturally appropriate ways of teaching, evaluating and conducting research. This is an example where cultural influences in retention were specifically evaluated. Native American retention has not been examined from the students' tribal or cultural background (Larimore & McClellan, 2005).

Native Americans, like all students, have many reasons for not continuing with college. Family responsibilities are frequently among the reasons they give for dropping out of college. Furthermore, lack of financial support, sensitivity to the attitudes towards Native Americans on campus, poor academic preparation and cultural traditions were noted as barriers (Dodd, Garcia, Meccage & Nelson, 1995; Minner et al, 1995).

Factors that lead to persistence include family support, Indian advocacy groups, peer support, and institutional support, such as a minority student office. The family structure of American Indians promotes interdependence (Mankiller, 1991). Traditional Native families are close-knit, and when emotional guidance and encouragement are

present, these students are more likely to continue in school (Jenkins, 1999). Successful

students are more likely to be nontraditional students. Traditional students have been

defined as being between 18-24 years of age, attend college full time and reside on

campus (Bean & Metzner, 1996). In tribal colleges the average student is a female, single

mom and over thirty (Ortiz & HeavyRunner, 2003). When older Native students enter

college they are motivated by different goals such as to gain additional skills for a

specific job, increase certification, or gain skills for a new career.

      Obstacles to persistence in higher education for Native American students include

prejudice, finances, language and alcohol (Reyhner & Dodd, 1995). Some students have a

tribal language as their first language, which can make learning in a secondary language

difficult. Alcoholism is a serious problem on reservations. The death rate from alcohol-

related causes such as suicide, fetal-alcohol syndrome and criminal offenses is three

times as high for Native Americans than the general public (Hodgkinson, 1992). Students

can be easily swayed to use alcohol as a coping mechanism, especially when friends and

family are also users. In one study a student openly cited alcohol and marijuana as

contributing to his leaving college (Minner et al., 1995). Friends and social pressure to

use alcohol can negatively influence students' ability to persist in college.

Persistence and Satisfaction

      Connections between persistence and types of motivation have been made by

several researchers (Loo & Rolison, 1986; Stage, 1989). Stage used the type of

motivation described by the student and compared it to persistence during an academic

year. Stage notes that persistence was related to the three types of motivation that the

student had: cognitive, certification or community service. Stage further suggests that

persistence fell into patterns. Initial levels of goal commitment were significantly related to later levels of goal commitment. Students in the cognitive group may not persist regardless of the fact that they received good grades. For the certification motivation group, academic integration into the collegial experience was not enough to maintain a student in the system. For minorities at high levels of academic integration, their persistence was not as likely unless they had some level of social integration. Those students who exhibited cognitive motivation were not necessarily likely to continue in college despite good grades. For all groups initial levels of goal commitment were related significantly to social integration. For those with community service, social integration was related to later institutional commitment. Social integration was an important indirect influence of persistence for this group. Academic integration was not an important influence on persistence for the community service group. Psychosocial differences influence environmental factors on success at an institution. Minorities with high levels of academic integration were not as likely to persist at the same level as minorities at a higher level of social integration. For minorities, persistence is more likely when the student is socially integrated into the institution.

Berger (2000) also proposes that social integration is more important than academic integration for student attrition. Berger comments that more students leave because of a mismatch with the student body than with the academic program. Geographically restrained students, those that choose the nearest institution for a variety of reasons, may leave college for good if their experience is not satisfying or successful. Stage and Hossler (2000) also note that social integration is an important factor in

influencing student satisfaction with the institution as well as with persistence at that institution.

In Lin, LaCounte and Eder's (1988) study Native American and White students in Montana were compared. These researchers discovered that isolation affected both groups, but isolation had a doubling effect for Native Americans. A student's attitude toward college was the second most important factor in their study.

Allen (1999) observed that the desire to finish college is associated with increased levels of family emotional support. Social support from the collegial environment or with the family is a critical component of satisfaction and persistence of minority students.

A sense of identity has been connected to satisfaction with the college experience by Lounsbury, Huffstetler, Leong and Gibson (2005). These researchers note that when a student has decreased self identity they are more likely to drop out. A sense of identity was positively related to life satisfaction and satisfaction with aspects of the collegiate experience. In addition, a positive self concept and self identity was positively correlated with GPA.

Regardless what motivates a student towards college persistence they can either be satisfied or dissatisfied with their experience. At the same time, regardless of their motivation the student may persist or leave the college. The commonality of persistence and satisfaction are linked when both are positive. What has been presented in the literature is that social connections contribute to this link. Connections between satisfaction and persistence can be noted through motivation and can be observed in Figure 1. Motivation is represented in the first box. The three orientations of intrinsic motivation, certification, knowledge and community are represented with arrows both

toward satisfaction and persistence. With each of the orientations there can be either

satisfaction or dissatisfaction and continuation or departure from the higher education

environment. Satisfaction is represented with one oval with two halves. One half

represents satisfaction, the other half represents dissatisfaction. The oval below the

satisfaction oval represents persistence, which can be either positive (staying in college)

or negative (leaving college). The connection between persistence and satisfaction is

represented with a horizontal blue oval which is social connections, the common factor

between the two.

Figure 1: Motivation links to Persistence and Satisfaction

Satisfaction

Motivation

Certification

Knowledge

Community

-

+

social connections

+

-
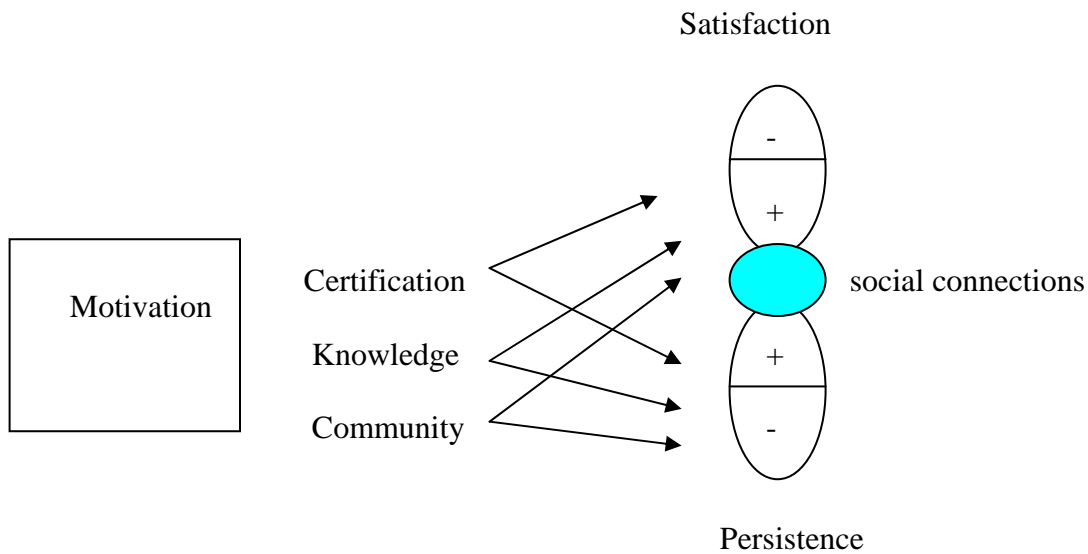
Persistence

Summary

Factors that contribute to educational persistence of the Native American student

have been reviewed. Cultural capital has been explored as a contributor to persistence.

Native Americans have not had a history of the educational cultural capital described by

Paulsen (2001) that encourages the decision to attend college. Without this educational

cultural capital, there is a risk for departure from college. Campus climate, support from

the family and supportive services and other factors that affect higher education have been reviewed as contributors to the persistence decision. Prejudice on campus can negatively impact the collegial experience. Intrinsic motivation can influence the strength of intention to continue with educational goals. Social connections can positively influence both satisfaction and persistence. A connection between satisfaction and persistence has been presented.

Ethnic Identity

Introduction

Student affairs professionals consider their role in promoting learning and student growth to be student development. Student development theory identifies student needs and develops programs to meet them. In the broad spectrum of student development one of the most critical to this study is areas identity development. Addressing identity development and the questions of how strongly students identify themselves with their Native American culture and how this identity impacts their college experience and perceived satisfaction are fundamental to answering the larger research question. For minority students, development of identity requires additional consideration. How one self identifies can influence a whole range of life experiences. What this section will do is review briefly the work of Jean Phinney (1990, 1996) who has described ethnic identity development. How the issue of identity has influenced higher education experiences will then be presented and how biculturalism is linked with Native American identity and lastly minority adjustment to college will be reviewed.

Ethnic Identity Development

Phinney (1990) has investigated the concept of ethnic identity extensively. She found inconsistent definitions and measures of ethnic identity, which make generalizations and comparisons across studies complicated. Ethnic identity is a dynamic concept, as there are several components involved in the definition. Phinney (1990) suggests three components to ethnic identity; self-identification, a sense of belonging and self pride. Other aspects that appeared in her search that add dimension to the concept of ethnic identity are positive and negative attitudes towards one's group, and ethnic involvement or social participation. How involved one is with one's group impacts on identity with that group.

Chickering's theory of identity development, described by Evans, Forney and Guido-DeBrito (1998), is composed of seven vectors of development, one of which is establishing identity. Identity includes many things such as developing comfort with one's body, gender, sexual orientation, self-concept, lifestyle and one's cultural heritage. Part of this identity is understanding one's ethnic background. Identity development is on- going and does not have a clear beginning and ending point, but changes occur with experience and opportunities.

Phinney (1990) is recognized in the student development literature for her ethnic identity model. Ethnic identity is viewed as developmental with three main stages; lack of exploration identity or diffusion, ethnic identity search or moratorium, and identity achievement. In the diffusion phase of the lack of exploration stage, there is little interest in ethnicity. Individuals in this stage do not explore their identities and what it means to

60

be a minority within a dominant culture. On the foreclosure side of the diffusion phase, ethnic ideation is focused on the opinions of others. Perceptions of self at this stage are based primarily on parental values. In the moratorium stage the person explores ethnicity and attempts to understand what ethnicity is for oneself. Phinney describes this stage as one where the individual will engage in cultural activities, do a lot of reading and talk to people to about the culture. In this stage some reject the dominant culture. During the identity achievement phase, the individual has a clear, confident sense of their identity and a more in-depth understanding and appreciation of their culture. Phinney further explains that when one reaches this stage the individual is not necessarily more engaged in the culture, but rather has a clear sense of self

In a review of the literature on ethnic identity Phinney (1990) noted that when an identity framework was mentioned, three broad perspectives emerged that describe the concept; social identity theory, acculturation and culture conflict and identity formation. The social identity theory stresses the importance of being a member of a group which provides a sense of belonging, which subsequently contributes to a positive self-concept. The acculturation framework is based on the concept of a change in cultural attitudes, beliefs and values when there is contact between two separate groups. Within the acculturation framework two models- linear and two-dimensional- describe the concept (Phinney, 1990). In the linear model ethnic identity is expressed on a continuum from a total commitment of the minority identity to an immersion into the mainstream. As one moves along the continuum, the ethnic identity weakens. In the two-dimensional or orthogonal model, identification with the ethnic group can be strong or weak and the same can be true of the dominant culture. When the identity with the dominant group is

strong and the ethnic group is weak, the result can be described as assimilation. When the

identification of both the dominant and ethnic group is present the term used is

acculturated, integrated or bicultural. When identification with the ethnic group is weak

and identification with the dominant culture is weak, the term used is marginal. In the

case of a strong identification with the ethnic group and weak identification with the

dominant culture, the descriptors are ethnically identified or embedded or dissociated

(Phinney).

Consideration of the various levels of identity presented in this model will be used

as a framework for the data that was gathered in this study.

Cultural Identity and Higher Education

How one identifies oneself can also be part of the description of cultural capital

(Berger, 2000; Kuh & Love, 2000; Rendon, Jalomo & Nora, 2000; Tinto, 1993). When a

college degree is the end result that students envision for themselves and this attainment

is important for the family and community as a whole, then the students' cultural capital

has positively influenced them to attend college. Students' perceptions of their college

experience is mediated through meaning that the students' culture places on those

experiences (Kuh & Love, 2000).Tierney (1999) states that when college students are

able to have their cultural identity affirmed they are more likely to graduate. Having a

cultural identity serves several purposes. The functions of a cultural identity have been

described as providing a self-identity, affective support and a place in the world

(Murguia, Padilla & Pavel, 1991). Cultural identity can influence the importance of

attending college and earning a degree and will influence persistence (Kuh & Love,

2000). Shields (1999) reported that when Navajo high school students adapted to the

dominant culture, the students felt that it was important to maintain a cultural connectedness.

Weaver (2001) notes that one of the important parts of an identity is self-identity. She notes that identity is multilayered. The context of the situation brings up different identities. Weaver explains that on the reservation a particular individual may be termed "mixed blood". That same individual may be called Lakota when talking to other American Indians. Or that same individual may be referred to as Native American when talking to non-Indian people. Each of these identities is contextual. Another important point that Weaver discusses is that when asserting an indigenous cultural identity, assimilation is being resisted.

When the cultural group values persistence and achievement, the student will more likely attempt to reach these goals. Kuh and Love (2000) state that the more that students engage in their culture of origin the more cultural stress they will feel, which will negatively impact persistence. Questions of interest are how one's cultural identity affects the experiences a student has while in college, what does the literature tell us about cultural identity and how are these concepts relevant for Native Americans? Biculturalism has been identified as a component of self-identity that may influence experiences and persistence in college.

Native American Identity

When the literature describes American Indians or Native Americans, the underlying premise is that all American Indians have the same cultural history. A generic background is assumed, but a generic Indian does not exist. Each tribe has its own identity and set of values and beliefs. When having to choose a race, Native American

would be selected, yet identification is more specific with the tribe. With this said, it may be more important to discuss a cultural identity for individuals. Identity is multifaceted and involves tribal sovereignty, tribal government, cultural change and one's individual sensibility (Horse, 2005). Individuals representing various tribes may attend any one institution. A Native American student population may be multicultural in its own right. Different values and beliefs may be present within the Native population. How any individual balances a tribal identity within a dominant culture of Western values is of interest to educators. How the balance is maintained could affect satisfaction, persistence and overall adjustment to the college environment. Identity with the tribal cultural may support students in their educational pursuits (Holt, Mahowald & DeVore, 2002).

Several attempts to define levels of cultural orientation have been made. Herring (1998) describes five types or levels of cultural orientation which are classified as pantraditional, traditional, transitional, bicultural and assimilated. Each of these orientations describes the extent to which one subscribes to Native culture as opposed to Western values. A person described as pantraditional is one who prefers to return to a traditional way of living and does not interact with others who are dissimilar from themselves. They do not speak English or use modern inventions. An individual at the pantraditional level would most likely not enter the higher educational environment. A traditional person is one who comes from a family that remains on the reservation or tribal trust lands. Herring's description of this type of person is one who would rarely attend a mainstream college. An individual at this level may attend a tribal college. A transitional person would only retain rudimentary components of the traditional life. This person may not accept all of the cultural values and traditions, and does not totally

identify with Western values. A student at this level may or may not seek out mainstream organizations on the campus. If an organization sparked an interest, then perhaps they would join. A Native American or multicultural organization may or may not hold interest. This type of student may be strongly influenced by the environment and how comfortable a fit it is for the student. A bicultural individual is one whose family is accepted by the dominant culture. These families practice mainstream values and traditional values. A student at this level may only be interested in both general campus activities as well as Native American focused organizations and courses that highlight Native American issues. If there is an organization for Native American students, it may provide reinforcement of the value of tradition and culture. An individual who is considered to be assimilated may be defined as one whose values are subsumed by the mainstream culture. A student at this level may have no interest in Native American organizations or courses that highlight Native American influences such as literature or history. Spencer, Swanson and Cunningham (1991) point out that acculturation may come with a price. When a student is acculturated into the dominant culture, they may become marginalized with intracultural groups. During adolescence this may be particularly difficult for students.

Herring (1998) organized the cultural orientation classification to more appropriately guide Native American students in counseling sessions. Individual responses can then be addressed by different strategies in counseling Native American students. How Native Americans construct their cultural identity can be of interest to more than just counselors, but to others in higher education as well, such as teachers and administrators. Garrett (1996) presents four levels of acculturation, traditional, marginal,

bicultural and assimilated. These levels are similar to what is presented by Herring. Garrett states that the biculturally competent person possesses a high degree of resiliency through a strong sense of self identity in more than one context. Garrett also suggests that a bicultural identity development leads to enculturation.

Important to the problem under investigation is that Herring's (1998) categories do not fit into the Native American experience in the South. One of the main differences is that language is not an identifying component of the American Indian culture in Louisiana; the native language has been almost completely replaced. What may inform this study is to note how Native Americans describe their identity. Glatzmaier, Myers and Bordogna (2000) interviewed three American Indians in-depth who were living in an urban environment to identify how they construct their identity. What they found was that their identity helped them make sense of the environment and situations in which otherwise would appear to be out of balance. Their identity remained with them regardless of their location. These researchers identified several aspects of a Native American cultural identity including spirituality, self-identification, perpetuating culture, use of cultural practices and tension of balancing traditional way with the modern world.

A different approach to defining acculturation has been presented by Choney, Berryhill-Paapke and Robbins (1995) using a more orthogonal model developed around the image of a medicine wheel. These researcher divide the circle into the four areas of personality; cognitive, behavioral, affective/spiritual and social/environmental, which is congruent with the four domains of the medicine wheel. Each of these areas is subdivided into five levels; traditional, transitional, bicultural, assimilated and marginal. These levels of acculturation are similar to Herring's (1998) levels. What Choney, Berryhill-Paapke

and Robbins propose is that the individual can exhibit different behaviors in each of the four areas of personality. Presenting a model of this type allows for a more varied and complex depiction of an individual that reflects the influence of the environment in which they live. One goal of these researchers is that the attributes of the model not be value-laden. No level is more desirable than the next. Movement from one level to another is not indicative of mental health.

The tribe was mentioned as a reason for success in college by at least one student in Dodd, Garcia, Meccage and Nelson's (1995) study with members of various tribes in Montana. More detail in how this was felt was not described. Tierney (1992) noted that tribal influences impact the college experience, which will depend on their cultural background. A pervasive tribal connection may be a factor, but has not been overtly mentioned in other studies.

Spirituality has also been identified as an important component for Native American students attending tribal colleges, which promotes a cultural resilience (Ambler, 2003). Garcia (2000) also found that spirituality was noted as an important component when navigating a doctoral program by American Indians in Montana who received a doctoral degree. Garcia describes spirituality as giving credit and honor to the Great Spirit, being respectful of all things, and taking care of Mother Earth. Garcia also indicated that prayer is sometimes a demonstration of spirituality. Faith in God was also noted as a source of encouragement for Native students attending a bible college (Saggio, 2001). Saggio found that seeking God's blessing for the college experience was mentioned, particularly when there were difficulties during the experience. Having a religious faith has been noted as a factor for success with American Indians in Montana,

though specific examples of this faith were not provided (Dodd, Garcia, Meccage & Nelson, 1995). It is the purpose of this study to identify which of these descriptors apply to the experience of Native Americans in Louisiana. After identifying which descriptors fit the experiences, overarching constructs or patterns will be developed and compared to existing constructs.

American Indian Biculturalism

Biculturalism is another manner of that describing the amount of each culture, in this case Native and Western, which are blended together. In general when looking at minority cultures in a majority culture, it is useful to find the amount of overlap of values between the two (Rendon, Jalomo & Nora, 2000). The more that commonality is present, the more bicultural the person may be. Phinney (1990) delineates a bicultural individual as one who is equally strong in both the mainstream and minority cultures. Herring (1998) only identifies a person as bicultural when they are accepted by the dominant culture. On campus this may be evidenced by majority students involving Native American students in a study group or asking them to participate in a shared project because they are one of the students and not because they have to demonstrate diversity. Acceptance may also be noted when Native American students are invited to join clubs or organizations because of merit or interest. Biculturalism is a descriptor in studies, yet it is defined with different emphasis by different scholars.

Several studies use biculturalism as a means of comparison with other traits and abilities. Biculturalism has been reported to relate to responses on the WAIS-III (Ducheneaux & McDonald, 1999). Those students who have a higher degree of biculturalism scored higher on psychological tests of well- being (Moran, 1998). Another

study indicated that higher degrees of biculturalism are more associated with student ability to manage stress (Griffith, 2000).

Brown and Smirles (2003) examined the ethnic identity of American Indian adolescents in a Northeastern tribe. To describe biculturalism they modified a bicultural identity scale to fit their population's needs. Results indicated that these adolescents displayed a bicultural ethnic identity- American Indian and White- with a stronger identification with the Native culture. Self-esteem was not correlated with the strength or type of identity that was identified by the adolescents. A Native American identity was stronger for those adolescents who lived in the state where the tribe's reservation is located. Those adolescents who lived outside of that state did not have as strong a Native American Identity. The researchers also identified 63% of the adolescents as having a sense of belonging and identity through being a tribal member. Twenty percent of the adolescents who lived outside of the state expressed a desire to learn more about their Native culture and found it difficult to live far away from the tribe. Adolescents who lived outside of the state were engaged in more non-Native activities and less activities that were Native American related than those who lived in the state where the tribe has a reservation. What this study suggests is that a bicultural identity is prevalent in Native American adolescents. What is also apparent is that when Native American activities are available, there is engagement. If opportunities were available for those adolescents outside the state to engage in Native American activities, they might have been more involved in those activities. Geography affected involvement.

A small group of Native Americans living in urban areas identified strongly with being Native American while at the same time being able to easily maneuver in the

mainstream culture. Maintaining their cultural identity was achieved by continuing to participate in cultural practices, communicating with other Native Americans, keeping traditional values and spirituality and sharing their perspectives with others (Glatzmaier, Myers & Bordogna, 2000). A bicultural identity was comfortably practiced. Where one lives is not an indicator of strength of identity.

The context of the situation influences what is perceived and what adaptations will take place (Glatzmaier, Myers & Bordogna, 2000). As an example, some Native Americans live away from the reservation and are very connected to their cultural traditions, while some can live on the reservation and be disconnected. Experiences in college are varied. Students do not necessarily replace their traditional culture with the dominant culture. A blending of cultures, or utilizing each as the situation mandates is more likely what is internalized. When Native Americans live in an urban environment, one can not assume that they have given up traditional customs and traditions.

There is an important difference between cultural adaptation and assimilation (Garrod & Larimore, 1997). Cultural adaptation can occur when it is self-directed (Boyer, 1989). Indian people need to choose for themselves what they choose to perpetuate of their culture and which of the dominant culture values they want to embrace. Self-determination is implied with adaptation and owning the changes is the critical difference. Individuals do not necessarily present in a typical culturally expected role (McFee, 1968). If one views culture as a fixed entity, one will fail to understand the individual. What level of cultural identity the person is in, or level of bicultural identity, may provide insights into how the college experience is perceived.

Not all forms of biculturalism have led to adjustment in everyday living, changing life circumstances and general coping in everyday life. An example of how adapting a bicultural perspective can lead to maladjustment has been noted with the Nez Perce. The Nez Perce are a Native American tribal group who are now restricted to a reservation in central Idaho. Traditionally their land encompassed most of Idaho, and parts of Oregon and Washington. Today there is a problem with alcoholism on the reservation. For example, the Nez Perce who had a greater identification with biculturalism, and involvement with sports, had a higher incidence of alcoholism and other drug usage. Intrusion of the white way of life has caused a cultural disconnect with Nez Perce tribal members so that alcohol has become problematic. Identification with the traditional Nez Perce culture lowered drug use (Harris & McFarland, 2000). Although this example was not situated within the higher education context, it does highlight the point that there is more than one result from either attempting to blend in with a different culture or holding on to traditional values.

What has been noted is that when students exhibit biculturalism (being able to feel comfortable and adapt in both cultures) there is a greater likelihood of success in school (Ducheneaux & McDonald 1999; Garcia, 2000; Moran, 1998; Griffith, 2000). Maintaining traditional values of community and being able to walk in two worlds has also been described as essential for leadership in Native American communities (McLeod, 2002). The skill of being able to walk in two different worlds demonstrates the ability to adapt. How to assist with this adaptation can be a focus for those designing curriculum. Another term that is used to describe the probability of success in the dominant culture is whether or not the person is acculturated (Ting & Bryant, 2001). Ting

& Bryant observed that the more acculturated the person was, the more likely they would continue in higher education. These results indicate that the more values of the dominant culture are internalized by the minority, the more likely it is that they will be successful. A person who is acculturated may be observed as participating in Native American activities on campus as well as student government, sports, or other special interest clubs such as photography.

Resilience is a positive trait that allows for adaptation in life. Resilience stems from knowing who you are and where you want to go in life and utilizes internal resources. An additional attribute that contributes to ultimate success in the higher education arena by Native Americans is resilience, both as an individual trait and one that can be noted as cultural resilience (HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003). Cultural resilience involves using values from one's culture to guide the direction in which to adapt. Tierney and Kidwell (1991) more forcefully stated that it was resistance to the assimilation polices that dominated Native American education for centuries that has left cultural integrity intact. The higher education process can provide an opportunity for Native Americans to redefine themselves in terms of their American identity which can then ensure cultural survival (Garrod & Larimore, 1997).

Biculturalism is a concept that is not consistently defined. A model such as Herring's (1998) would not provide an accurate description of the American Indians in Louisiana. There are no isolated reservations where a Native language is spoken exclusively. The majority of Native Americans in Louisiana live in racially- mixed communities, where interaction with other races occurs on a daily basis. In other states where more Native Americans live, there are reservations on traditional land that is well

isolated from the majority. The five descriptors that Herring utilizes are not able to be

enacted in Louisiana. The continuum model described by Phinney (1990) may also fall

short of a rich description of the resulting dynamics under which the Native Americans

have had to adapt over the past centuries. A model such as Phinney's two -dimensional

model may allow for more flexibility in assessing the various groups of Native

Americans in Louisiana.

Ethnic Variations in Adjustment to College

Adjustment to college life by minorities in Predominantly White Institutions

(PWI) is stressful. How individuals cope with adjustment varies across ethnic lines. One

study that included Asians, Asian Indians, Blacks, Hispanics and Whites found that

students were better adjusted when they were more individuated (Kalsner & Pistole

2003). For females, when they were more individuated away from family closeness,

there was a greater likelihood for adjustment to college. When the females were closer to

their families, they felt pressure to fulfill family obligations (Kalsner & Pistole, 2003).

This same study found that family attachment seemed to have been more important for

males than females. Males had a greater need for independence than females. An

influence for this finding was that the caregivers had a value that the male should be

independent. These researchers further noted that a variance was present between

different groups of students. When students were more oriented toward others they also

had more likelihood to be better adjusted to college. Asian students scored higher than

Hispanic students in this area. Cultural orientation and values were suggested as a

possible explanation. Eastern philosophy stresses family over the individual and

obligation and loyalty. For these reasons Asian students may be more likely to be

73

committed to their institution. When an understanding of the student's culture is present, strategies that fit their needs can be planned for. Native Americans were 0.3% of the diversity on campus, which did not allow them to be represented in this study. The Native American voice is not heard. Regional variations in adjustment have not been described. Experiences of minorities may relate to their level of bicultural identity.

A study involving African American undergraduates highlighted the importance of an ethnic student organization. An organization of this nature facilitated student interaction with faculty, provided students an opportunity for them to be themselves, provided a safe place to be connected to their culture, allowed the students to give back to their community and in general allowed for social integration within the university (Guiffrida, 2003).

Native Americans are not adequately represented in the literature on college choice, experience and persistence issues. Studies like Guiffrida's (2003) cited above, have few Native Americans participating. This does not allow for describing differences in their perceptions. Regional, state or tribal differences in adjustment have not been addressed in the literature. A Louisiana Native American perception of the college process (choice, satisfaction, retention and graduation) has yet to be described. This study allows for an initial understanding of the needs of Native American students when participating in the campus culture. Our understanding of the pertinent issues for these individuals can help sensitize student service personnel, counselors, student government, student organizations, administrators and others involved in the college mission. Strategies for recruitment and retention can then be focused on issues that are important to this minority group.

A Cultural Identity and Satisfaction Persistence Model

What is not emphasized in Tinto's (1993) model of departure and Guiffrida's (2006) cultural departure framework is the flip-side, or contributing factors for persistence. Both of these models are important when analyzing departure decisions by students. Tinto and Guiffrida's models focus on departure. If one uses a variation of these models to enhance the understanding of the components or influences that affect decisions to continue academic pursuits, then a more balanced view of the college experience may be described. Developmental stages of the student's cultural identity are not a part of either model. The student's level of cultural identity has not been used as a contributing factor in the departure or persistence decision.

How cultural identity development is woven within this cultural model has not been documented. The literature on Native Americans in the higher education arena describes some experiences but does not connect them to a framework of identity or persistence. This study attempts to address these gaps in the literature by highlighting experiences of Native Americans in Louisiana and will compare their responses to Guiffrida's (2006) cultural model of departure. What will hopefully emerge are the resilience strategies or cultural adaptations that are the tools for a successful college experience.

I suggest a model for persistence that expands the existing models to incorporate cultural identity and satisfaction. The roles and obligations that a student has are added to the external commitment box in the cultural departure model (Guiffrida, 2006). Exploring the students' additional roles will highlight their influence on student persistence.

Guiffrida's departure model (2006), as has been noted previously, expanded Tinto's model (1993) of departure to include components that allow for a more appropriate cultural perspective. The entry attributes that a student brings to the college experience have been expanded to include cultural norms and values, which in turn influence goals, commitments, institutional experiences and integration into the academic and social network of the institution. To the institutional experience in Tinto's model, Guiffrida adds family and friends. His justification is that either or both family and friends outside of the institution can influence how the student will be integrated into the social and academic aspects of the college. Motivational orientation has been added by Guiffrida as it influences the academic experience. Cultural values will influence the motivational orientation of the student, which in turn colors the whole academic experience both before they enter the system and as they make a decision to stay or leave.

How cultural identity is conceived as a part of this cultural departure model has not been considered. I have added cultural identity within Guiffrida's (2006) cultural model to fill this gap. Cultural identity development does not begin with the college experience, but it continues to develop while the student is in school and will continue throughout the student's life. A cultural identity can act as a lens through which all experiences are viewed. Perceptions about any experience will be influenced depending where on the cultural identity developmental continuum the student falls. One way to visualize a possible link between persistence and identity is to put cultural identity as the filter through which decisions are made at several points in the persistence process. I use the word process here to recognize that a decision to stay or leave the college environment may occur at more than one point throughout one's college experience. A

cultural identity will permeate throughout the collegiate experience. This new model that I suggest incorporates this idea and is noted in Figure 2.

One of the goals of this study is to determine which factors in the Native American student college experience are connected to persistence. In a model of student factors that affect persistence, it should be labeled as such. Experiences that a student has may also influence persistence. Experiences will contribute to either satisfaction or dissatisfaction. In the model that I am proposing, satisfaction is represented by a spiral that potentially intersects with the collegiate experiences as well as cultural identity. I call this the satisfaction spiral. When an intersection occurs, when satisfaction is present, then the experience is positive. This spiral has the potential of circling around itself and not intersecting with either the academic environment or the cultural identity component, which would be a negative experience, as no satisfaction is encountered. When no connections are made within the formal academic arena, for example, it may be labeled as a negative experience. When the spiral connects within the academic, social and home systems, experiences may be perceived as positive. An example of a satisfying connection may be taken when the student describes a faculty member as being helpful in selecting a course that would help them in their major. When the spiral crosses the cultural identity component it is positive within the cultural identity realm. An example of a cultural identity activity would be attending a powwow, which would have no connection to the collegial experience. There can be positive experiences within both the academic experiences and the cultural identity component. When the spiral connects with both the institutional experience and with cultural identity an integration of the two areas occurs, making it a strong connection for the individual, as several facets of the self are

resonating together. An example of this type of connection would be a textbook in a course that included works by a Native American author. When there is no integration within the institution or the surrounding support systems, a negative experience and lack of satisfaction is demonstrated. A framework that exemplifies this concept is presented in Figure 2. This study places the responses of the participants within the framework. A revised framework is suggested.

Figure 2: Cultural Identity and Satisfaction Persistence Model
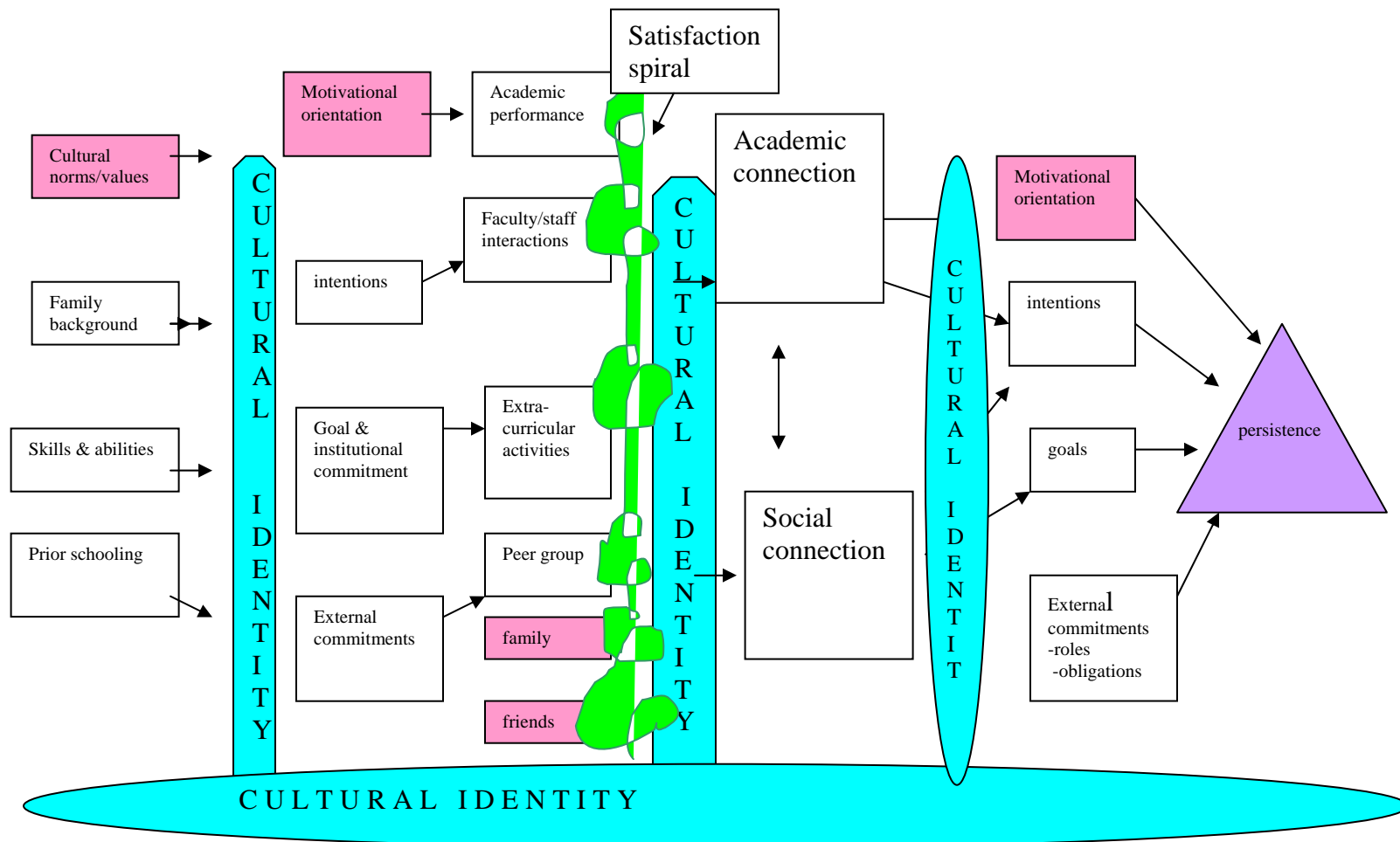
Concluding Remarks

This chapter has reviewed several bodies of literature to orient the reader to the issues surrounding the college experience for minorities. Ethnic identity development has been reviewed. Development of an identity occurs and alters throughout the lifespan. A collegial experience can be an opportunity to enhance and strengthen cultural identity. How this occurs for Native Americans is of interest in this research. A theory of departure utilizing an amended framework from Tinto to incorporate cultural components has been briefly described. Using a framework allows the results of the research to be described within a pre-existing structure. Literature delving into retention and persistence has been presented. A comparison to this literature can be used when the Native American experience in Louisiana is described. College experiences have been explored with the focus on alienation, family and satisfaction. Native Americans in Louisiana have a perspective on their college experience which allows for a comparison with other Native American students. How tribal colleges contribute to the college experience for Native Americans has been introduced. And lastly a framework that blends cultural identity, persistence and satisfaction has been suggested for guiding the analysis of the data that was gathered from the participants.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This section reviews the questions that drove the study, explains the research design, and the role of the researcher in the study. Ethical considerations are addressed. I describe the methodology and how the site and participants were selected. I explain how the interview process was designed.

Next I describe how the interview was conducted, how the information was recorded and transcribed. Preparation of the coding and data analysis is described.

Research Questions

Several questions guided the development of the semi-structured interview format. This format allowed the participant to answer in the depth that they chose. The interviewer probed for more in-depth information, clarification or redirected the participant to respond to the information as intended by the researcher as needed. The interviewer guided the participant for clarification to obtain a rich response. The primary question that guided this study was:

- How can the experiences of Native American students be explained in models of persistence?

Several other questions also contributed to the design of this study which were:

  o What are the perceptions of the higher education experience of Louisiana's Native Americans?

  o How does being Native American in a predominantly white institution affect one's college experience?

- Which aspects of the experience contribute to satisfaction and dissatisfaction of Native Americans?

- How can motivation for attending an institution of higher education for Native American students be described?

- What are the expectations and goals that the Native American student has when entering the higher education environment?

- How does role conflict contribute to persistence decisions for Native American students?

Research Design

The nature of the inquiry required reflection, which made this subject suitable for qualitative research methods. Answers to the questions that informed this study have allowed for an understanding of the essence of Native Americans' lived experience in the educational environment, which is the identified phenomenon. With this description, this study may be described as phenomenological research (Creswell, 2003).

Rationale for a Qualitative Research Design

The type of information that was desired in this study required perceptions and reflection from the participants, which made this subject suitable for qualitative research (Schram, 2006). To uncover how the participants made meaning of their educational experience made a phenomenological study the most logical approach to consider (Creswell, 2003; Schram, 2006). This study fits into this component of qualitative research as it was conducted with individuals where they were asked about their perceptions of their collegial experience.

Questions in this study were refined as information was gathered from the participants. Qualitative research is emergent and alters as opportunities arise which can enhance the understanding of the patterns that emerge (Creswell, 2003). This was essential as the interviews developed. Qualitative research is primarily interpretative (Creswell). Results from this investigation have been interpreted from the patterns and themes that emerged.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher was to ask general directed questions that allowed insight into the research questions. The researcher facilitated in-depth probing for clarification when it was needed.

Reflexivity, or acknowledgement of the researcher's biases, interests and values that may influence research should be stated (Creswell, 2002). Some believe that only indigenous peoples should do research with indigenous people (Mihesuah, 1998; Smith, 2001). This author has Cherokee ancestors, but has not been raised with Native American traditions. My upbringing is from a white middle class perspective. One of my previous jobs was with Indian Health Service where I provided consultative occupational therapy services to handicapped children and organizations to all the tribes located in Arizona and New Mexico. I gained insight into the health and economic problems Native Americans face in the Southwest on a daily basis. The uniqueness of the individual tribes was obvious to me at this time as the team to which I belonged negotiated with tribal entities to provide recommended interventions. This awareness sparked an interest to investigate the perceptions of higher education from a Louisiana Native American perspective and not one that is necessarily generic to all Native Americans.

I acknowledge monumental injustices in the education of Native Americans in the past. Discrimination continues to be felt by various Native peoples throughout the United States in

higher educational institutions (Garrod & Larimore1997; Jackson, Smith & Hill, 2003 Loo & Rolison, 1986; Stewart & Post, 1990). It is my intent to bring the perspectives of Native Americans in Louisiana forward with this research. Voices of the participants have been utilized in the analysis. I am the one who interpreted the data, which means I brought my own biases to the process. One of my biases was that I anticipated finding more felt prejudice by the participants in this study. Stereotyping was reported, but not to the degree that I anticipated. I have made a conscious effort to be objective in my analysis of the data.

My intent is to describe the collegiate experiences of American Indians to help institutions better plan an educational environment so that it meets the needs of this population while ensuring student satisfaction.

Ethical considerations

Each of the participants had the choice to participate or not in the study. A letter of consent was signed by each participant involved in the research. Each participant was assigned a code so that only the researcher is able to identify the individual participant's response to insure confidentiality. Each participant was assigned a Roman numeral and a letter for identification by the researcher.

Data is kept in a locked drawer in the researcher's locked office. Only the researcher has the key to the cabinet. Tapes will be destroyed after transcription and member checking has been accomplished, the final written document has been completed and subsequent articles have been written. Until all written work is complete the tapes will be kept in case further reference is required for verification.

Methodology

A phenomenological design was chosen in order to obtain a holistic picture of the participant in all aspects of their college experience. Phenomenology investigates the lived experience from the viewpoint of a small group of people (Schram, 2006). According to Schram, the intent is to identify what the experience means to the individuals and to provide a comprehensive description of it. Schram elaborates that the intent of phenomenological research is to uncover the underlying meaning of some shared experience. This study has provided the framework to accomplish this goal in understanding the meaning of higher education to Native Americans from Louisiana.

During the initial interview, responses to questions in a semi-structured interview were documented. A phenomenological design takes the nature of the social phenomenon that is obtained from the viewpoint of the actor and is noted from the ideas, feelings and motives of individuals, making it ideal to document Native Americans' experiences in the educational environment (Freebody, 2003). In the analysis phase the researcher identified the factors that related to satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Then the researcher identified connections between the participants to find patterns. Common roles, values and beliefs that emerged were coded to determine similarities and differences between participants.

American Indian student experiences in a PWI were the foci of this study. Satisfaction in the higher education arena and its relation to ethnic identity by American Indians is one of the specific aspects of this cultural group that was investigated. The study was approved by the University of New Orleans Institutional Review Board (see Appendix C).

Participant selection

     Twelve students were selected to participate in this study. Students were selected from two geographic areas in the state of Louisiana. All participants voluntarily agreed to participate in this study. Students are at least in their sophomore year and were members of a Louisiana-recognized tribe.

     A gatekeeper was identified at McNeese State University who assisted in facilitating the research protocol at this institution. Letters were sent to all identified Native American students on this campus. A total of 49 letters were mailed. Three participants responded to the letter that was sent from McNeese. The snowball technique was employed to increase the numbers of participants from this area. Five additional participants were identified with this approach.

     At one institution in the south of the state, two students were known to the researcher and agreed to participate in the study. A snowball technique was utilized to identify other potential participants. In all four participants were from the main tribal group in this area.

     In addition to the twelve participants, two other people were interviewed. After listening to the Coushatta subjects, it became apparent that the educational director for the tribe was an important person in the Coushatta students' transition to college. A forty minute phone conversation with her was held. While interviewing one participant, a graduate of LSU was also present at her place of work. She had been instrumental in beginning the Native American Student Association at LSU which made her a person that could bring meaning to the present study. She was interviewed for approximately fifteen minutes. These two participants were interviewed for contextual information. Information from them clarified the information that the other participants provided. Shirley amplified the information about the Coushatta tribe's higher education policy and role. Jamie provided the viewpoint of an alumni who has had the

opportunity to reflect on her undergraduate education Each of these interviewees is described

below.

Shirley Doucet: Shirley is a member of the Coushatta tribe and its educational director.

Her job puts her into contact with the office of admissions, human resources, the registrar, the

bursar and social services at the institutions where the recipients of financial support attend

college. Education is a priority for the Coushatta tribe and programming begins in pre-K. Awards

are presented to successful high school and college graduates to support their educational

experiences. Successful tribal members act as role models for the younger tribal members, which

encourages them to continue on with their education.

The opening of a casino has provided opportunities for Coushatta tribal members to be

able to pursue higher education degrees (Goldsmith & Mueller, 2003). Ms. Doucet corroborates

this statement and remarked that of the eight high school graduates from May 2007, seven are

attending institutions of higher education. Coushatta college students are attending or have

attended institutions such as Duke, Notre Dame, Livingston, Sam Houston as well as others. She

is very proud that tribal members are attending colleges all over the United States. Another result

of this education is that graduates return to the tribe and are some are now council members, and

one is a tribal judge. Continuing with her pride she commented, "Nobody has dropped out. They

may take off a semester or two, but they go back".

Jaime Billiot: Jaime is a member of the United Houma Nation and is currently working on

a Master's degree at Arizona State University. She attended LSU as an undergraduate. During

her time at LSU she was instrumental in organizing the Native American Student Association

and served as an officer. She was influential in organizing the first powwow on campus. Her

reasons for being involved were that she was frustrated with the misconceptions that students had

about Native Americans in Louisiana. A couple of the comments that frustrated her were when someone asked her if she lived in a teepee and where did she go shopping. Jamie made it her personal mission to educate non- Indian students about Native Americans.

Both Shirley and Jaime expanded the information that was provided by the participants. Shirley reinforced and expanded the information about the Coushatta's support of education throughout the lifespan. Her information highlighted the education cultural capital that is being reinforced at the tribal level. Jamie's viewpoint reinforced the findings in the literature that indicate prejudice is strongly experienced by some Native Americans during their higher education journey. Her experiences provided the impetus to alter the negativity that she felt to create a more supportive environment for those who followed.

Interview Protocol

Little instrumentation is desired when underlying constructs are being investigated and the context is the focus of the study (Miles and Huberman, 1994). When there is too much structure it ignores the context. Universality was not the desired outcome in this study, but rather a range of rich description of the perceptions of the individual participants in the Louisiana higher education context. To begin to discover how being Native American influences the college experience, a semi-structured interview format was utilized to allow for in-depth responses. Twelve participants were interviewed, which again supports the use of little instrumentation (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The richness of the data came from the individual's experiences rather than responses to isolated questions. Participants were interviewed between forty five minutes to an hour and a half. Follow-up telephone calls were made to clarify responses when needed. See Interview Protocol Appendix A. Participants received and reviewed the informed consent protocol (Appendix B).

Questions focused on background demographics, reasons for attending the institution, experiences at the institution both socially and academically, the roles and responsibilities beyond that of student, and how students self identify what it means to be an American Indian attending this institution. All interviews were tape recorded.

In order to probe the research questions, a semi-structured interview protocol was created to ensure that the primary questions asked of each participant would be the same. This allowed for exploration and in-depth personal responses from the guided questions for each of the participants. Themes are more likely to be noted when the same questions are asked, which is what emerged.

Demographic information was asked during the first part of the interview. Some of the questions referred to the participants' tribe, is the location of their home in relation to the college, what other roles they have and other obligations that they must perform while they attend school. Current and past grades were reported to obtain the academic connection to the institution. The participants were asked to describe what it meant to them to be a member of their tribe. Questions were asked about why they chose to attend that particular institution of higher education, their goal of education, and their motivation to attend. Questions were directed to discover the level of satisfaction of their experience as well as factors which influenced their feelings about their experience.

Site selection

Students who participated in this study attend five institutions of higher education in the South and Southwest of Louisiana. Each of these institutions is located in a city that services the city and the rural communities surrounding the city. Only one institution, McNeese State University, was contacted directly for access to students. In the end, the site location was more a

function of where the participants were attending college rather than a deliberate attempt to use the institution to identify participants.

Nicholls State University also has a high enrollment of Native American students, which makes it more likely to be able to locate participants. Nicholls University is in the southern part of the state and has a Native American enrollment of 1.9%. The United Houma Nation, Point au Chien and the Biloxi Chitimacha Confederation of Muskogee tribes are state- recognized groups that are in the area around Nicholls. In the 2000 census all of these groups were part of the United Houma Nation, the largest tribe in the state with 5,844 members (U.S. census, 2000). In 2004 the other two groups broke off from the United Houma Nation and became state recognized. Nicholls is close enough to allow students who live in the area to stay at home while they attend classes if they choose. Role responsibilities and obligations that impact persistence may be more apparent in this type of arrangement.

I contacted the students with whom I was acquainted to obtain agreement from them to participate. I used the snowball technique to identify more students who might be attending the same institution. One other student was identified this way from Nicholls. The snowball technique did locate one other student who was attending a different institution in the area.

McNeese State University was the only institution used for approaching participants. It is a four year public university located near the Coushatta reservation. Although this is a small tribe, it is federally recognized with more resources for supporting its members through education. More opportunities for Coushatta members to attend college are available if they are motivated to do so.

The other institutions which the participants attend, LSU-E, L E Fletcher, and

90

Louisiana State University A & M (LSU) were not selected by the investigator, but were the institutions which were attended by the participants that were identified through the snowball technique.

Gaining access

A United Houma Nation student was known to the researcher and was asked if she would be a participant. In addition she was asked to identify other Native American students who were attending Nicholls State University. A snowball technique was utilized until four participants were identified who were from the United Houma Nation. One of these four attended LE Fletcher.

At Northwestern State University contact was made with the advisor of the Native American Student Association. The organization is inactive at this time. The advisor attempted to contact students for participation. No participants were located at this institution as initially intended.

A member of the faculty who teaches a course on Native American history was contacted for support at McNeese State University. A letter of introduction was sent to the IRB at McNeese along with the IRB approval from the University of New Orleans. A letter of introduction was sent to the research officer to introduce the researcher and the intent of research to inquire about appropriate protocol. A letter of support from the advisor was included. The IRB at McNeese requested the entire proposal that was sent to the IRB at UNO for review. In addition they requested the entire methodology section that was presented to the department. After this was submitted, their IRB reviewed my proposal and methodology. Permission was granted to use McNeese as a site to recruit participants.

The IRB at McNeese agreed to allow letters to be sent to their students who identified themselves as Native American. In order for this to be anonymous to me, I needed to send to the institution a copy of what I wanted the students to receive. The gatekeeper at McNeese would receive my letters and give them to the appropriate person at McNeese who would apply labels and mail them. A total of 49 Native American students were known to the institution.

The gatekeeper at McNeese wrote a letter introducing my research to the students. He sent a copy of this letter to me. I then made 50 copies of his letter of introduction and my letter of introduction along with a self -addressed stamped envelope inside an envelope that was left blank. The labels would be applied by the designated person at McNeese. At total of three responses were returned. Two of these were Coushatta and one was Choctaw-Apache. A snowball technique was utilized to gain more participants. In the end a total of five participants were attending McNeese.

Participants

A total of twelve students were participants in this study. In addition, two other individuals were interviewed. One of these individuals was a past graduate of a local university. The other, the educational director for the Coushatta tribe, was interviewed over the telephone. Participants include those students who voluntarily agreed to participate. Selection was made from students who were currently enrolled in their perspective institutions and were in at least their sophomore year. Forty five percent of students who enter as freshmen at institutions with open enrollment will drop out during their first year of school (Tinto, 1993). Since one of the research questions relates to what contributes to the students' decision to stay in school, or why they persist with their education, students were selected who at least made the choice to continue to the second year of education.

The age of the participants range from 19 to 51. Students of any age were welcome to participate. The last criterion was that they were a declared member of a Louisiana tribe. Three separate tribal groups are represented with participants. Two of these tribes are only Louisiana State recognized: the United Houma Nation and the Choctaw-Apache tribe. One of the tribes represented with the participants is the Coushatta, who are a federally recognized tribe.

Interview process

Students were asked demographic information such as their age, gender, family residence and tribal affiliation. The semi-structured interview format consisted of open-ended questions. Interviews allow the researcher to direct the line of questioning (Creswell, 2003). The interviews lasted between forty five minutes to an hour and a half. Interviews also allow for information that is filtered through the perspective of the participant. This format is particularly suitable for obtaining the experiences of the participants. A copy of the format is included in Appendix A.

The site where the interview took place varied between participants. Three of the United Houma Nation participants were interviewed in their offices. The fourth United Houma Nation individual met me at a bookstore where the interview took place. The Choctaw-Apache participant invited me to his home for the interview, where we met on the porch. The first two Coushatta participants were interviewed at a hotel where I stayed to be able to meet with them. Two other Coushatta participants met me at the local library in Kinder. Three of the participants met me at the Waffle House for the interview. All of the sites for the interview were made for the convenience of the participant.

Recording

To be sure that I did not exclude pertinent information from the interviews I used a tape recorder to document the sessions. I explained to each participant that I did not want to lose

information, so I would like to record the interview. I asked each participant if that would be acceptable to them. No one objected to being recorded. Tape recording is the most viable of the alternatives to collecting data, though note taking during and after the interview may also be used (Gay & Airasian, 2000).

The name of the participant was not spoken into the recorder. Each participant was given a number and letter that was used to record their responses. An example is that IA indicates the first participant from the first institution. This provides anonymity for the participants.

Note Taking

During the interview I had a copy of the interview questions and took notes while the informant responded. Notes were made on this copy of the interview questions. I explained to each of the informants that I wanted to note important responses while I was listening to their responses. Maintaining notes of the interaction also provided a reference to the information as a backup in case the recorder failed, which is a recommended procedure for researchers (Creswell, 2003). This was needed in one instance when the tape was defective.

Transcription

Transcription must be done to effectively use tape recordings and become the field notes for the interview data (Gay & Airasian, 2000). This researcher personally transcribed all of the interview data. This allowed the researcher to maintain closeness to the information, which facilitated noting patterns that occurred through the interviews. Nonverbal information was also noted through inflections, pauses and tone which added meaning to the information gathered. Each interview was listened to several times for accuracy of wording.

Data Analysis and Coding.

Coding of all of the data from the interviews was completed after the transcriptions were complete. Each participant was coded individually. The codes were organized to look for the themes and patterns that emerged from the data, both for the individual and the group. Triangulation was utilized across the participants and across the institutions. Similarities in response across participants strengthened the meaning of the comment. When similar responses were made by participants from various institutions, this again strengthened the meaning of the reaction. Analysis was conducted from the patterns.

Data displays were utilized to depict the patterns that emerged from the data. A comparison of the responses was made to note how responses fit into the cultural framework for student persistence described by Guiffrida (2006). A cultural identity is described as it evolved from the data. How Native American identity is described is compared to existing descriptors (Phinney, 1990).

Creswell (2003) discusses six steps involved in the analysis of data from the research design. These steps include organizing and preparing the data for analysis, reading through the data to get a general sense and meaning of the information, developing a coding process, using the coding process to generate a description of the data, describing how the themes will be represented and lastly interpreting the data.

The first step described by Creswell (2003) is to organize the data for analysis. For this study, the section on transcription is the equivalent first step. All of the tapes were transcribed and became the data used for analysis. Each transcribed interview had a code with a number and letter on each page.

The second step of reading through the data to reflect on the meaning of the data was completed as the tapes were being transcribed as well as at the end when the completed interview was re-read. During this phase common expressions, comments, opinions were looked for to find commonalities among the participants. A list of words, phrases, feelings that were repeated were written separately.

Creswell's third step is the coding process. Coding is the process of organizing the material into chunks before bringing meaning to these chunks. Questions on the interview protocol were guided by the research questions. Responses to these questions provided data that was able to be separated. Codes were designated accordingly. Each of these codes was entered on a long sheet of butcher paper. Each interview was scanned for the responses to questions. Answers were cut out of the interview and entered onto the paper. The data was organized into chunks based on the responses to the questions that were asked. Thirty two codes were constructed in this manner. Some of the codes were able to be broken down further. An example of this is motivation as a code which could be further divided into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Similarities were searched for to determine patterns. When this was complete the codes were clustered together in patterns.

Another example of coding the data can be noted with the activities that were mentioned by the participants. All of the activities mentioned were listed together. I separated out all of the activities that could be classified as Native American related. Next, patterns were looked for within these activities. Six different aspects were suggested. The activities were put into one of these six categories.

All of the data material in each theme was reviewed to provide a preliminary analysis. Themes that emerged were those related to different stages of the education process as well as

overall impressions. These themes fit with components of Guiffrida's (2006) framework, but were not pre-selected as themes. The themes that emerged were: preparation to enter the collegial environment, academic connections in the college, campus connections, home connections, and overall impressions.

In the fourth step described by Creswell (2003) a description of the people and categories and themes is presented for analysis. Patterns described in chapter five were derived from the individual responses to the themes. A general description of the theme is presented. Patterns were searched for in the combination of responses from the various codes. Patterns of responses were able to be divided into different aspects of the college experience.

Step five is representation of the data. The narrative that emerged is presented with wording that came from the participants and quotes are used throughout the text. Matrices and diagrams are utilized to present a summary of the participants, themes and patterns that emerged. Patterns are used in a diagram form to explain the connectedness of the themes. A data poem is provided as representing the data from the cultural identity theme. Words were taken from the participants that reflected their Native American identity. The participation in activities, or doing, was one component of the poem, while the feelings they had about their identity was another. A free form poem emerged from this data. A metaphor is presented as a summary of the data. A Native American symbol was used as a metaphor for the results. The specific animal chosen needed to be one that could easily work in two environments, like the participants. A turtle fit this description.

Creswell's (2003) sixth step is the interpretation of the data. This step is provided in chapter five where the meaning of the data is discussed in tandem with comparison of the findings with the literature.

I reviewed the answers with the participants to make sure that I understood the intent behind their words. I did this in a follow-up phone call after the interview was transcribed. This member checking (Creswell, 2003) procedure allowed the participants to further add or correct information that they believed to be relevant. This procedure allowed for the participants to correct my understanding and add information for clarification.

In addition to obtain trustworthy information, one must be sure that quality standards for the research have been met. It is not enough to only carry out correct procedures in obtaining data, it is also important to make sure the quality of the information merits attention in its own right. Objectivity, reliability, internal and external validity are four components that can be utilized to assist in determining the quality of the conclusions of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In other words, these components assure credibility. Describing the methods and procedures as well as how the data was collected provide a measure of objectivity. I have presented how the study was conducted and the methods utilized to obtain the data, which helps affirm objectivity.

The second criteria for credibility is reliability or dependability (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Ways to determine if this is achieved is to determine if the researcher's role and status within the site are described explicitly. This was done before entering the field to help ensure that the information was dependable and reliable. The process of the interview was consistent across that parallel information could be obtained. Coding checks were made so that agreement could be noted.

The third criteria is internal validity, credibility and authenticity (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Thick descriptions and triangulation assisted with this aspect (Creswell, 2003). Thick

descriptions were obtained from the participants and examples were included in the findings of the study. Thick descriptions are extensive, detailed, clear notes that are taken from the field (Gay & Airasian, 2000). Participants were asked to describe their experiences until the responses were detailed and clear. They are descriptive in order to obtain a clear understanding of the meaning of the experience to the participant. Themes that emerged from using each of the participant's descriptions were a way to triangulate the responses.

The last component is external validity or transferability (Miles & Huberman, 1994). When the explanations developed are able to be compared to other situations, or theories, the results can be considered transferable. If the characteristics of the participants and their experienced are described clearly enough to permit a comparison with other individuals, then the results may be considered to have transferability. Descriptions of the participants, their experiences and setting are presented to allow for adequate comparison by others in the future.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this study was to understand Native American student experiences in higher education in Louisiana. Responses from the participants in this study have provided illumination to the questions that have driven this study. Responses and analysis will be structured around the emerged themes of preparation, academic connections, campus connections and home connections. The findings section is subdivided into six subsections to report the results of the participants' responses. The first subsection introduces the twelve participants. The second subsection represents the theme of preparation for college which will include responses about the family background, influence to attend college, financial access, intention and goals, motivation to attend college, choice of institution, transition and cultural identity.

The third subsection reports on the theme of academic connections made by the students. This section will include the students' grades and their impressions of the faculty.

Subsection four centers on the theme of campus connections and includes the participants' involvement in the campus life, college peers, the Native American presence on campus, student development and isolation.

Subsection five includes the theme centered on home connections. Topics in this subsection include family, friends, activities, priorities, roles and tribal inspiration.

The sixth subsection reports the themes that developed from overall impressions of college, which include satisfaction, dissatisfaction, prejudice and recommendations made by the participants. A concept map of the findings as they are presented in this chapter may help in orienting the reader to the results and is presented in Diagram 1.

Diagram 1: FINDINGS

```
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│        PARTICIPANTS         │
└─────────────────────────────┘
        │             │
        ▼             ▼
```

PREPARATION	- Family background - abilities - influence - intention and goals - motivation - choice of institution - transition - financial access - values - cultural identity
ACADEMIC CONNECTIONS	- academic performance - faculty support - satisfaction - dissatisfaction - prejudice - influence from the academic environment - persistence strategies

CAMPUS CONNECTIONS	- campus life
	- Native American organizations
	- College peers
	- Isolation
	- Political views
	    • minority faculty
	    • interracial understanding
	- Student Development and cultural identity

HOME CONNECTIONS	- Family - Friends from home - Priorities - Roles and conflicts - Activities - Tribal inspiration

Participants

Twelve American Indian students completed an interview with the researcher. These twelve students attend five different institutions of higher education in Louisiana. Three tribes are represented in the participant pool: Choctaw-Apache, United Houma Nation and Coushatta. Three of the participants were men and nine were women.

The ages ranged from 19 to 51 years. One of the participants was working toward a master's degree, four were working on degrees at the associate level and seven were working toward the bachelor's degree. Six participants were full- time students and six were part-time. All four of the United Houma Nation were part-time students. Only two of the Coushatta were part-time.

All of the names used in this study are fictitious. Names have been changed to protect the participant's anonymity and confidentiality. Male names were selected by taking the first letters of the alphabet and selecting a common male name for each of the participants. The male names chosen were Adam, Ben and Carl. For the females I selected names that were found in nature such as flowers, gems, birds, or something organic. Names chosen for the females were Pearl, Ruby, Opal, Amber, Robin, Sandy, Rose, Iris and Ginger. The following descriptions are snapshots of the participants which include why they are attending college and what they would like to do with their education.

Pearl

Pearl is a 50 year old United Houma Nation woman who lives alone in Houma, though she grew up in Dulac. Both parents were also United Houma Nation, but are now deceased. Neither completed high school. Pearl remembers her mother stating at one time that she couldn't wait

until she turned 16 so she could quit school. Her father never received an education and was adamant that his children receive an education. His vision only reached for high school diploma.

Psychology is Pearl's major at Nicholls State University. She has been attending college as a part- time student for the past six years working toward a bachelor's degree. This university is the closest to her home, which is why she chose this institution. When her mother was critically ill before she died, she stopped out to take care of her for a semester.

Pearl's main goal in attending college is to get a degree. She states that she wants to be able to die with a degree. Her push to attend college is her job as a counselor with the tribal vocational rehabilitation program, where there is the expectation that she will obtain a degree. Ultimately she wants a degree in vocational rehabilitation. She envisions herself working in a correctional institution at some point in her life.

Since Pearl has a full- time job she is only on campus for classes, which she usually attends in the evening. Group discussions and working on group projects are some of the things that she enjoys in school, which allow her to get a different perspective on issues. Three instructors stand out in Pearl's mind as being supportive. One of those teachers was a Native American and stands out as the best teacher she ever had. This particular teacher was a remedial math teaching assistant who provided emotional and academic support by taking a special interest in Pearl.

In addition to her college and employment demands, Pearl remains active in her community where she is responsible for a Native American dance troupe. Weddings, funerals and other Indian gatherings also take up Pearl's time. On an individual note she spends time weaving baskets and making dream catchers. She also sits on the parish council. A parish has the

same function as a county in other states. Pearl is very active in her Native community as well as the community at large.

Robin

Robin is 43 years old, a member of the United Houma Nation and grew up in Dulac as one of six children. Currently she resides in Houma where she has lived for the past 10 years with her Caucasian husband and seven year old daughter. Both parents are deceased and neither attended college. She knows that her parents would be very proud of her now as she is the only one who has received a college education. French was spoken by her parents, yet she only speaks English. She can understand all conversations in French but her speaking ability in French is limited.

As a mother of a young child, Robin only decided to attend school when her daughter was in school. She has a part- time job in the education field. She has chosen to attend Nicholls State University because of its proximity while she works on her associate degree in general studies. Occasionally she will meet with friends for lunch or to study and spend time in the library; otherwise she is not very involved in campus life. She graduated in the spring semester during which the study was conducted. For her last semester in college she obtained a 4.0 average, about which she is very excited. Her goal in attending college is to be able to get a job on the school board and work with Indian education where she can have similar hours to her daughter. All of the faculty were very helpful in Robin's opinion. Her counselor in particular was always available and helpful.

With her responsibilities as a wife, mother and employee, her time is limited on campus. She spends a lot of time with her family, which she views as being very close. The only thing she identified as Native American in her activities was attending the local powwows which occur

twice a year. Robin is also a parent representative on a parish committee for Indian education. Photography is her favorite hobby and she and her husband enjoy fishing.

Adam

Adam is a 28 year old United Houma Nation man from Dulac. He attends Nicholls State University because it is the closest four year college to his community, which is important for him with his other obligations. He resides in Dulac with his grandmother. His mother is Indian and his father is White. His parents divorced when he was young and he has remained more tied to his Native upbringing. He speaks fluent French, which was his first language. Neither parent attended college. Having their children graduate from high school was an accomplishment toward which they aspired. He graduated either third or fourth in his high school class.

Tribal members encouraged him to attend college. Adam states that he would not have considered attending college without their encouragement. He began as a traditional full- time student, but many felt responsibilities have pulled him away. He has been involved in rebuilding his community from several hurricanes. His tribe also felt he was the best person for the job when he took over the directorship of a community center. Today he works full- time in another agency that has the mission to support and promote Native Americans in Louisiana. Adam has attended college continuously during the past ten years with the exception of one semester when he stopped out to assist in rebuilding his community following a hurricane.

Nicholls State University is Adam's institution of choice primarily because it is located near his home. His major is business administration, but his objective for attending college is broader. Eventually he may want to go on for an MBA degree. Adam wants a firm foundation of skills that will prepare him for the future. He talks about wanting to own his own business, yet he

does not have the image of what it will be in his mind. Whatever it is, it will be something to support Indian people. When he first began college he was a full-time student and he was on the dean's list. Today he gets high Cs and Bs. The amount of hours that he takes depends on the responsibilities that he has with his employment. Adam has a personal commitment to complete his education and he pays for it out of pocket. His response to the faculty was mixed. Some were good, some were not. Some of the instructors in the business department really stood out as pushing their students to do well and would help when needed.

Adam wants to be able to own his business one day. To be able to do this he needs the solid base that his education will provide for him. He continues to be motivated to attend school because of the financial commitment that he has made toward his education. Another motivator is the tribe. He wants to get his education not just for himself, but as a way to help his community. Adam is very involved in his local catholic church where he is active in several activities, including the Knights of Columbus. His church interests also had him involved in campus ministries. The Catholic Church which Adam attends has the largest Native American congregation in Louisiana. Native American drumming is sometimes included during church services. He connects Indian traditions with his involvement in the Catholic Church.

Ruby

This 51 year old Coushatta woman lives in Elton with her husband. Originally from Houston, Texas, she moved to Elton when she married at age 22. Ruby's mother was Coushatta and her father was of Mexican origin, though she lived primarily with her stepfather who was Alabama-Coushatta. Her father was a high school graduate, but her mother never completed. Out of 300 graduating high school students Ruby graduated 30th. She stated that she always

performed well in school. All three of her daughters live away from home. Two of them have children.

Currently Ruby is working towards a master's degree in special education at McNeese State University. As a full- time employee, she is taking classes at night on a part- time basis. Her intended graduation date is spring 2008. She already teaches in a school in a nearby community. Having a degree in special education will allow her to do something different in her present job. Her college career began in Texas. She attended for about three years and her focus was languages. She indicated that she wasn't satisfied and really didn't have a direction. Her grades remained high until her last semester when she received Fs, incompletes and she dropped out. It wasn't until after her last child started kindergarten that she decided that she needed to do something else with her life. She worked in a nursing home and wanted to do more. Her first attempt back at higher education was at LSU-E where she tested her ability to go back to school. She successfully obtained her associate's degree. Teaching her children at home came naturally to her, and she thought she was pretty good at it. Her next attempt was to combine this interest with a bachelor's degree in education, which she was awarded with honors in 1996.

According to Ruby, all of the faculty are very helpful and they provide guidance when needed. Her involvement in the campus life is non-existent. She primarily goes to work, class and then home. She does spend time in the computer lab.

Ruby works full- time as a teacher. When she is not working or at school, or babysitting her grandchildren she likes to work in her garden or work on a quilt. A fun activity at the moment for Ruby is to teach her grandchild the Coushatta language. She uses the computer to find pictures and puts them on the refrigerator with the written language. Church involvement is of primary importance to her, and she devotes three days a week to work in her church.

Sandy

Sandy is a 28 year old Coushatta woman who lives in Elton with her three children in her own home. She completed her high school diploma when she was 16 and graduated in the top three of her class.   Her only language is English.

She has been attending school for the past 10 years, since she was 18 or 19. McNeese is her college of choice because it is the closest to her home. In between she took off a few years to be with her children. Interaction on campus is minimal, as she always has to deal with picking up children from school or daycare. Currently she is a senior and hopes to graduate with a double major in marketing and management. Financial support for Sandy's education is the Coushatta tribe.   Sandy feels that some of the faculty are too lenient, and some are too hard. They are supportive, as when she was ill. Her current GPA is 2.6. She feels she could do better if she tried, but right now she is doing what she needs to in order to get by. Activities in which she is engaged relate to her children's interests and functions.

Iris

Iris is a 25 year old Coushatta woman who lives in Kinder with her husband and two girls ages two and three. When she attended high school she did not do very well and obtained mainly Cs and some Fs. She had no intention of going to college. She did not take the ACT test because she had no intention of continuing on in school. Iris's primary language is English, though her father speaks fluent Coushatta. Her mother is also learning a little of the language as she grew up speaking only English.

McNeese was chosen as it was the only school around where she could study art. She took a ceramics class in the community in which she lives and loved it. Her goal is to graduate. She began her college journey in 2002 and continued for one year, after which she took a break

to have her children. Iris returned in the spring of 2006. Grades are coming easier for her now, as she maintains a 3.6 average, to which she attributes that she knows what she is interested in now. Her intention after she graduates is to open her own business. She would like to teach ceramics to kids or adults. Since home has many obligations, Iris tries to allow time at school to study. Iris comments that some of the faculty are helpful, but found her ceramics teacher to be the most understanding and helpful. Art is her major, which has a lot of labs, requiring her to be at school most of the day. She will engage in the campus activities when she sees them happening on her way to class. She feels uninformed about the activities that are on campus. She is aware of a Native American history class offered and expressed interest in possibly taking the course in the future. The Coushatta tribe is financially supporting her education.

Her motivation to stay in school is diminishing. She finds herself pulled to be home with her children. She feels that she is not home as much as she should be. Another activity that takes up three days of her time is her church obligations.

Opal

Opal is a 19 year old Coushatta woman who lives at home with her parents and two younger brothers. Both parents are Coushatta. When she was young her parents spoke to her in Coushatta, but now she speaks English. She states that she can't have a whole conversation in Coushatta, but is trying to learn more. In high school she obtained all As. College classes were scheduled for her concurrently with high school classes.

She is studying biological science at McNeese State University with the intention of going on to medical school. Her choice of McNeese was that it was close to home and it would get her started. Her grades right now are in the middle: Cs and Bs. The Coushatta tribe is financially supporting her education.

McNeese has a biology or premed club of some sort of which Opal is aware. She would like to be involved in this maybe next year when she is more acclimated to college. Opal tends to be more isolated on campus. She will work in groups and enjoys them when they are structured for her. She has looked into attending a tribal college. She would like to go to Oklahoma University for her medical degree because they have programs specifically for Native Americans.

Chores at home are minimal. In her spare time she plays with her brothers. She likes TV. Basketry is her hobby, though she has little time for this while in school.

Ben

Ben is a 20 year old Apache-Choctaw man who lives at home with his parents and sister in Iowa, LA. Ben's mother is Apache-Choctaw and his father is Caucasian, of German ancestry. Neither parent attended college. In high school he was on the honor roll getting mostly As and Bs.

McNeese is his college of choice because it is only a 30 minute drive from home and it has an agriculture department, which is his major. In the future with his degree he hopes one day to own cows, run his own farm or work on one. He will enter the fall as a junior and maintains a GPA of 2.7 while taking 18 or 19 hours per semester. Ben is able to attend college due to the financial assistance he receives from TOPS, a state program to support academically able students.

He sees faculty as doing a good job. One particular instructor in the agriculture business department has been helpful as an advisor. Getting a degree and earning money are his primary motivating factors for staying in school. Ben has made some new friends at the university. When at school Ben does meet up with these friends, as well as friends he knew from his childhood. He

does not involve himself in the campus life with the exception of 'Aggie day' which is put on by the department.

When not in school Ben is self employed. Tasks in which he is involved include working cows, trimming horses and carpentry work. At home he maintains the care of several animals which includes a horse, cow, birds, dogs and various other animals at different times. There is always something to do around the house, making it a year -round job.

Carl

Kinder is the home of this 20 year old Coushatta man. When not in school he lives with his parents and younger brother. Both of his parents are college graduates. Carl refers to himself as a hybrid, with an Indian mother and white father, where he claims to get the best of both worlds. He continues to explain his feelings by saying that he is more Indian in the White world and more White in the Indian world. He left high school with a 4.0 GPA. Carl's mother and other relatives speak fluent Coushatta. He believes all of his generation is losing the language, although he does speak a little of the Coushatta language.

Louisiana State University (LSU) has been Carl's choice since he was young. He can't explain why, except it may have been his interest in sports. Another advantage of LSU is that it is away from home, yet close enough to get back when he needs to return. History is the major for this traditional student who began his college career immediately after high school. In the fall Carl will be a senior who usually takes about 15 credit hours per semester. To date he has maintained at 3.7 GPA, although he hopes to improve it before graduating. Off- campus living is his choice of accommodation. A cousin was able to recommend his particular apartment complex.

To graduate with honors from LSU is one of Carl's goals. After obtaining a bachelor's degree, Carl wants to get into law school, with a current interest in criminal law. He does envision himself possibly working elsewhere before he eventually returns to southwest Louisiana. He would like to give back to his tribe for helping him so much. He is currently a TOPS recipient, with the tribe supplementing travel and other educational needs.

Carl is an avid reader and found himself on the internet frequently tying to find additional reading material, including information about his tribe. A typical week included attending classes for his 15 scheduled hours and 20 hours of work within the history department. His job was a merit based placement. His professors have all been helpful, with a few people in the department particularly supportive. Friends do encourage Carl to join them for an occasional movie or an evening out at a club. Church is part of his life, yet only when he is in his home environment. Carl remains closely tied to his family and returns to Kinder every other weekend. He wants to support his younger brother with the activities with which he is engaged, such as little league and piano recitals. This semester he states that he will only go back once a month, as he feels a need to wean himself away from his family if he is accepted at a law school further away from home.

Amber

Kinder is this 20 year old Coushatta woman's home where she lives with her parents, younger brother, her two year old daughter and her boyfriend. Both parents are Coushatta. Both parents quit high school. Eventually her father got his GED. She will be the first in her family to get a college education. Her high school grades were good and she obtained a 3.8 average. After graduating from high school Amber worked for a year. She wanted to earn her own money as she doesn't like being dependent on anyone. Amber chose Louisiana State University-Eunice

112

(LSUE) as her first choice because she wanted to try a smaller campus before transferring to a big four year university. She is majoring in criminal justice and is about ready to transfer to LSU in another semester where she wants to major in sociology. Her ultimate goal is a law degree. Like in high school, she maintains a 3.8 average. The Coushatta tribe is financing her education. Amber viewed most of the faculty as helpful. She believed this to be true because of the teacher-student ratio. One of her criminal justice teachers, who has been an advisor, had been most helpful.

Amber considers herself a social person. Sometimes she will stay on campus and study with her friends. Once a semester she looks forward to the stress buster week where food is provided each day.

Rose

Rose is a 19 year old Coushatta woman who lives with her parents and two younger sisters in Elton. Rose will be the first in her family to pursue a college education. Her mom is Coushatta and her father is Choctaw from Oklahoma. Her father completed high school, but her mother did not. Rose was an average student in high school with mainly Cs.

Although Rose is a traditional age student, she worked for a year before attending college. She wanted to save some money before she went to school. Rose is majoring in nursing and working towards an associate degree on a full- time basis. Rose has attended full- time for the past three semesters, including this past summer. This fall will be her second year in college. Perhaps later she will think about a bachelor's degree. Her choice in career relates to watching her grandfather suffer in the hospital, and now she wants to help people get better. LSUE was selected because it was smaller and close to home. She is doing much better in college and gets mostly Bs with a 3.0 average. She attributes this to the fact that she is more focused now and is

working toward a career. Her main goal is to graduate from college, even if she needs to alter the focus of her studies. Mostly the faculty were viewed as supportive and she knew she could go to the instructor's office when she needed to. The most helpful teacher was a biology teacher who helped answer a lot of questions she had about nursing. The Coushatta tribe is financing her education.

After classes Rose returns home. She is not engaged in any activities at school. She tends to hang out with her friends, except when she needs to study. While at home she tries to help around the home and she sees herself as a role model to her younger sisters.

Ginger

Ginger is a 32 year old United Houma Nation woman who has lived in Grand Caillou for the past 13 years. She grew up in Dulac. She currently lives with a boyfriend and dogs. Her parents are both United Houma Nation members and speak French. She understands the language and speaks a little. English is her primary language. Neither parent has a high school education. She quit high school and opened her own business, which was successful until Hurricane Katrina destroyed everything.

At the time of Katrina Ginger was attempting to earn her GED, with the encouragement of her boyfriend. The storm discouraged Ginger and she almost quit. Her instructors talked to her and convinced her to complete her GED, which she did in three months. She decided to continue at L E Fletcher Technical Community College, which is where she obtained her GED. Drafting had always been an interest of hers, so she decided to work toward an associate's degree in that area. After a year she realized that it was not what she expected, and has switched to accounting. The Carnegie classification of this institution is Associates College.

Education is the number one priority for Ginger right now. Her main goal for attending college is to obtain a new career. She remains working with two jobs to keep herself financially viable. Attending classes is her main involvement with the campus. She attends early, 7:30 and leaves at 10 or 11, depending on when her classes end. She then is at work until about 8:00 at night.

High praises are expressed toward L E Fletcher. The college helped with tuition the semester of the storm, and continued to assist with tuition in the spring semester following the storm. Ginger is very grateful.

A summary of the participants' demographics and college majors can be noted in the following diagram 2.

Diagram 2: SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANTS

NAME	SEX	AGE	TRIBE	DEGREE	MAJOR	INSTITUTION	FULL/PART TIME
Pearl	F	50	United Houma Nation	Bachelors	psychology	Nicholls	Part
Robin	F	43	United Houma Nation	Associate	General studies	Nicholls	Part
Adam	M	27	United Houma Nation	Bachelors	Business	Nicholls	Part
Ginger	F	32	United Houma Nation	Associate	Accounting	LE Fletcher	Part
Ben	M	20	Choctaw-Apache	Bachelors	Agriculture	McNeese	Full
Ruby	F	51	Coushatta	Masters	Special Education	McNeese	Part
Sandy	F	28	Coushatta	Bachelor	Marketing/ business	McNeese	Full
Iris	F	25	Coushatta	Bachelors	Art	McNeese	Part
Opal	F	19	Coushatta	Bachelors	Biological Science	McNeese	Full
Amber	F	20	Coushatta	Associate	Criminal justice	LSU-E	Full
Rose	F	19	Coushatta	Associate	Nursing	LSU-E	Full
Carl	M	20	Coushatta	Bachelors	History	LSU	Full

The themes that emerged originated from the chunks of data that were collected from the participants' responses. These main themes parallel the components of the model of departure as presented by Tinto (1993). Themes are preparation for college, academic connections, campus connections and home connections. These themes were further divided into the patterns of responses within the themes. The following sections are presented with the themes and patterns.

Preparation for College

Family background

Influence to attend college typically comes from the family where one or more of the parents have a degree. Parents with a degree provide discussion around college issues and provide a role model for their children to set up an expectation of college attendance. When the parents understand the importance of higher education, planning ahead to be able to afford college for their children is part of the household. Only one of the participants had this type of background. Almost all of the participants are the first generation in their family to attend college. All of the Houma participants grew up in poverty. However, all of the parents of the participants are extremely proud of their children's choice and support the decision in whatever way they can. Positive encouragement from their parents is what keeps many of the participants motivated to do well in college.

Most of the participants reported that their parents were glad that they were attending college. An example was provided by Carl who stated about his parents' reactions "They're excited. They are glad. They also placed a big importance on education. Both my parents are college graduates." Carl was the exception. He was the only participant that had two parents who also received a college education. Iris also had one parent who has a college degree. Her mother is currently obtaining an advanced degree. Iris's comment about her parents was that "They

support it. Mom goes to school, college, still. And my husband, he supports it". Opal's mother attended a trade school for two years in the secretarial field. Opal comments about her parents opinion on her going to college, "One thing for sure, I guess they are proud, the first child in that family to graduate." A proud small reaction came from Ben who clearly explains his parents feelings in this comment, "Aw, they like it. Neither one of them ever went and they think it would be a good experience for me."

Education was supported in all of the families, even if it wasn't always towards the college level. Most of the parents of the participants did not receive a high school diploma. Some did not even attend high school. These parents wanted their children to obtain what they did not: a high school education. Since a high school diploma was desired for their children, it appeared to be an easy link for the family to promote higher education. Adam's parents did not attend college. He explained his family's regard for education:

> I've always got a positive response in going to college. They've always aspired for their kids to go to school and graduate. High school graduation was always kept high on top of the totem pole to accomplish. College was just an extra. They've always wanted to see someone in their family graduate. I'll be the first one in the family, when I graduate, to graduate from a postsecondary school, college.

Carl notes that his support came with expectations from his parents. He takes the pressure he felt in stride. He explains, "I don't mind being in a stressful environment, like my parents. They are very strict when it came to grades. I had to maintain a 4.0, all that stuff."

On the opposite end of the expectation continuum is Ginger. She dropped out of school and managed her own business for years. Ginger's boyfriend encouraged her to obtain a GED, which she began in the fall of 2005. Today her parents support Ginger's decision to return to

school. Her comment is, "They're excited. I'm the first to further their education. My parents didn't go to high school, or at least finish. I didn't finish high school." Rose also reflects about her parents' attitude towards her attending college through this comment, "My mom is glad that I'm going to college. She didn't think I was at first…She was like proud that I was going there, and my dad". Rose's dad finished with a high school diploma, but her mother did not.

Amber noted that she had been prepared to attend college for a long time while she was growing up. She talks about this preparation that was provided by her parents when she says, "They were always talking about it ever since I entered high school. How I should think about my future, what should I do to prepare for it. College was the best choice. "

The graduate student, Ruby, commented about her mother's reaction, "Well when I got my associate's they were proud. When I got my bachelor's they were proud. Today my mom says, when are you going to finish with school? She is proud, happy." This length of time in school was also described by another participant, although for different reasons. Sandy began college then stopped out to have children. Sandy commented that her mother never thought she would do anything with her life because of her decision to have her first child when she was young. Now Sandy proudly stated, "They are waiting for me to finish. My mother has encouraged me through the whole ten years that it has taken me to get my two degrees".

For Pearl, her background was mixed in terms of the value of education. Pearl responded to the question of how her parents felt about her attending college with a more detailed explanation. She gives the following details:

> Actually both of them are deceased now. But before my father died he was adamant that all of us receive an education. He didn't have an education. He wasn't afforded the opportunity for an education. And he was adamant that we get an education. My mom

wasn't the one to support education. As a matter of fact she used to tell me when I was in high school 'I can't wait until you turn 16 so that you can quit school'. She wasn't one for education. But my father was the complete opposite".

Each of the participants has a support system within their family to attend college. Participants who had children were frequently able to rely on their parents to care for their children while they attended classes or while they studied. Other participants had husbands who supported them by watching the children or cooking meals. One participant's husband drove her to class. Some of the mothers helped their children fill out paperwork. Chores were lessened to allow for study time. Those who no longer have parents have a memory that they know that their parents would be proud of their current decision to attend college. Those participants who have deceased parents commented that their mother and father would be proud that were receiving higher education, especially since their parents were not allowed to attend high school when they were young.

Abilities

Prior abilities in high school were mixed. However, most of the participants performed well in high school. In the following comments it can be noted how well some of the participants performed in high school. Participants remarked with the following words; "I had to maintain a 4.0 average, all that stuff", "Honor roll all As and Bs", " I was third or fourth in high school", "My high school grade point average was 3.8", and "In high school I was all As". Sandy elaborated slightly when she said, "I was in the top three of my class. I took correspondence courses in high school to get out early, in Baton Rouge with LSU." Ruby too elaborated a little about her performance, "I was always good at school. I even graduated with a yellow rope

119

around my neck". Some of these participants continue to do well in school, a continuation of their high school performance.

A few of the students were not strong students in high school and performed more in the average range. Rose earned mostly C's in high school. Ginger, who earned Cs and Bs in high school eventually dropped out. Iris even failed a course as she related and justified her grades, "Not very good. I got Cs and Fs. I had to retake algebra II. We take it in our junior year and I failed it, so I took it again in my senior year. I wasn't very studious; I didn't study a lot….boys." During high school Iris did not focus on academics, her interest was mainly social and finding a boyfriend. Her academic abilities did not surface in high school.

Although most of the participants were high performers in high school, several of them were not. Even with less than a stellar high school performance, they chose to attempt a college degree. They all have hope that college has something to offer to them.

Influence

A variety of sources surfaced as influencing these participants to attend college. Several participants indicated that it was their own personal decision to go to college. Rose is an example of this response and she elaborates in this comment when asked who influenced her to go to college, "Nobody really, I just did it on my own. Because I see most people don't go to school and I want to go and finish and get a degree and do something with myself." Pearl had a similar response, "Actually it was through my own motivation. I wanted to attend college growing up knowing that, or learning that the way to be able to advance, especially here in Terrebonne, as an Indian person, I needed to get an education." Other supportive structures allowed for these participants to reach this self-determination stance. Rose was influenced by the education department in her tribe that provides a whole host of activities and support around attending

college. The educational director for the Coushatta tribe assisted all members through all of the paperwork required by the institution. She did not mention this support in her response. Pearl also has a support system for her to be able to attend college. Pearl works for a tribal organization that mandates that their counselors obtain a degree, and to back up that requirement is a grant that allows the employees to attend college to get that degree.

Family support was also a factor in influencing some of the participants' decision to attend college. Amber recognizes this influence when she explains, "I think I always just wanted to. I always knew I was going to attend college. My family has helped though, especially my parents." Opal also had a similar response to the same question and added other influences also. The Coushatta tribe is beginning to realize the benefit of a college education and has created policies to support college education for its members. Opal's comment reflected some of the cultural capital behind her decision when she said, "Well actually just myself, I just want to make my mom and them proud, secondly for me to get a better education and thirdly my people to make them proud a member of their tribe is going to school."

Outside influence was mentioned more frequently. This influence is represented by teachers, tribal members or friends. This external influence was later internalized and became the basis of participants' own goals and interests. High school teachers influenced some participants. Ben was able to identify this clearly when he said, "Some of my teachers from high school really influenced me." Adam also mentioned the high school influence in his decision to attend college and added tribal influence pushed him to attend the university as he remarked, "I would say the school system and working closely with the tribe."

One of the background influences that the Coushatta members have is tribal support through the education department. Even in pre-k. education is planned for through the tribe.

Shirley Doucet describes that Camp Coushatta is organized each summer for tribal members to learn about and participate in their culture. Ms. Doucet is visible in the community and provides guidance to students who want to attend college. She is in contact with many departments at the local institutions the members attend including admissions, human resources, and whatever else it takes to serve the needs of the members. Award ceremonies are provided for those who graduate from high school and college.

Sometimes it was a family member or some other individual that provided the impetus for participants to attempt the challenge of college. For Robin, it was "actually my niece." An individual influenced Sandy. She explains that it was, "My educator at the tribe." As Ginger completed her GED, her instructors from the higher education institution where she obtained her GED encouraged her to continue.

Extrinsic gain, one of the extrinsic motivators, has also influenced a few of the participants. Carl had a more practical response when asked who influenced him to attend college. He retorted quickly, "Monetary desires. I think education is important to have a decent standard of living and the educational benefits provided by the tribe make it easy, like a no-brainer to want to go."

For at least one of the participants, college was not in her life plan, but she altered her stance. Iris has attended college by default. When she attended high school she knew she never wanted to attend college, and demonstrated this by not taking her ACT. Only later after she was married did she decide to return to school, and only then because "there was nothing else to do." It is easier to make this decision when financial support exists, as the Coushatta tribe pays for Iris' education. An underlying influence that emerged was that of the tribe, not just for Iris, but for all of the Coushatta participants.

The sources of influence to go to college varied between the participants. Some felt going to college was their own choice, but did recognize the family influence. Iris demonstrated this influence when she said "I think I always just wanted to. I always knew I was going to attend college. My family has helped though." When Rose was asked who influenced her to attend college she stated "Nobody really, I just did it on my own." Ruby knew she was good in school, yet she described her influence as "I wanted to do something better." For one participant it was an extended family member who encouraged her. Robin indicated her influence came from outside her nuclear family as she stated where the influence originated, "Actually, it was my niece, a first grade teacher." The school system was recognized as a support and specific teachers or counselors could be noted as influential. Adam noted two sources of influence, "I would say the school system and working closely with the tribe. The tribe always promoted education." Ben also noted high school teachers as an influence when he stated "I guess some of my teachers from high school really influenced me." Sandy noted a specific individual as her influence, "My educator at the tribe." For two of the participants the places of employment, or skills needed at the job were the influencing factor that prompted a return to college. Pearl explained that where she worked was now requiring a degree from its employees who are counselors. Her employer has a grant that pays for staff development which allows Pearl to attend college.

These influences can be noted in Figure 3. The large rectangle on the left represents the influence that the student had when deciding to attend college. The thick arrows point to the category of influence, which are self, parents, tribe, school system, job, financial benefit and the educational system. Specific reasons or individuals that were indicated as the source of influence are indicated by the thin arrows. When the students indicated that they were their own influence, two of the reasons they gave were to better themselves or to do something. The family was often

123

the source of influence, which for these participants was the parents or, in one case, a niece. The

tribe was mentioned as an influencing factor, as was the school system in general. Specific

teachers were also mentioned. The place of employment was another influencing factor in the

decision to return to school, which was either to get the credentials needed or to learn something

new to allow for options at the same job. Financial benefit was mentioned as an influence, as the

participant wanted to have a good standard of living.

Figure 3: Sources of Influence
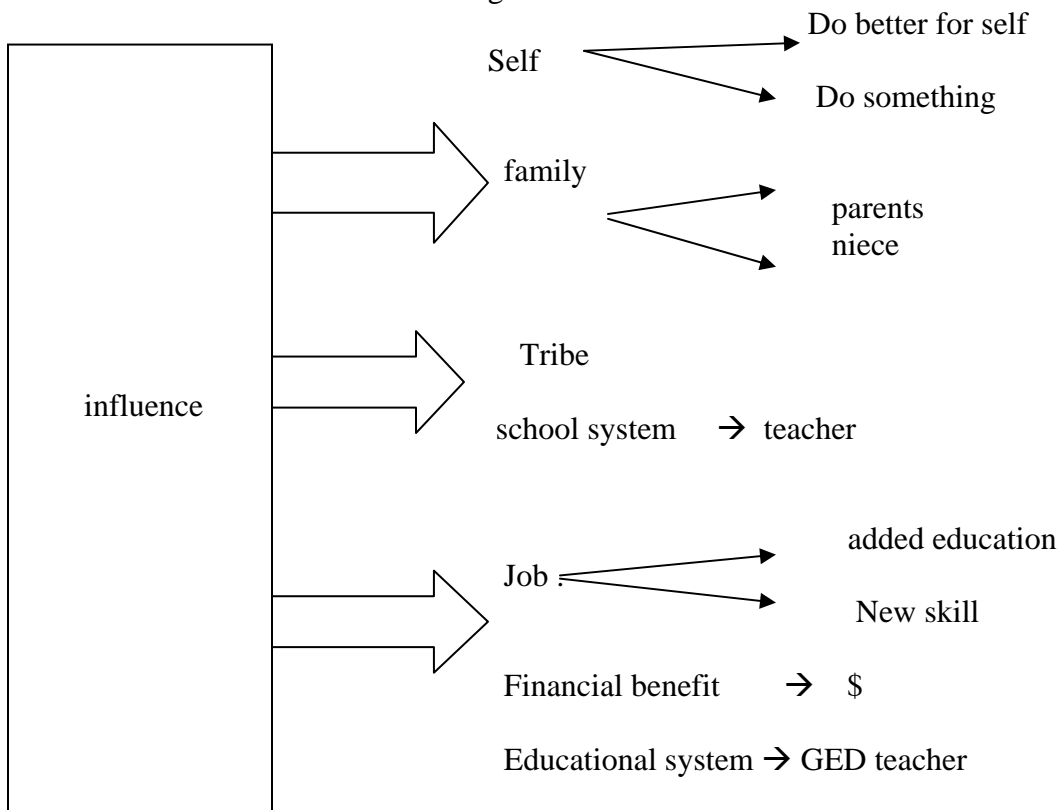
Intentions and goals

The most common initial response to the question about the goal for attending college was

to get a degree. Several of the participants were able to identify that the current goal is part of a

continued goal to get an additional degree. Other participants explained what the degree would

allow them to do rather than just the degree itself. One response that indicates that the degree is

the goal was acknowledged by Iris whose simple response was "My goal is to graduate and to get a degree, to finish."

To demonstrate responses that fit in the continuing education goals several participants' comments can be utilized. Pearl's immediate goal was to "earn my degree in psychology." She wants to continue her education as she explains, "Hopefully go on and get a master's in counseling, rehabilitation counseling." Opal wants to get her degree in biological science and "then go to medical school." Carl qualified how he wanted to complete by saying that his goal "is to graduate with honors. And then get into a graduate program in law or history." Although Rose was focused on a current goal of getting an associate degree, she also allowed herself to dream of a further degree. This hope is noted in her comment, "I can get a degree in nursing and I'm trying to get an associate's degree. And maybe later think about getting bachelors."

Sandy is the only participant who will actually graduate with two degrees when she completes. Her ultimate goal is, "to have a good job." Similarly Adam's purpose in obtaining a degree was to what he called setting up a foundation. He explains:

My goals in life, some of my aspirations are to maybe one day to own my own business. That is kind of why I want to go to school for, to set my foundation. That way I have the tools, the resources, and the what-not to be successful with owning my business.

Ginger was still searching for the right fit for herself but her goal is clear, which is "to find a new career." Robin wants to use her degree "to get on with the school board." Ben also wants to use his degree so that he can "hopefully get some cows one day and run a farm, or work on one." Although Amber sounds undecided, she is focused on a practical use of her degree. Amber explains, "I really don't know yet, I had wanted to go into the law field, maybe." Amber

is currently working toward an associate degree in criminal law and will be ready to transfer to a four year institution after one more semester.

A practical use of the graduate degree that Ruby is pursuing relates to her current job. She is a teacher in kindergarten and she wants to be able to teach special education, which is what her Master's degree will be in. Additional courses may be needed because of the type of certification that she will need.

Each participant had a personal goal which included the intention to complete their degree. Each participant expressed interest in the material that was covered in specific courses while continuing with a plan of action. Iris exemplifies this interest in her comment "I've learned a lot since I've been there academic wise. It has helped me out." Amber agreed with the point that she learned a lot and that is what she enjoyed most about college as she commented "One thing I like is the learning, another step of it, like math." Carl finds almost anything of interest in class and he stated "I just love to read that's all. That is how I made it through because I love to read." Iris loves art and she continues in school because of her success in that field. She discussed her interest in art with the following comment, "I knew that I liked it. I was kind of good at it. I liked it. I want to do something that I really like."

Motivation

One of the chunks of information that was critical in understanding the experience of the participants was their motivation in attending college. To be able to view motivation as a pattern it had to be further broken down into intrinsic, where one wants to learn because the content is interesting, and extrinsic, or learning as a means to an end, influences. Guiffrida (2006) describes the various levels of motivation that have been described in the literature. I will describe these categories and then connect them with the participants' responses. In addition the type of

intrinsic motivation could be broken down into three aspects which are autonomy, competence and a sense of relatedness. Autonomy is present when the student chooses to be involved in learning because of interest. Competence relates to the need to be effective in the environment and to be challenged and develop skills. Relatedness refers to the need to establish secure relationships with others. Extrinsic motivation is also broken down into three levels, external regulation, introjected regulation and regulation that is internalized, or self identified.

The common motivational response for the participants in this study related to the intention of earning a degree, which fits into the competency area of intrinsic motivation. Obtaining a degree is a short term goal. When probed further they could respond specifically to their major and what they thought about doing with that type of a degree. This intrinsic motivation tapped into wanting the skills to be able to perform, or have a purpose in their lives, placing the response in the competence and autonomy area of intrinsic motivation. Although the major goal for attending college was a simple response - to get a degree- it was strong and led to persistence. To be able to reach their goal, they would stay in school until they completed regardless of how long it took. Several of the participants needed to stop out of school for reasons that most commonly revolved around birth of children or caring for those children. In one instance it was to help the community rebuild after a hurricane. When looking at motivation the intent is to get a degree and this goal, for some, stretched over years. Other life roles required the time to obtain this goal to be stretched out however it did not diminish.

Only three of the responses fit primarily into the autonomy or knowledge component of intrinsic motivation. This orientation of intrinsic motivation was spurred by the student wanting to choose his/her own learning which usually related to values and interests. Iris was an example of this type of motivation with her interest in art. She wanted a degree, but also wanted to know

about and expand her knowledge about art. Amber was really interested in forensics, so she was taking a course in this subject. It relates to her interest in criminal justice, but she wants to explore a topic for the pure interest in the subject matter. Ben has been interested in farming and animals and is pursing a degree to learn more about that subject.

A third component of intrinsic motivation, a sense of relatedness, was intertwined with the need for competence. This doubling of the intrinsic drive is observed more clearly when noting how the individuals want to use their degree. The long term goal for gaining their degree was to gain the competency skills necessary to be able to work. Most often this goal was coupled with where or how they wanted to use that degree. Occasionally this goal was specific.

Choice of the desired skills to build a competency covered a range of potential jobs. Competence extended past the degree. An example for Pearl was to "be able to teach at a juvenile facility or detention center." For Amber and Carl the ultimate goal was to become a lawyer. Rose wants to be a nurse. Ruby is already a teacher, but she wants to add to her skills and become a special education teacher. Ben, on the other hand, wants to run a farm.

All levels of extrinsic motivation were also reflected in the responses of the participants. The external regulation part of motivation was observed mainly with Opal who, although initially seemed to represent a solely internal motivation, also reflected the external motivation. She stated that she wanted to make the tribe proud.

Two responses were more extrinsically motivated where the values have been introjected or internalized, which relates specifically to the financial gain that is possible with a degree. Ben reflected this motivation when he said the reason he was attending school was to "get a job." Carl had a similar response when he said his motivation to attend college was "monetary desires. I think that education is important to have a decent standard of living."

Responses from the participants reflect all parts of internal and external motivation. Combining these components presents a more specific pattern to these particular students. Several of the participants exhibited two types of intrinsic motivation; need for autonomy as well as the need to be part of a community. In conjunction with these two parts of intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation that stressed the need to help the community was internalized.

Underlying the need for competence was also the need to relate to others or to belong, the third aspect of intrinsic motivation. The most common response was a double identification in the aspect of intrinsic motivation where the need for competence was coupled with the need for a sense of belonging. These two components were also connected to extrinsic motivation where educational values of the tribe were internalized. At least one participant expressed the same intrinsic motivation, yet her tribal values were less internalized where her response about motivation was to make her family and tribe proud. Two of the participants indicated an external motivation for attending college where responses were to get a job and make a decent living. Carl indicated the extrinsic motivation which was connected with the internal motivation of competence. In addition there was a connection to both the internal motivator of belonging as well as the internalized motivation of the tribe. Family values and tribal loyalty is best expressed by Carl who explained:

> I have been given so many opportunities to succeed. ….And it is put on a platter for me to be able to do whatever I want. And that is what drives me to keep going. I have been given all these different advantages, you need to make something out of yourself, you have to do something. It's like your obligation. Especially, which is why I would like to help the tribe one day because they have helped me do so much. You have to give back to the people that give to you.

Carl's response reflects a strong sense of belonging, and also reflects the value of giving back. Carl's intrinsic need to belong was coupled with the extrinsic motivation to do well for the tribe. Outwardly, developing the skills to become a lawyer is the intrinsic motivator that is apparent. Inwardly his skills are intended to be used for the assistance to his tribe. Rose also reflected this need to give back to the community. Her way of saying this was, "I'm trying to take the opportunity to be able to go and do something, to help my tribe."

A tribal connection is strong for the majority of the participants. This desire to be part of this group is reflected in the motivation to attend college. Motivational connections between intention and application can be noted in Figure 4. Intension is represented by two circles. One intention stated most frequently was to get a degree. The second circle represents the expressed intention of wanting to earn a decent living. The motivation behind the intention was both intrinsic and extrinsic which are represented by two boxes under motivation. Intrinsic motivation has three orientations: knowledge, competence and belonging. Extrinsic motivation was noted with family values, expectations and tribal pride. Each of the intentions is related to one or more of the orientations of motivation as indicated by the arrows. The application of the degree is also influenced by the intention and motivation. At this stage of the participants' college career it is the intent to apply the degree they are working towards. Each of the participants wanted to use their degree for some purpose, which filled an interest particular to the participant, making the application intrinsically motivated. The majority of the participants wanted to use the skills acquired by their degree to assist the tribe in some way. This application has an extrinsic motivator. The application of the degree is depicted by the two boxes under the heading of application. Arrows indicate how the motivation to earn the degree is connected to the use of the degree. How this connection impacts the students' decisions will be addressed in chapter five.

Figure 4:   MOTIVATION CONNECTIONS BETWEEN INTENTION AND
              APPLICATION

INTENTION   MOTIVATION   APPLICATION
Short term goallong term goal
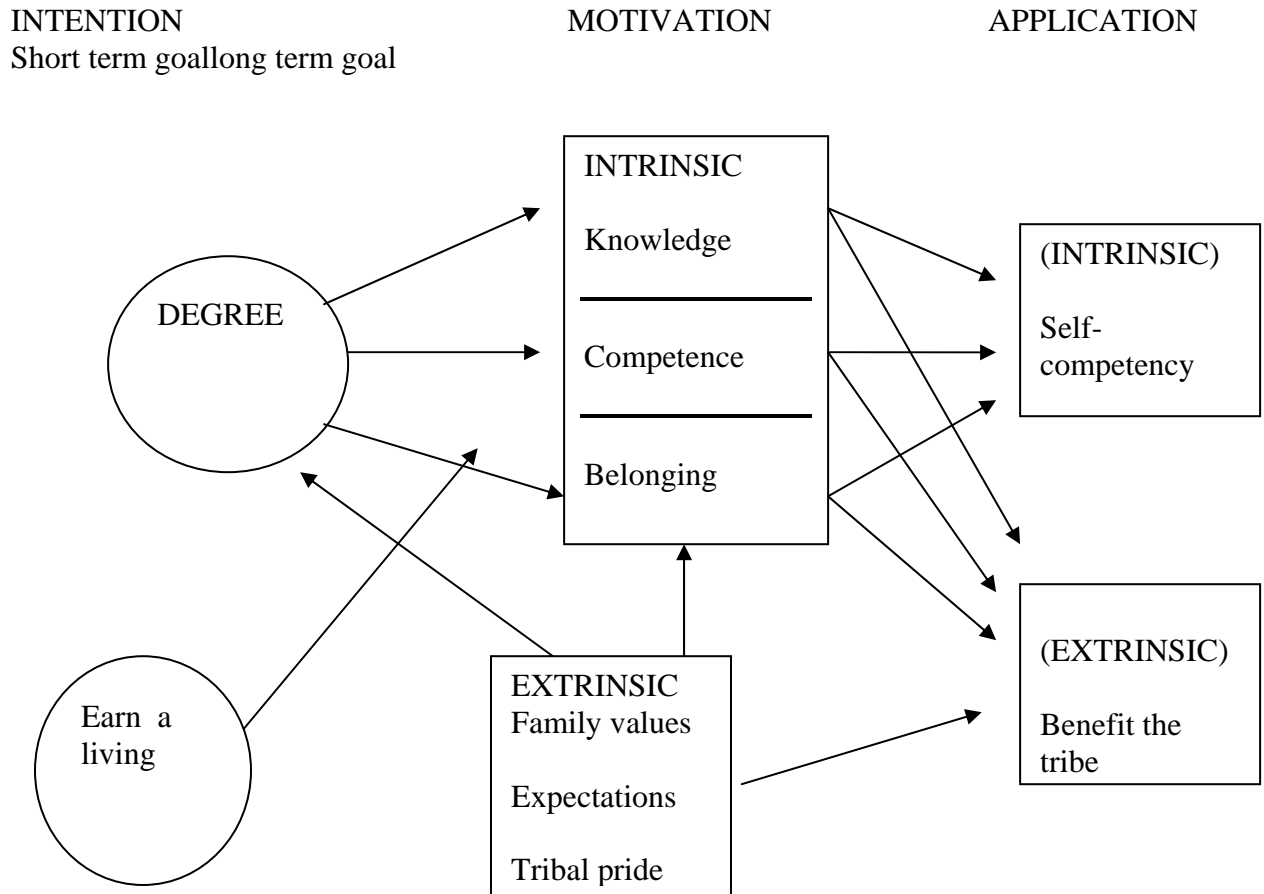
Choice of institution

   Each of the participants indicated location of the institution as the primary reason for

enrolling at the particular institution. Some of the participants included other features of the

institution, such as a desired program of study or size of the institution that combined with the

location preference.

The most frequent response was that location was important as stated by Sandy "it is the closest school", by Iris who commented "it is the only one" and by Opal who said "I guess because it is close to home. And just to get me started."

The small campus was also desirable for some of the participants. Rose stated, "I wanted to start off at a smaller college. And it was closer to home." The smaller campus was also desirable to Amber.

Programs of study that were offered were also added to the location preference. Ben acknowledged that his reason to attend McNeese related to the faculty, "I guess because I knew a lot of the Ag professors there. They had a pretty good agriculture department." Robin noted that it was "convenient for me to drive there…. And they offered the classes that I wanted to take." Adam concurred, "I'd have to say location. Because it is closer. And also because of the academics. It falls in line with what I want, the business aspect of it. It is a good business school."

Location was not the primary reason Carl chose LSU, but it was a factor in his decision. Carl described his choice:

> I always wanted to go to LSU since I was little. It isn't really a rational reason. It is just something I grew up liking, probably for their sports and stuff like that. TOPS (a state tuition supported program based on academic achievement) provided the financial support for me to attend a university, and support is limited to Louisiana schools. LSU is, they want to be the flagship school, they try, which made me interested. And also it is located just enough down the road to be away from my family and also close enough to come back, if the need arises.

Other participants chose their institution for location but also for other features. Some of the reasons that were mentioned were the campus was small and more manageable than a large university or that the programs of study either matched their interest or were noted to be good. Four year universities were also chosen for the fact that they offered the desired degree. All of the participants first chose location then added other components to their college choice decision. Program of study was also a factor in the choice of institution.

Transition

Moving from high school expectations to college demands was not always met seamlessly. Difficulties with entering college have been cited by several of the participants. How this transition was eased was explained by the support systems that surrounded the student. Sources of support were identified such as the family, high school counselor and the education director with the tribe. Family members also provided encouragement.

College red tape can be bewildering to the new student. Adam's first encounter with college was very frustrating the minute he walked through the door. He had to stand in line for long periods of time to register, then after that time he still couldn't get the desired classes and he had to wait in line again. Bouncing back and forth in registration lines was discouraging for him. Pearl admitted that college is difficult, especially at her age. She attributes this because "of everything else that is going on in my life, ….other obligations." Balancing several roles at once can be a challenge for anyone.

Fears of the unknown can cause anxiety for new students. Carl admitted to being nervous before he went to college. He described the anxiety as relating to leaving home for the first time, "To leave the nest per se." He also offered other insights about college, "It is different. The adjustment was easier than I thought and I was real nervous about going to a different

environment." When asked what helped him with that difficult time, he added "my campus job helped a lot." His job was in the department in which he was majoring. Carl also reported that his high school guidance counselor helped him with the application process and sending the transcripts. Family helped him with the transition by helping him find an apartment in the community. His cousin had an apartment in the same city and he was able to get a recommendation for his own apartment in that complex.

Assistance with the transition to the college environment also came from the education director of the Coushatta tribe. Amber describes how this happened:

> She helped me out a lot. She answered all our questions about everything we need to know about college, what they pay for what they help with. They also help, I'm about ready to transfer in another semester, and she is helping me with the paperwork and everything.

Opal agreed that attending college presented some challenges and she admits that the newness and expectations precluded her being involved in any campus activities by adding, "I wasn't ready for that my first year." Her grades are not to her expectation. She is receiving As, Bs and Cs, where her high school performance was all As.

Ruby re-entered the college environment when she was thirty. In her adolescent years she didn't have the same confidence that she does now; she admits to not being happy at that time and that she was aimless at school, which lead her to leave. No connection with the advising or counseling personnel was made that may have altered her outcome at that time.

Transition to the college environment was not always an easy step for the participants. Some had assistance to ease the transition and some did not. A couple of the participants are struggling with transitional issues, yet are not seeking out advice from college personnel. Opal is

an example of this type of student. Her grades are not what she expected and she is not seeking out guidance from college personnel. When she has sought out advice it was from the tribal education director.

Financial Access

How one will pay for a college education is always a consideration in the decision process. For two of the participants the state funded program, TOPS, was the primary source of revenue for the student. All of the Coushatta participants have access to full support from the tribe. Carl is using TOPS primarily, but is supplemented from tribal resources. Several of the Coushatta participants indicated that they would not be able to even think about attending college without the support that the tribe provides.

Shirley Doucet, the education director for the Coushatta tribe explains that as long as the student maintains a 2.0 GPA their members will have their education paid by the tribe. Financial support includes tuition, room and board if on campus, books and travel expenses. Students can choose whatever college they want to attend. Currently tribal members attend Duke, Notre Dame, Livingston and other schools out of state. Students who are tribal members report to her for the financial paperwork that needs to be completed. She also frequently advises students as the need arises.

For the United Houma Nation participants the primary source of funding was out-of-pocket. Pearl works for an agency that requires her to obtain a higher degree, which because of this expectation, funds her college education. Several of the United Houma Nation participants indicated that in earlier semesters they received a $500 scholarship from the state Indian Affairs Office. The Intertribal Council pays $3 for every hour that they are in school, which acts as a type of college allowance. This may appear to be a small amount, but it is a welcome support.

Values

When the participants were asked directly about values that were Native American very few were identified directly. Most of the values were noted more indirectly throughout the interviews. Values that were identified were family, loyalty and being more laid back. Other more indirect expressions of values were respect for elders, a collective good and giving back.

When Carl was interviewed he had to check that I would not be offended by his response, his respect for elders appeared in this comment. After he checked that it was OK to say what he thought, he noted the difference between cultures in the following statement, "Indians are more laid back and are more family oriented." Later he reiterated that it was "family loyalty" that was important. Carl continued:

> They (Indians) are more laid back. They take things more in stride. Like white people are more schedule oriented. Here, we've got to be here, we do this and we do that. Indians aren't like that; they take it as they go. Sometimes that can be a negative too. That you are so closely tied to the family. But that's it for right now.

Differences between the college culture and Native American culture were noted by one of the participants. College assignments do not incorporate the larger community; work is individual for the most part. Adam looked at the college setting this way

> It is, it is like you are on your own, and it is individual. You are going to do this for yourself. It is not collective. Even as a class. I can see how that is. It is kind of removed from that collective.

When asked if he felt a disconnect between school and home, Adam related:

> I do because I am a people person. I like to do stuff for people and to know it would benefit someone else and not just benefit myself and I do feel a disconnect with that. I

have to stop and think, this is why I am doing this. It will not only be able to help myself, it will be able to help the tribe. I'll be able to help my community. I can tell you on the unity. It is very disconnected. Together we feel connected. The community, we come together as one of a family. But at school it is different. At church we feel as a family, but at school there is nothing that identifies us that we come together. I don't feel anyway. But there is nothing to say that we are disconnected, in that we are totally apart, where we don't belong.

A respect for elders was noted during the interviews where the majority of the participants frequently answered my questions with 'yes ma'm'. An example of this respect was also noted when Carl was talking about the powwow that is held annually on his campus "I don't want to say that. I don't want to offend them, for me personally, I don't find too many powwows authentic…"

Another way that respect was observed was as the participants explained uncomfortable situations in the classroom. In each of the situations that were reported, each made a decision not to disrespect the teacher, consciously or unconsciously. Explanations of this behavior was reported this way by Pearl, "But you know maybe it's just inborn, that just leave it alone, its OK, get over it". A sentiment of this nature was also presented by Carl when discussing his tribe where he detailed, "You know how southern communities are like that, families, the skeleton? That times two. They have this Southern thing, but it is also a Native American thing. Don't speak, be quiet. I kind of like it."

This value did come into conflict in the classroom. Three separate students' issues came up in which they felt attacked and they did not stand up for themselves. This response might be cultural. It allows the student to feel offended and does not offer a solution for resolution within

the classroom context. What was not said was that the instructor was misinformed about the socioeconomic status of individual Coushatta members. Silence demonstrated respect for the instructor, not agreement. What is even more disadvantageous is the lack of opportunity to educate other students on more appropriate responses and various perspectives.

Tribal values still have the collective good as primary. This was noted through the value of education that the tribes have for themselves. Two of the three tribes represented through the participants have education of their tribal members as paramount in importance. The Apache-Choctaw tribe was represented by one member which did not allow for the appreciation of tribal values. The Coushatta and United Houma Nation tribes recognize the need for their members to be educated to be able to move forward in the current society. The United Houma Nation supports members indirectly for the most part since there is no educational department within the tribal structure that has access to financial support. Support in this manner is still effective as is noted by Adam who directly reported that various tribal members influenced him to attend college. He later noted that "I don't think if they weren't pushing me initially that I would even have gone to school, to tell the truth." The tribal agency where Pearl works has grant money that allows her to further her education, which is required for her to keep her present job.

The importance of community was also noted in Adam's behavior when he stopped out of school to help rebuild his community after a disaster. He remains in his community of origin and supports it in many ways, through church related activities and coaching softball, to name a few. Pearl also noted her continued involvement in the support of her tribal members at all times in the community. An elaboration of this connection to the community is provided by Pearl:

Number one, from the Indian community I see people who are served also. A lot of times

I am probably related to them whether it is close or distant. I am still related to them. And

138

even if I don't have a blood relation, a lot of times I have that community relation. So my

decisions as a vocational rehabilitation counselor, a lot of times, other people could say I

go to my job, I have put in my 8 hours as a counselor and I am out of there. I don't see

my clients, I don't have to interact with them, and my book is closed once I close the

door to my office. That is not in my case. In my case I am going to see these same

consumers, these same clients in the local grocery store, at our funerals, at our gatherings,

at our Indian gatherings. I am going to see them at friends' homes, in relative's homes,

and that makes a difference.

For the Coushatta tribe this support is more direct. The educational department has as

part of its mission to support its members financially in full to attend college. The end result of

education will go back to the community or tribe. Is this feeling one of altruism, responsibility,

or one of giving back to the community? This is a question, but the importance of the tribe is

implied in the responses of the students.

The words used in casual language reflect this value of helping others. Those actual words,

to help out, were used by several participants in different contexts. Rose used this language when

discussing her involvement with the powwow, "last powwow I got myself involved and tried to

help out." Amber described her long term goal with this phrase as she said, "what I really want

to do is help out my community, tribal community." Carl used this phraseology when talking

about deciding to do the interview with me as he told me, "So I wanted to help you out. I think

that somebody is studying this field, I think it is pretty cool."

Spirituality in the form of respect for a higher power and connectedness to that power

came in the form of a transposed religion. Ruby and Iris talked about God being number one in

their lives. This outward religion is completely different and even against traditional Native

beliefs. Ruby demonstrated this when she stated that traditional American Indian beliefs worshipped animals and objects. Traditional Native religion did not have the bible, which is the true way to God. The overall importance religion has within their daily lives is at best similar in its focus on connectedness. Adam finds the connection in his Catholicism with Native spirituality when the traditions, such as drumming are allowed to be part of the church service. He feels a strong connection with that outward acceptance.

Respect of the land is still present. This is noted when the ground breaking is made for a new facility. Amber offered this comment in relation to land "They're making like a museum or something. I think they've just started on it. They found a site for it and they held a little ceremony." This was also described as happening before a powwow. Some of these traditions are still being practiced.

Traditional medical practices are based on the connectedness to the land. Traditional skills of healing are still valued and practiced. Another traditional Native value is perpetuated. Traditional medicine is still practiced on some level, though it is kept underground. One participant noted that a person who knew traditional medicine practices was called on when the student was younger. The identity of the person has been kept quiet and not discussed. Carl didn't know why this was true, but speculated that perhaps the medicine person was active in church, which might be thought of as inconsistent with religious beliefs. One of the other participants did comment that she knew some of the remedies.

Many traditionally held beliefs that are described as Native American are present within the tribes that have voice in this study. Values that are traditionally described as Native American continue to be viable and important to the participants in this study, although the form they take may be different in presentation. Values emerged directly and indirectly from the

participants. The importance of family was primary. The community was indicated as being

extremely important, as the participants wanted to improve the lives of the people in their

community, which they wanted to do through their education. Helping others was mentioned

several times by the participants. Respect was noted several times. This value was related to that

of not speaking out. Not offending others is a value that was mentioned several times. All of the

values that have been expressed can be illustrated in the circle. A circle is chosen to depict

continuity, as is expressed in the continuation of traditional Native American values in a society

that is perpetually evolving. Native American values that have been cited previously are present

and others have been added. This reinforces the point that Native American values are strong and

are represented with these participants. A summary of these values can be noted in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Louisiana's Native American Values

Cultural identity

Each of the participants exhibited a strong cultural identity with their perspective tribe.

Each of the participants had a mother who was Native American. Only six of these students had

both parents who were also Indian. In spite of this biracial background, all of them identified as being only Native American. Four of the participants had husbands or significant others who were Caucasian. All of the participants were asked what it meant to be a member of their tribe. Responses varied in explanation, but all indicated a sense of pride and connection with their specific tribe. A couple of the participants noted benefits of belonging to the tribe.

Belonging to a tribe can be part of a whole identity. Adam voiced this aspect when he commented, "It is always something I identified with. It has given me an identity. This is who you are. It has given me an identity to know that I am Houma." Along with this identity is a sense of belonging to a specific group, as is reinforced by Ruby who comments "I guess it is like belonging. You belong."

A sense of pride was stated by several of the participants. This sense is part of a sense of identity and these participants embraced that identity. Pride is the epitome of the responses, as is heard from Pearl who claimed, "Actually I am very, very proud to be a member of the United Houma Nation." Carl concurred with this sentiment when he explained:

> First of all is the pride of being Native American, being part of a small special group that is tight knit. I think it is cool to be different. The fact that they speak the language and stuff like that, it is really cool. I don't.

Another word that some participants mentioned was the sense of honor. Ben is an example of this sentiment. He stated, "It is an honor to stay with the tribe, to keep it in the area. Just to be a member is an honor to me. I guess a lot of people can't say they are now a days I guess."

The identification with the tribe was expressed with a sense of love and enthusiasm from Amber's perspective. She exuded her feeling in the following remark:

I love it. I am glad that I am, that I was born into this community, that I am a tribal

member. It is different in that we are unique. No tribe is the same. And I like being part

of my tribe. Because, I love the culture and heritage that I grew up with, I just like it.

In addition to a sense of pride, a sense of importance is attached to tribal identity. Several

of the participants stated that identification with tribal held a sense of meaning. Robin explained:

It means a lot. The culture and heritage that I know from growing up with my parents, it

is just one of those things, like America. We were here first. You know what I am

saying? Everybody else came from somewhere else. It means a lot to me that we are an

indigenous people.

Two other participants commented on how much the tribe meant to them, but qualified

the response in relation to the benefits received. Iris is one who commented about benefits as she

stated, "It means a lot. I think I have a lot of benefits." Separation of benefits and the community

was made more explicit by Sandy who agreed, "It means a lot as far as health and education. As

a community, no. I don't feel anything like that with them."

One student referred to the language as being an identifying aspect of her tribe, yet did talk

about her feelings directly. Opal stated "Actually our main thing about Coushatta is our language

that keeps us as a tribe." Opal is not totally fluent in the language, but she practices frequently

with whomever will listen, including her dogs. The identity with the tribe came with several

different descriptors. A sense of isolation is heard in Rose's comment:

I know I am different, and that we are on our own, so I want to be there to help my

people, Coushatta. So that's what I'm trying to do. Since I know like we all have some

part in it.

Responses varied from participant to participant. Overall there was a strong sense of identity, belonging, pride and meaning attached to being a tribal member. Even when the connection related to benefits, the identification was strong. One way to represent the cultural identity is through a data poem. The words came from the participants from the responses to the questions on cultural identity as well as how they spend their time in their everyday lives.

Data Poem:

Honoring Louisiana's Natives

We come from different tribes--- each one unique
Our BEING provides:
         A sense of belonging
         A sense of identity
         A sense of pride
We are unique--------- our tribe
     I am different
                 It is cool to be different
                I love it
                   The culture & heritage
         IT IS AN HONOR TO BE WHO WE ARE
You will see me DOING things—
                Going to powwows
                Family reunions; where stories are told
       Sometimes we share our culture at college for special days or
         Jazzfest for all to see
     Eat fry bread, macque choux or Indian tacos
     Some of us make baskets, or dream catchers,
     Play golf in tournaments with other Indians
     Teach grandchildren the language
Some of us work at tribal agencies to support our Indian people
     Or go to conferences to share concerns with other Natives
         IT IS AN HONOR …….. WHAT EVER WE DO
Our FEELING goes deep
    I danced when I was young
       I still go to powwows…. I still have that in me whenever I hear the drums
       I like the drum beat, and watching the dancers

    I go to an Indian Bible Church
    Drumming is part of my Catholic Church
    My children go to an Indian pre-school
    And learn our culture at a camp
I AM PROUD
It is an honor, to feel my culture, to be who I am here in Louisiana-----Native

Academic Connections

Academic performance

Grade point averages are one way to measure the student's academic adjustment to college. When grades are high, one might assume that the student is finding the course material manageable and that learning has occurred. This assumption may imply that the student wants to learn. Each of the participants reported satisfactory grades. Most report over a 3.0 average. Ruby commented that during all of her years in school she got good grades. She also stated that during her semesters while working on her Master's all of her grades were As with the exception of one B. Carl reported a 3.7 average but would like to bring it up to a 3.8 which he doubts he can do, but says "you've gotta try." Amber has a 3.8 average.

A couple of the participants reported adequate grades, but their college performance is not as high as their high school performance. Opal reported getting Bs and Cs. This is a difference for her from high school where she received mostly As. Sandy graduated 3rd in her class, whereas now she is making a 2.6. Ben wasn't sure about his grade point average, but thought that it might be about a 2.7. Although this is satisfactory to him, he was on the honor roll in high school, where he earned mostly As and Bs.

Three of the participants reported the opposite result. One student, Iris, reported a complete pattern change from her high school performance where she earned Fs and Cs to a 3.6. Rose recounted her high school grades were mostly Cs. Now that she is in college is getting more Bs. Her perception is that she is doing a lot better now that she is in college. Only one of the participants dropped out of high school and later earned a GED. Her grades in college are much better now, which is a complete reversal from how she performed in high school.

Study habits can also be revealing about an academic performance. This was not a question that was originally part of the interview probe, but became part of the response and was asked of several of the participants. Some of the students had no organized time to study. For some, study time was increased when tests or special projects were required. Carl explained his studying as being based on need, which works for him, as his average stays high. He explained his strategy in the following way:

Oh I do it not in an organized time; it is on a need basis. When a paper comes up, or I need to read a book. When I need to read a book, I read a book. It is based on how I work the syllabus. So, as needed. There is not its 8:00 time to study. It's not like that at all.

Ben had a different strategy. He likes to study while he is at school when he can as he knows that he has other obligations and chores at home. Ben's strategy worked this way, "If I have enough of a break at school, I'll work on it there, or at night. Most of the time I find time at school unless I have a big paper or something."

Finding a scheduled time to use for studying is one way of managing the preparation time for class. This can work if you can be flexible to alter the amount of time for studying when demands change. One student seems to have an organized time for studying, but might have a conflict with other preferred activities. Opal explained her scheduled time:

When I get home some time I take a short nap before I study, and then I do homework. Most of the homework I had was math. I do go over the notes when they say we need to. I do that. It takes, sometimes it takes some of my TV time. So, I've got to watch TV.

Opal continued that sometimes studying does take precedence. "So sometimes I don't have TV for one whole day because I'm too busy doing this."

147

Lack of regular study time was mentioned more than once among the participants. At least one student admitted to studying primarily before a test. This is demonstrated by Rose who confessed, "I usually look over my stuff, see what my test is and study for it. And after that I just leave my school stuff alone and go and hang out with my friends a lot."

Faculty Support

As a whole the participants liked the faculty. None of the responses indicated any strong negative feelings toward the faculty that taught them. Exceptions to this global acceptance of the faculty will be discussed in the section below on prejudice. Participants expressed their feelings in a general statement that indicated that faculty were all good. Others were more pragmatic and stated that there were differences of quality among the instructors.

Those who thought that all of the faculty were good made comments like Carl did when he said "As a whole, I'd say solid. I think they do a pretty good job of teaching" or Rose when she said "they do good and try to support you". Ruby was also praising the faculty when she stated that the faculty were "very helpful. They guide you, they advise you. It is good."

Other students were less global in their comments about their instructors. Adam commented that he had "mixed interaction. Some of them are heavily involved with students, helpful. Some are not. I've had mixed interaction." Sandy noted a difference in the instructor's approach to students. She explained the difference as relating to discipline by saying:

> Some are nice and helpful and some of them are too lenient and some are too hard. It is
>
> the mixture of all of it. I've gone through so many instructors and doctors and professors,
>
> I know most of them. There is a lot and there is a lot of difference toward students.

Comments that were positive were phrased differently, but the positive regard that the students had toward the faculty was strong. At one of the two year institutions the highest praise was

given for the faculty as whole by Ginger who explained, "They are almost like family." Ben agreed by saying about his professors, "They do a great job. I don't have any complaints. They all treated me well." Opal thought "they're pretty nice. They are all different. They have their own different ways of teaching." Another positive comment came from Amber who stated:

Anytime you need help with homework or when they have a project they want you to do. They say these are my hours, if you need help just come in, and they usually are there. And they will help you in detail. It is very helpful.

When asked if any professors stood out and offered support in some way for the student, all but one of the participants could do so easily. Iris immediately praised one of her art instructors by saying, "My ceramics teacher. He noticed this past semester that I was kind of under a lot of stress. He said, 'I felt it'. He understood that my college was being paid for; I could take as long as I wanted. He understood. He was the only teacher I talked to about that." Encouragement about her ability is another aspect of the faculty that Iris appreciated. She recognized how important the complements were to her own growth and noted this importance by explaining how comments gave her confidence in this statement, "Whenever I started in art my professors would tell me how good I am."

The mixed bag report came from Sandy. When Sandy needed to miss school because of surgery her instructor gave her a break, but she didn't like the end result. Here is her explanation:

There was one that I think was supportive, but she was one of the most lenient people. She was supportive because I had several surgeries throughout school and if I didn't get things done that was supposed to be done to turn in for a grade she'd just take it off. I felt cheated. She shouldn't have done it that way. But she was supportive as far as my health wise. However you want to take that.

149

Most of the participants were able to cite at least one example where a faculty member had been supportive of them in particular. Opal was the only exception for when she was asked if anyone in particular had been supportive of her, she replied, "not really." More frequently the faculty that was described as helpful came from the discipline in which the student had chosen as a major. Rose remembered one of her first instructors that helped her learn, particularly in areas that she perceived to be related to her chosen career. She pointed out that "I learned a lot for the nursing part." Carl noted that "just a few have been particularly supportive, the former chair, he's a good teacher and he always helps if I need it." Amber found an advisor, who was also one of her criminal justice instructors, to be supportive. His dual role, advisor and instructor, was what she found helpful. Her comment reflected the appreciation of his experience in the field:

Because I am a criminal justice major, I am always asking him questions about the field. He helps me decide which classes I really should take, what I need to help me prepare for my bachelor's. He's just really helpful in that area.

Adam also found someone in his chosen field that was helpful to him. His response was, "I'd say yes, in the business department, and the marketing business. I've had some instructors that come to mind that really push, that really try to help their students."

One participant related an extremely positive interaction from an instructor who was also Native American. For Pearl it wasn't the subject, it was the connection with another Native American to whom she gave high praise:

There was one teacher that was; as a matter of fact she was one of the best instructors. To me she was the epitome of what an instructor should be. It was a remedial math course that I was taking. And I felt that she was supportive, and one the reasons why is because she was Native American.

Pearl continued the praise:

I think she took a special interest and making sure that I did well. Kind of asked me how I

was getting along, that sort of thing with my grades and all. I actually excelled in that

class. She was an excellent, excellent instructor and she was only 25 years old.

All encounters were not met with comfort. Amber reiterated a few stereotypical

comments that her instructors made. When asked, after a comment she made if she felt that the

teachers understood what she was going through she responded:

I don't think so. I think they think we're just fed with a silver spoon because we have the

casino. I don't think they understand, like myself, I actually worked before I went to

college to just to save up money.

Responses to the question how the participants perceive the faculty were mixed. Some

were only positive, others qualified their responses somewhat and a couple found individual

faculty members insensitive to their issues.

Satisfaction

All of the participants expressed satisfaction with their collegial experience. Different

aspects of the experience were highlighted in each participant's response to satisfaction that

ranged from size of the campus, convenience of classes and the diversity of students. Each

indicated this satisfaction in different strengths of conviction. One of the most emphatic

comments came from Amber who stated, "I love college. I don't know who wouldn't like

college. For some reason I love it." Amber continued by qualifying her satisfaction with the type

of institution she attends by adding "Overall I like it, just the atmosphere of a small little college.

It is more, like I said, intimate. You see the people in your classroom just walking around

campus." Amber comes from a small town where she knows everybody and she can connect

with the familiarity of a small campus. Another student from the same institution also commented on the size of the institution as being a positive factor. Rose said it this way, "I do like it that the campus is smaller, and that the classes are smaller. So I can get more help from the teacher." Rose's overall impression was positive as she commented, "There's really not much I don't like about this campus." Ben, who attends a larger college also eagerly commented, "Oh I like it a lot, I've learned a lot, had a lot of fun."

An older student found the college experience worthwhile. She apparently had been concerned that she might not really learn anything. Her comment was positive as she noted the college was "rewarding, in my opinion. On a different level of course, education wise. After all these years, there was still a lot that I learned. For me it was a rewarding experience."

As a part- time student timing of classes can be important. Pearl noted the convenience of her class schedule by stating, "The satisfying part is that they do offer more classes in the evening. And now I see there is a jump in the on-line classes too." At another point in the interview Pearl warmly commented about her institution in that it was "doing the best that they possibly can". She reiterated and added, "As a whole I think they are tying to do their best to make it as easy as possible to enroll and participate."

Carl, who attends a large university, enjoyed the multiculturalism that the campus allowed which can be noted in his comment "I like being with so many people, different people, all kinds of people, different races. All kinds of students. I like the diversity on campus." His appreciation was also for the contrast which was available from the small town where he grew up. He finds the change interesting, "which is cool." Diversity is something that Opal also enjoys, as she stated "I think it is kind of neat. The different people can learn about each other, where they come from or how their lifestyle is compared to another person." Carl was the only

student who commented on the physical layout of the campus as a positive factor he noted this feature by saying, "It is a beautiful campus, it is nice the way it is laid out. Big trees." At the conclusion of his comment was a big smile.

One of the participants was working on a master's degree. Her comments about this degree were more general. She commented that "I just go to class, you know, find everything interesting, and then I leave." Ruby noted a difference in her undergraduate days when she carpooled with a friend. During those times she remembered "it was interesting just hanging out and riding home." The college experience was enjoyable because it provided new learning as well as companionship. At times the college experience was unremarkable, yet remained a pleasant experience.

Sometimes the transition to college is not as easy for students. The change from the expectations and familiarity of high school requires a change in preparation. In addition, other opportunities that life offers can be equally engaging for people. Although the participants enjoyed college, the transition was something some of them needed to adjust to. Opal noted "Oh, uh, I guess I'm kind of used to it, because it is not like high school."   Adam, a student who has been attending part time for ten years saw it this way, "It is something I've taken a liking to over the years going. I think I like college. It is something that is growing on me."

Liking college also relates to the reason they chose the college in the first place. Robin chose her college because it was close to home and she could meet her obligations as a mother more easily. When asked what she liked best she said, "I guess commuting would be the top thing for me. In case if something would happen to my little girl at school, I could be back at her school in 15 minutes. That was the main thing for me."

With many reasons for liking school from the convenience of location, ease of scheduling classes, finding a campus that was manageable in size, the intrigue of meeting different types of people, to finding the environment pleasing, all of the participants found attending college a satisfying experience.

Dissatisfaction

As with all aspects of life, there are two sides to all experiences. Positive experiences will not be found one hundred percent of the time. Also for the participants in this study there was the down side to their experience. A variation in responses was noted ranging from common complaints to more distressing findings of stereotyping and feeling uncomfortable.

On the typical side of comments were the complaints about parking, which was inadequate. Ben said there was really nothing he disliked "besides parking two miles away." Carl has a similar comment when he remarked "It's big (referring to the campus). I hate walking ten minutes to get to class. I hate having to park ten minutes away. They need a parking garage or something." Parking was an issue for Pearl also. She added several aspects about the structure of the campus, she also stated that "the school is older, the desks, they aren't very comfortable at all." Pearl continued that "the room, the temperature, the climate is not very good. Because there are so may people in there. Sometimes it's crowded. They try to fit a lot of people in one room." In addition Pearl wanted more technology available. Her comment was that her institution "is not technology oriented enough sometimes."

Another nut and bolt aspect of the college experience is the ease or not of being able to register for class. Only one student made a comment in this regard and it really turned out to be a positive comment. Adam explained:

I'm going to say when I first started I really disliked, the worst part was registering.

Because you had to wait in long lines, not being able to get the class you wanted. Then

having to go back in line, find the instructor, getting in, getting him to sign off, to let you

in class, then go back to find out you couldn't get in, then going back, it was ridiculous.

But now they have a system where you can go on-line to register and know immediately

if the class is available that you put in. That part of it has improved.

In regards to classes, some of the participants felt that there was not enough variety of

courses. Rose commented "They don't offer as much as bigger colleges." Another problem with

classes is availability as Amber explained:

Also not a lot of classes, like a big school would have. Definitely have to work out your

schedule. To make it work. Because they don't offer a lot. They offer just one class and

then that's it. And they offer another class at the same time, so you have to decide

between one of them. That is kind of difficult. But I try to make it work. That is why it

has taken me awhile to finish.

Problems with scheduling are also a concern for Robin. She explained the scheduling

dilemma in detail:

Dissatisfying would be the availability of classes. They don't offer classes. As they offer

some just in the morning three times a week, where they should offer it like three times in

the morning and twice in the afternoon. Some classes they won't offer more than once,

per time slot. That is a disadvantage. Because you have to take that sort of class at that

time. And it may interfere with another class that you might want to take at that time.

That is one thing that I didn't like. I think for three semesters I took three night classes

because the availability crossed with my others classes. So I had to wind up taking a

Monday night stats class, and then Tues/Thurs I had my other classes. I took that one class at night, because they didn't offer it on Tues/Thurs during the day. That would be the disadvantages as far as scheduling.

One of the new issues for the non traditional student is child care. At least one of the participants indicated that she tried to procure day care for her child at the college, but was unsuccessful. The end result was that her needs were not met. Iris commented about the college, "They have a day care. I tried calling them. I was looking for a day care. They were pretty booked up. I had to get on a waiting list." Alternatives to her needs were to use family and day care locally.

A frequently noted problem on university campuses is with fraternities and alcohol. Only one of the subjects mentioned this as a dissatisfying factor in her experiences. Opal explained "The thing I don't like about campus is the fraternities, where drinking is part of it. I don't like the drinking part on school days."

Social integration is not as easy at an institution that is a commuter college. Students have less opportunity to spend time together when they have to drive back to their home. Amber explained the problem in this way:

I guess being small has a negative and positive to it. Negative is we don't have much to offer, like social events. We don't even have an apartment on campus or dorm or anything. So we couldn't get together even if we could. A lot of us travel a distance. I know from the people that I've talked to, they travel 30 minutes to an hour just to get to that little college. So I know, I'm pretty sure we wouldn't have time to get together anyway.

Students' complaints were organized around the structural environment of the campus. Complaints were about the climate in the classroom, comfort of the desks and inadequacy of parking. Class scheduling was a problem noted by some of the participants. Dissatisfaction did not include any personal feelings about their instructors or course content. Responses were typical of students in general.

Prejudice

The majority of the participants indicated that they never experienced any uncomfortable feelings while on campus; few negative or derogatory remarks were made towards them or about Native Americans in general. One comment typifies this response as Iris stated when questioned if she ever felt uncomfortable for any reason or if anyone make any negative comments towards her, "No, no. If there was I blocked it out."

Several instances of prejudice did surface in the participant's discussion. Situations where this occurred came readily to those participants who had this type of experience. Memories of these instances were hurtful to the students. Comments that were made related to two main points: insensitive presentation of course material and stereotyping. Stereotyped responses came from both the faculty and students. Student reactions ranged from frustration, being mad to being outraged.

One of the stereotypes that surfaced was related to alcohol. Two of the participants recounted incidences relating to alcohol. One of these experiences was perceived as negative, the other took the comment as a matter-of fact. Amber felt her experience negatively, and stated regretfully, "I've heard we're supposed to be all alcoholics. I hear that on campus. Yeah. I've heard it in the classroom."

A second comment about alcohol was presented in the classroom by a teacher. It is difficult to know exactly what was said by the instructor, the comment could have been stated in a factual manner, as the student reported it. Iris reported about something one of her instructors commented on by explaining:

> She said something about Native Americans. I forgot what time it was, but she said about how they sold liquor, and mostly to Indians. And she said something about they don't handle their liquor as well as other people. I thought that was funny, because it is true. That's what we say about Indians, they can't handle their alcohol that good. And she said it.

After this comment I asked her if it offended her in any way, to which she responded, "Well no, I didn't know everybody else knew, you know". I probed a bit more and asked if she felt if it was a derogatory comment about Native Americans, to which she responded, "No, I just thought that was interesting. That she said it." What is of concern here is that the student noted a negative comment that is discussed in the community and heard it reinforced in the classroom. She may have understood this from a historical perspective, as a health concern issue, or she may have just had her own stereotype reinforced.

A second stereotype surfaced which related to the casino and gambling. Apparently in the area around the casino the stereotype exists that all Indians are rich since the casino opened. Three of the participants commented on this stereotype. One of the participants did not hear any comments on campus, but explained his behavior on campus relating to this issue. Two participants heard comments about this casino stereotype and responded quite emphatically about it. Amber first commented about the casino when asked if she learned about her own culture while on campus to which she responded:

158

I hear this notion. I don't know if this is what you mean, but I've heard this notion that just because you're Indian you are loaded with money. I hear that a lot. We're actually not. We're not. I had to work to help out with college. I hear that a lot and it frustrates me.

Amber continued after I asked her if this occurred on campus, to which she continued:

Yeah, a lot during classes and stuff. When we talk about, and get to the topic of tribal Indians, then you hear casino right after that. So then they say 'oh they've got money they don't have anything to worry about'. It's kind of irritating though.

I probed and asked her if the teachers brought up this subject to which she responded even more regretfully:

Two of my teachers brought up the casino thing. That we are all full of money and stuff. Two of my professors, two different professors, yeah. I sat there. I didn't say anything. I was the only one, the only tribal member in there. I don't know if they think I'm Mexican or Hawaiian or something. I don't think they know I'm tribal. Because they usually don't apologize after they say that.

Rose also felt this type of stereotyping. "Actually yeah, with one of my teachers. I kinda did, with one of my English teachers. Whenever we was writing, when we had writing assignments and stuff. I kind of didn't like the fact of her bringing up, like writing about gambling or something." I asked if she wrote something on gambling. "No I didn't. She was just commenting on something about me writing, as if it was going to be, something about gambling or something. I didn't like that comment too much."

As profitable as the Casino has been for the tribe, it appears to have taken its toll on the individuals living in the neighboring communities. Friends, teachers and other community

159

members continue to make comments about members of the Coushatta tribe as being rich. Carl noted these stereotyped comments, but does not appear to be bothered by them. He notes that comments are made to him by friends where he grew up, by explaining:

I don't know if you are aware of the economic situation in the tribe. Money is dispersed. It gets disbursed to tribal members through payments. So, I mean my friends would pick on me, whatever, talk about me. Even to get into school they would say 'oh you're Native American you'll get in. They just pick on a 3 point curve on the ACT, whenever. It didn't offend me. I could laugh it off. I was glad to go to a place that Coushatta Indian didn't automatically, people didn't know that it came with a lot of money. So, but there is no racism towards Native Americans. What my friends said, that isn't racism.

Comments of this nature are looked on as typical from the area surrounding the Coushatta tribe. It is bothersome enough for Carl to comment that he didn't want to be reminded of this all of the time. He doesn't like the stereotype of being considered rich. I pointed out that comments like that could be considered a type of racism, to which he retorted, "Well, I don't want to talk about it. I take it as a joke. It doesn't bother me. I can laugh." I did continue to ask if what he described only happened during high school and in his community or if it ever occurred on campus to which he replied:

They don't know what Coushatta is. They'll kind of ask me, because they can kind of tell that I'm something. When they ask I say I am Native American. When they ask and I say Coushatta, they don't know what that means, which is how I like it. To me I am just another college student trying to make my way, which is what I wanted. I'm proud that I am Native American, I'll tell them, but I'm not going to tell them that I have a little more money.

Later thinking about Carl's response, I wondered if this anonymity that he desired was the reason that he chose not to engage with other Native Americans in the student organization. When one has to continually justify one's own existence and uniqueness, it may be easier to ignore situations where the issue may arise.

Another area in which prejudice was felt was in the course content. How material is presented can make a difference to students and how they learn (Benham & Mann, 2003). It can also be a reflection of personal identity (Benham & Mann). In a history class the topic of the discovery of America was presented in a manner in which one participant was outraged. Pearl describes the event that occurred on the third day in class:

> He was talking about Christopher Columbus, coming over and he said, Christopher Columbus came and they saw these funny looking brown people. He actually said those words, those funny looking brown people. And he used the term about maybe three times. And I was fuming, I was fuming. And like I wanted to say did you ever think about the fact that maybe Indian people or the Native Americans, or the Americans here thought you were funny looking Europeans?

Feelings of prejudice were felt by some of the participants. The majority of the feelings came from the classroom environment. On a couple of occasions the negative comments came from other students. Negative prejudicial comments color the overall college experience, which for the majority was expressed as being positive. Trying to combat stereotypes was present even with me. Two of the participants were concerned about being late for their appointed time for the interview. One stated that he was afraid I would make the judgment that Indians are always late.

Influence from the Academic Environment

Students were able to report both positive and negative experiences that occurred in the academic environment. It appears to me that even though their overall experience was explained as being positive, several events of prejudice marred the overall journey. The academic environment is largely influenced by the faculty. Departmental decisions can determine what is in the syllabi and what books are used to support the syllabi, but the instructor can supplement books. The material, assignments, lectures and discussion are directed by the faculty. It is the classroom environment where two types of experiences were felt, one positive and one negative. On the positive side of the experience was a contribution that can be classified as ethnic identity development. On several occasions an opportunity was provided which can be described as identity exploration. Books, assignments and lectures provided information with which Native Americans could culturally identify. New information was provided that reinforced that Native Americans have something to contribute. These situations occurred when historical information was presented as part of a lecture, through the books provided in the course or assignments. One example was noted when one of the participants stated she was interested in taking a course in the future on Native American history. On the negative side was felt prejudice. An instructor presenting information in a derogatory manner was perceived by one participant. Discussions that were led by the faculty member were perceived to be negative about a specific tribal group. When tribal members were in that environment they did not feel comfortable. A diagram (Figure 6) of these activities can represent how the classroom was perceived from two opposite college experiences. The yellow oval represents the classroom environment which is generally controlled by the faculty. Faculty can create a course, determine which books are used as references,

162

determine the content of a lecture, develop assignments and lead discussion. The negative

experiences that the participants felt related to three of these components; lectures, discussion

and assignments. Lectures were perceived as offensive, discussion was perceived to be

derogatory and an assignment on a personal experience was rejected. These experiences are in

the pink rectangles, which exemplifies how prejudice was felt in the classroom. One the other

hand, positive experiences that were available in the classroom allowed for identity exploration.

These tasks are located on the right side of the yellow oval and are pointed to with green arrows.

Figure 6: FORMAL ACADEMIC SETTING
FACULTY CONTROLLED

+ IDENTITY EXPLORATION   *- FELT PREJUDICE*

History course
(future)

Course

Children's books

Book

Literature anthology

Derogatory
description

History
(New information)

Lecture

Discussion

Opinions
- faculty led
- faculty allowed
students

Shared experience

Assignments

rejected topic

Overall College Impressions
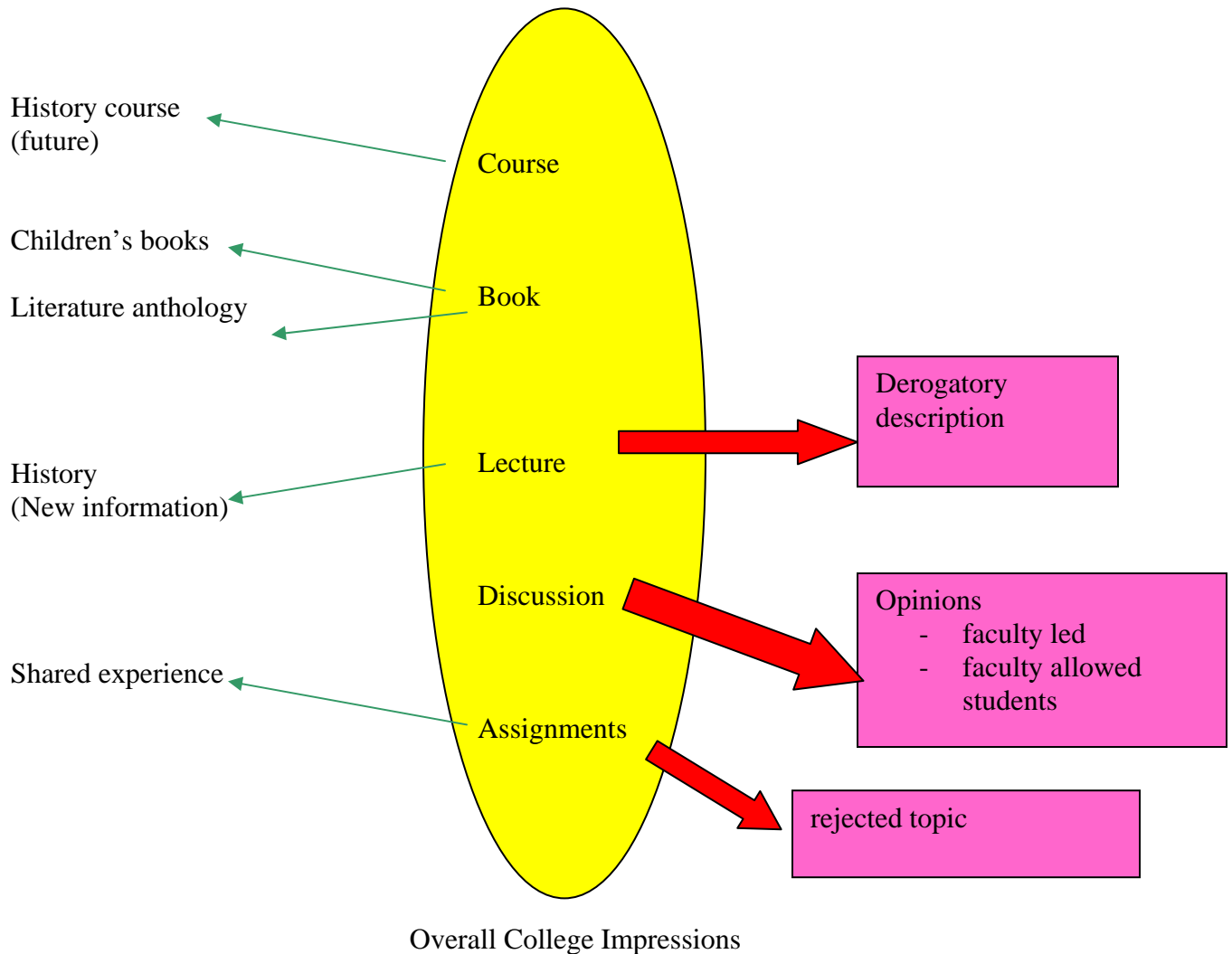
Persistence Strategies

Parts of the college experience required planned strategies to manage demands placed on

the students from the college environment itself or from other obligations in the students' lives.

Class schedules are an example. Students must organize their schedule to coincide with program

requirements as well as other role demands. Other life occupations such as the worker role or the parent role required hours to be scaled back or added during a semester. This strategy helped balance role demands. Another strategy used was to take classes on-line so that the course material could be mastered during a convenient time for the participant and lessened the stress felt by commuting and being away from children.

Choice of the institution was a strategy employed by individual participants to manage needs. The worker role and parent role each required some of the participants to choose an institution that was close to home to manage role obligations. Most of the participants live in small towns and describe their families as being a strong component of their lives. These two facts led some of the participants to try a smaller campus before they ventured out into the more complex four-year institution.

As these participants continued through their classes, some would regularly connect with an advisor to make sure they were on the right track. Others found instructors that were in their department of study that acted as mentors to their selection of classes or to prepare them for their future careers. Some of the Coushatta participants returned to the familiar tribal educational director for advice. Any of these strategies helped to ground the participant in their current educational needs for managing the bureaucracy of planning for their degree or coping with difficult coursework.

Each of the participants utilized some strategy to assist them through their degree progression. These strategies assisted with transitions, isolation and new demands.

Campus Connections

Campus life

Almost all of the participants indicated that they do not spend much time on campus. All participants entered the campus with the primary goal of attending class and then leaving. This behavior is more understandable when it is noted that six of the participants are part- time students, and two of the full- time students have young children. Nevertheless there was some involvement on campus, minimal as it was described by the participants.

Most of the participants were able to clearly state that their primary objective was to learn and not necessarily to be involved in other ways. Opal's objective on campus was "to just study", which was echoed by Ben who said he goes to college for "just learning, going to class". Rose agreed, "Campus life? Not too much, it's more a focus on school, my classes. Nothing else really." Sandy was very short and to the point about her involvement when she was asked, her response was "none, none at all."

Only one of the participants noted involvement in any type of organization. Iris qualified her involvement by stating, "There is an art organization. I don't belong to it, but I have gone to some of the meetings." In addition, although she noted her involvement in campus life as "not much", she did indicate that "If there was anything that ceramics was doing I would go, if they had a sale."   Since Iris was an art major, her involvement mirrored her interest in her major. Ben also noted involvement in the campus around his major, events that were sponsored by the agricultural department, such as "Aggie day". Opal spent her first year tying to get acclimated to the demands of college, but she knows of an organization with which she might like to get involved. Her comment was "I'm not too much involved with clubs. But maybe the only club I

probably will, the medical club, whatever they have. I'm hoping to join that some time." Ruby doesn't currently involve herself in any clubs, but she remembered when she was working on her associate degree she "was part of a club they had, I forgot the name of it. We just got together and told testimonies." Involvement in a group of this nature is congruent with her involvement and interest in her church.

Occasionally professors will require attendance at events for extra credit or for part of a classroom assignment. Two of the participants mentioned this type of engagement. Robin offered, "I attended a few functions, anything that I was required to, I did do. I did that." Carl also commented "I've had to go to things for class, like plays that are on campus, musicals, stuff like that for class. But never like on my own."

Student life departments always have organized student events throughout the semester to support students that include club awareness day, food events like pizza parties, where sometimes entertainment is included, and other various activities. The participants in this study did comment that they were involved in some of these types of events. Iris noted that "sometimes they have little things going on in the square, in the center. I never know what is going on. They don't like advertise it. If I'm walking to class and I go through it I wonder what's going on." She indicated that she liked these events and did participate. Robin noted a similar type of involvement and included special events. Her description revealed the following:

> Like if they have certain things, like a graduate day, I did that. They had a student, I forget what they called it, all the students get together and have a crawfish boil, things like that I attend. I went to a play that they had. They had a Jubilee; I attended some of the Jubilee events that they had.

167

One of the events that one of the colleges sponsored was a stress buster event. Amber enjoyed this event and described it positively:

Oh we have just one, what is it called, when we have midterm, stress buster week….
Each day of the week they have free food. One day they had pizza from Mr. Gaddi's, it was free. They have games and prizes we can win. It is the week before midterm. So it helps you out, so you don't get all stressed out. Then the following week we have midterms.

Carl also noted campus events in which he will participate for the free stuff that they give out. He stated:

Oh yeah if they have stuff like the free speech alley, I don't know if you are familiar with LSU, they have by the union this place you to different clubs are set up and put out stuff. I'll take something then if they offer it.

One of the most involved students was Adam. He described a change in his involvement from when he first started college and currently, a span of ten years. He was heavily involved in campus ministry events initially and remains involved, although not as frequently. He described involvement that included a Native American awareness for which he was primarily responsible. This particular event was to assist in awareness of Native American culture. Adam explained it in the following way:

Even in the campus ministry, the local priest has kind of wanted to raise awareness of different cultures. Our catholic diocese is promoting cultural awareness. And the local church on Nicholl's campus promotes minorities. Native American month is October in Terrebonne parish and Lafourche. In November we yearly celebrate a Native American day, around thanksgiving. The history of what we'll do is put on a presentation for the

168

campus and we invite everyone to come in. We have the local foods, fry bread, macque choux corn. And we'll have kind of an Indian feast, local cuisine of the tribe and we'll prepare that and feed them. And then we'll tell them a little bit about the tribe.

When the participants were engaged on campus it was most frequently related to special interests. Some of the students were involved in activities on campus that were required for class. Several of the participants were engaged in campus events because they were happening while they were walking around and happened to see them, such as when free food was being offered.

Native American organizations

Participating in clubs and organizations is part of the formal social involvement on campus in which students can engage. An organization that would support Native Americans might be a strategy an institution may have to promote involvement and support of Native students. Four of the five institutions that the participants attend do not have any Native American organization. One student attends an institution that does have an organization. When participants indicated that isolation was something that they experienced on campus, a question was then posed if an organization was present would it help with the isolation. For the most part the response was that an organization would help. Others wanted to know what would be the purpose, such as Iris who asked, "Yes, that would be interesting. What would they do?" The student who has the option of attending an organization opts out. The following are what the participants thought when asked about the addition of an organization.

Ben had two different thoughts on the inclusion of a Native American club. At first he commented when asked about a club making a difference, "yeah, it would be neat to meet people of your own race." Later he rescinded his stance and said:

I guess it wouldn't be fair to other people if they had some kind of club. I just look at it being equal for everybody. If they made some kind of group for the Native Americans, make a group for everybody. I really don't think it is right.

At one of the universities there is a fair percentage of Native American students, yet no Native American student organization is present. The students from that institution had different views on the issue of why no organization exists. Leaders from the student body are needed to commit to the development of a Native American organization. Busy schedules are one reason why leadership may not have emerged from the Native Americans that are currently on campus. The Native American students on this campus have indicated that other role obligations make it difficult to commit creating an organization to support Native Americans. Pearl indicated that:

They also talked about starting up a Native American club. I was approached for that, and I really would like to be able to do that. I think that would be interesting. But the time constraints and my financial responsibilities and my job responsibilities, as I said in and out of the office, it would be too overwhelming. I found out if I spread myself too thin of course I would not be able to do well in anything.

Adam responded that if there was an organization he would definitely have taken an active role. When asked why there isn't an organization, he felt that the dean of students needed to take more responsibility in this pursuit. Adam commented:

I'm not really sure. I know the Indian population is there for a club or organization. I guess I don't know if it is just a need or want, or getting together. I don't know if there was a real push to get anything started. Current leadership. The students haven't really developed anything, experience to take an active role. The dean of students needs to want this, to need this to happen.

Robin had a different tack on what could have happened if there was an organization. She saw the potential of an organization as information sharing, which may have made a difference in her degree choices. Her opinion was stated in the following comment:

It may have. It may have because me, like any other student, I had an advisor, through academic success. But maybe I could have found out more information from them somehow. Maybe I would have pursued a different degree somehow, or maybe there is no telling what could have happened through them somehow. You know what I mean? …In a way I wish they would have.

Opal had a similar idea to Robin in thinking that a club would "be a lot helpful." While in high school Opal had the opportunity to attend a conference with other Native American students from across the country. She enjoyed talking to different people and finding out about their customs. Her belief that a club would be helpful stems from experiences where she was able to interact with others and found it beneficial.

Carl had a very different opinion from the others. He admitted to receiving emails to join the Native American Student Association at his university, but has refused to join. He gave a short and a long reason. The short reason was "I'm a shy person……that's too structured. I like being able to do what you want, not really independent but, not to be tied down." When asked why specifically he would not join he continued:

I guess I don't really feel a tie to other Native Americans who aren't Coushatta. To me the whole Native American tie is more of a Caucasian based thing. Like a stereotyping, one being all the same. One Indian is all the same, they really don't appreciate the differences of view…..they are not just Indians, they are their own entity. I mean the

same thing with white people, you call a person a white person, they could be from

England their ancestry could be from France, two different Nations.

The Native American Student Association at LSU was created in 2000. Jamie Billiot

explained that her transition into the college scene was not easy. Many students were ignorant

about Native Americans in Louisiana, which would be demonstrated by questions such as 'do

you live in a teepee?' or 'where do you buy groceries?' She felt a need to educate other students

about the richness of Native American culture. During her time at LSU she did serve as the

president of the organization and organized the powwow that was held on campus. In a way this

was her healing process in dealing with a situation she felt intolerable as she entered the

education environment. She is currently working on a master's degree at Arizona State

University where she can learn Native American strategies in education.

No one answer serves as a unanimous opinion. It appears that a club of some sort would

be viewed as a welcome addition to the college experience. Obligations to family and

employment may interfere with active involvement, yet involvement in a club is an opportunity

that most of the participants would welcome.

College Peers

Almost all of the participants are attending their institutions as commuters. This factor

makes it more difficult to connect with other students, though not impossible. Most descriptions

that participants brought forward were that they did not interact much with other students and

when they did they got along well.

Many of the participants indicated that they were not necessarily friends with their

classmates outside of the college environment. Most of the participants did say they liked being

in class with other students and talked about positive interaction with them. Most of the

interactions between students were either classroom activities or study activities. An example

can be seen with Robin's comment, "Sometimes I run up with friends, depending on their

schedules and we'd talk. Or somebody would come find me and we would study together."

Opal's response when asked if she had friends in school was, "No, not really. I talk to people, but

we're not friends." Sandy verbalized a similar response, "I just go to school, just go to class, then

I leave." When the participants did engage with other students, it usually related to classroom

activities.

None of the participants indicated that they spent time with other Native Americans while

at school. Most of the participants' friends were from around their home community.

Iris did recount that she attended an art workshop with a fellow student; otherwise this was not a

common occurrence.

Each of the participants noted that they infrequently saw other Native Americans on

campus. Occasionally they would recognize someone they knew from their tribe. A Native

American presence was not observed by the participants. The participants do not hang out with

other Native American students on campus. Members of the same tribe are recognized by each

other and they acknowledge each other by waving or asking each other how classes are going.

More common was the comment that they did not see other Natives, and when they did it was

once. Ben who is from a tribe that is not common in the area stated that he noticed other Native

Americans on campus. He commented that they were probably Coushatta, an assumption that he

made because of the T shirts they were wearing.

Isolation

According to the descriptions of the participants, only one of the institutions has any

reflection of Native American culture, the other four do not. There are no paintings, motifs, or

anything visible that is Native American on campus. The one exception is the Indian mounds that are on the LSU campus. This lack of concrete visuals coupled with the fact that very few Native Americans are noted on campus can lead to a sense of isolation. This is in fact what the participants noted. Amber explained that when she first started college she felt different; her words were "I felt different in that I was the only Native American there, that I knew of. I felt kind of like an outsider in that aspect." Amber noted that her feelings did change with time. She explained when asked if her perceptions changed, "It's changed. I don't really take notice of it anymore."

Students commented that they do not spend much time at the campus. Sandy when asked if she was pretty much a loner at school replied "Yes. I go to school, just go to class. And then I leave." When asked if she felt her ethnic background or culture was reflected in any way on campus her reply was again "no". When I added "again you are on your own", Sandy responded with a laugh and said "yes, very much so."

Another response to the question of how it felt on campus without seeing other Native Americans came from Robin who commented:

Awkward actually. I make friends with Spanish people, black people, white people, I want to say Korean. Just about every other race was there, but as far as Native American, I really didn't, I don't know if I just didn't come across their paths, or they were taking different classes than I was, or at different times, I don't know.

Amber agreed with the sentiment that other tribal members were not around and stated that she really didn't see more than three people from her tribe, "I don't know if it is because we are not a large tribal members going to college or I just don't see them. I don't know. Yeah, it

just feels like you are the only one." Robin noted that she did not feel that she was treated any differently. Her reflection was:

> Well I just noticed there are all walks of life at college. As far as being Native American, I felt alone actually. I was the only one there that was Native American, that is how I felt. Nobody treated me any different because I was.

When asked about a Native American community on campus, all of the participants responded that there was not a community as such. Some indicated that they saw other people from their tribe that they recognized, but they did not 'hang out' with them. Iris noted that she just waved or "we just pass, we just say hi. You know we are going to classes and stuff." Socializing at school was not the focus for the participants.

Iris added "I don't really meet or talk to anyone that is from my tribe." When I asked if she saw people from other tribes she just said "I guess I need to ask more people where they are from." Her commented indicated that she was not sure if she had met other Native Americans or not. Carl talked about the numbers of Native American actually attending LSU as less than 200, a small number. So he said "Native American presence? That's me." When asked how he felt about being the only one Carl said "it doesn't bother me, that's just the way the world is." Ginger had a similar comment "it's like everything else in life; you learn to live with it."

Another follow-up question was how not seeing any Native culture made them feel, Amber responded with her adaptation, "When I first attended I did, I felt kind of different. Different in that I was the only Native American there that I knew of. I felt kind of like an outsider in that aspect." I then asked if that had changed since she first began college. Her response was "It has changed. I don't really take notice of it anymore. I feel like I am there for my own benefit, and not have to worry about my skin color or whatever."

175

Opal said that she didn't find anything Native American reflected on campus. She lamented not going to a tribal college and wants to do so in the future. She is putting that on the back burner for now. Her comment was:

> I always wanted to go to a Native American college, but they don't have what I want to do. But I've been searching at OU, Oklahoma University; they have a program for Native Americans, just for Native Americans. So I am hoping I can go over there after McNeese. And they can work one on one with Native Americans. I can meet other Native Americans over there too. I'm pretty sure at that school they'll have many projects for Native American like a mini powwow or a cultural day or something like that. That is what I'd like to see. I'm hoping to go over there, if nothing will change.
>
> Her comment reflects a lament of what is not present in her current institution.

All of the responses from the participants indicate a cultural isolation on campus. Few connections on the campus supported their ethnic identity. This isolation is felt with the student body, the campus environment, in the classroom, within the courses and with the faculty.

Political views

A couple of questions centered on how the participant viewed the concerns of minorities on campus as a whole. One question related to inter-racial understanding and the other on the number of minorities in the faculty and staff.

Minority faculty. One of the directed questions asked if the participant felt that it should be a priority to increase the number of minority faculty. The question took most of the participants by surprise. Responses ranged from thinking that it wouldn't make a difference, it would be a good idea, to it wouldn't matter or shouldn't be a focus.

One participant felt that it was too much of a focus and she didn't like it. Her reference point was that she had a teacher from India and had a hard time understanding what the instructor said. Sandy felt that when asked if it should be a priority to increase minority faculty she added "not so much as they have." When she was asked to explain her comment she continued "they have a lot. It is hard for you. When you haven't been in that atmosphere it is kind of hard, to switch over and you have to learn from this person who hardly speaks English. It is hard. It is difficult." Sandy's sentiment came from having international faculty. Distinction between international faculty and minority faculty was not made.

Rose on the other hand didn't think that it would make much of a difference. Robin thought that it would be a good idea, but recognized she hadn't thought of the issue before. Her reflection was, "Overall, yeah. Now that I think of it. Yeah, I think so. I think they need to diversify that more. Good question." Amber thought it would help with the feeling of being the only Native American around campus. When asked to expand on that comment she continued "just that it would. Honestly, I don't want to seem racist or anything, but I see more white people in our university." I asked if she noted other minorities. She followed with the statement:

> African Americans, or Mexican, Asian Americans or myself, Native American. I don't
> see many of them, so I think it would help in that we would have someone of our own
> background, I guess, helping us. They would understand what we were going through.

Opal primarily agreed with Amber, though she at first didn't think it would make a difference if more minority faculty were present on campus. Her concern was for the impact of those changes on others. Her explanation was:

> For me it doesn't really matter, I guess. But if there would be a Native American teacher
> I guess I'm more talking to my own kind of people than other races. But if there was a

177

Native American teacher maybe me and her would talk, teacher to student. I think it might help, for me I know, but I don't know about the others.

Adam immediately noted that faculty diversity was now a priority at his campus. He recalled newspaper articles that addressed the concern of a lack of diversity. He quickly responded:

> That was a big push. Last semester that was a big push in that Nicholls worked with the local paper for the college, and in the college they have had several publications addressing that same issue. That they are looking to bring in more Native American and minority faculty, students and people higher up in the administration. They were definitely pushing for that same thing.

On the issue of increasing minorities on the faculty there were some polar responses. Two participants responded that there should not be a push for increasing minorities. Race should not be a factor, merit should. Carl saw it as unfair to Caucasians as he clarified in his comment:

> No. To me I feel sorry for Caucasians. To me it is almost like reverse racism. It should be strictly merit based. If you have the qualifications for the job, then it shouldn't matter if you are white, black, Indian, Mexican or Asian. If you have the qualification and you are the best person for the job, they should give it to them. When you are forced to make quotas, that is wrong.

An agreement on this point of merit based hiring came from Ben who said. "No I don't think it is important. As long as they are doing their job. I guess I don't look at everything as equal. It should be who is better for the job."

178

Most of the participants agree that it could be beneficial to have more minorities among the faculty, as it could help in communication with students. Other participants focused on equality as long as there was merit.

Interracial understanding. A question was posed if it was important to promote an interracial understanding. Most of the participants answered this question with a simple yes, or I think so. All agreed on some level that understanding others is important.

Carl wanted to agree that this was something that you could try to do at school, but he felt that the home environment should be more responsible in promoting this understanding. Carl explains "You can try, but to me it is more family. It's based like in the home, attitudes the home presents. To me that is where you learn most things." When Rose was asked if she thought this understanding happened in school she replied "not so much. But I kind of understand that everyone is different. And it is interesting to learn what others, they have, what they do and stuff that is different from my culture." Amber agreed that is was interesting as she said, "I think it is. I myself find it interesting to know, learn about other societies and cultures."

Other than interesting, the point is taken that it is important for everyday existence in the world. Ben gave this view:

I guess everybody has different ways and their culture, and you just have to live around different people. I guess you have to get used to it. You can't always fight and argue about people's different beliefs or views on life I guess.

The point that inter-racial understanding is something that should be a universal given was reinforced by Robin when she said "that is kind of a universal kind of question. Everybody should understand." Other participants agreed with this sentiment, as was voiced by Adam, "I

179

think it is because we all have to learn to get along. Definitely, that is a biggy. Respect one another. To do that we need to come to understand one another."

Another participant indicated that understanding was important, possibly interesting, yet she wasn't sure how it would impact her daily life. Ruby's statement described this sentiment:

I guess so. I don't know how you would do that, taking classes, unless you meet up with those types of people. Then you would wonder about them, how is their culture, how is their relationship with their culture… It is important to know, I guess. But if it doesn't involve your daily life, maybe they aren't interested in it. I never thought about being interested.

The most emphatic opinion on prejudice was expressed by Pearl whose feelings expressed past experiences of discrimination. She elaborated:

Yes absolutely, and I try to do that in every way that I can, every opportunity that is afforded me, even like this survey, for me to be able to do that, to be able to promote racial understanding, to be able to get that across. Especially here in Terrebonne. Every chance I get to be able to have an audience, whether it is one or five hundred. I think my whole goal in life is to be able to say we're still here and we still want to maintain our culture.

Several of the participants commented that they haven't changed their perspective of others. They attributed this to their belief that they were open to others before they began their college journey. One or two of the participants stated that the presence of various cultures on campus was a positive feature. No big difference was noted in getting along with others because of their prior diverse experience.

Most of the participants felt that inter-racial understanding is part of what is necessary to get along with others in life. Some students questioned how an inter-racial understanding could be practically implemented in the college setting.

Student Development and Cultural Identity

Student development theory helps guide student service personnel to develop policies and plan activities and services to meet student needs (Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Racial identity is part of the developmental process that students go through at different rates. Phinney (1990) describes three level of ethnic identity. One aspect of these levels is exploration of identity (Phinney). Chickering's seven vectors, as described by Evans, Forney and Guido-DiBrito include developing a sense of one's cultural heritage as part of establishing an identity. An important part of the college experience would include components where this cultural heritage may be explored or developed further in some way. Each participant was asked if the college experience offered them any opportunity to learn about their own racial or cultural identity. The overwhelming response from the participants was that nothing was presented. When they were asked if they learned anything in any history class or anything a couple of the students elaborated a little. Even with this subject, the amount of time spent was minimal, perhaps one class session.

Only at one institution of the five utilized in this study was it possible to join any type of club. The participant attending this university declined to be involved which may have afforded him the opportunity of growth. Another opportunity was noted by this participant in a literature class where one of the instructors used a large text with a wide variety of authors. Carl noted that it contained a work of one Native American author whom he knew. This piece was not selected for class discussion. His learning occurred independently. He remarked:

I thought it was cool in like our second half of American lit they had stories by a Coushatta. I knew him. He was in there. He had a bunch of stories, but we didn't go over them. Granted it was a big old book, like 1,500 pages. You only did out of the whole book, maybe 200 pages. He didn't pick that one, but I read it myself.

An expectation of learning about one's own heritage in any way was not present with any of the participants. A typical response came from Ruby when asked what she learned about her own culture or race to which she said "I guess nothing." Iris summarized this lack of expectation the clearest when she commented "As you get older you learn more. You learn by yourself, when you get older." Anticipation of this learning was not part of the college experience.

History is a subject where the presentation of Native Americans could be included. When asked if any mention of Native Americans was made in any history class the participants remembered when and how the subject was addressed. Lack of any mention was noted. Amber stated, "I've had a history class, but it had nothing to do with Native Americans. It was before, the early years. So it had nothing to do with Native Americans, it was mostly from the Eastern history." Even when one participant had several history classes there was not any comment made as can be observed by Adam who remarked:

I haven't really heard any mention of, throughout any of my history classes, and I've taken about four or five classes, and I've heard not mention of our tribe specifically, or in general not much history about Native Americans even in very, very general broad specific toward the Houma. Even in Louisiana history, when I've taken Louisiana history, nothing specific to a tribe. All my knowledge was acquired out of school on the Houma culture.

As an example, a couple of the participants remembered exactly what was discussed, however briefly. Robin remembered learning about some of the other tribes in Louisiana "I learned about the other tribes in Louisiana, which I didn't realize that they had that many." Robin continued, "I learned about the mounds and what they found in the mounds." A more vague memory came from Rose who added "I did learn a little, I can't explain it. In that class we learned about the history parts of it, looked at photographs." The only distinct memory for Pearl was the negative experience where her instructor evoked strong emotion. She explains "…he was talking about Christopher Columbus coming over and he said, Christopher Columbus came and saw these funny looking brown people. Actually he said those words."

Mixed reviews predominate about what was presented in classes that were attended.

One stage of an ethnic identity is exploration (Phinney, 1990). The college environment can facilitate exploration through courses, lectures, assignments, events and other types of activities. Most of the participants could describe activities and events that provided opportunities for them to learn about their culture while growing up. When transmission of culture happened outside of the immediate family, it appears to have occurred during the high school years with activities that were provided through the tribe and with family structured events such as reunions. Several of the participants did provide information that indicated that some exploration was occurring at the college. Examples can be cited where, as explained above, a book was used in one of the literature classes that had a story that was written by a local Native American. Carl discovered this piece and read it on his own, not as a class assignment. Another way Carl explored his identity was looking up information on the internet. In a children's literature class Robin remembered that three books presented as part of the class materials contained Native American stories. Being aware of Native American materials that could be used

183

in a classroom allowed Robin to see that Indian related stories were worthwhile educational tools.

History courses are another example of an opportunity for information about Native Americans to be presented. In fact, several participants were able to remember learning specific pieces of information about Native Americans that they didn't know before, even about Native Americans in Louisiana. Not much was presented, but what was discussed was remembered.

Special lectures that are of an interest to the student body as a whole is another way that identity exploration can occur. Amber recalled a special lecture about how Native American languages were being preserved through a grant. There was a large turnout to this event, which pleasantly surprised her. Her opinion was asked for and she felt involved in this presentation. Amber wanted more of this kind of event.

Anticipation of exploration was expressed by Iris. She knew of a Native American history course that she wanted to take in the future. A course related to casinos was also something that she expressed interest in taking to learn more. This interest was sparked by the casino that is on her reservation. Ginger also talked about future exploration when she expressed a desire to go to powwow that was out- of- state. She has never been to a powwow and is now eager to be involved. Ginger's excitement has been stimulated in a work environment rather than her college setting.

The participants in this study were able to identify a few instances where Native American culture was presented within the structure of the college experience. Only isolated instances were able to be recalled.

Family

Without exception family played an important role in the experience of higher education for the participants. Family was encouraging and supportive of their attendance at college. Family was also the source of timing of the educational process, classes and outcome intentions of the college education. The family role that the participants were responsible for varied. Four were mothers of young children. One of those mothers lived with her child together with her siblings and parents. Three were living in their family home. Carl was the exception as he has his own apartment while in college, yet when out of school returns to his family home. Adam lived with his grandmother. Two lived with supportive partners. Ruby lives with her husband of 28 years and Ginger lives with a boyfriend. Pearl, whose children are grown, is the only one currently living on her own, yet she has a friend living with her for a couple of weeks. They are all strongly connected to additional family members even though they do not live in the same dwelling.

Responsibilities in the home for those living in their parents' home varied. Opal didn't have many claimed responsibilities as indicated by her comment "Every once in awhile I help my mom around the house, wash dishes or pick up, vacuum, sweep. I don't really have a big job, but that is what I do." Rose's obligations are less defined. She commented, "I always look after my sisters and try to be a good role model for them. And I try and help around the house." Ben, who lives on a small farm, had greater responsibilities, which include "taking care of my animals and just cleaning up, cutting grass and maintenance of the place."

Child care responsibilities are of paramount importance to those students who are mothers. Study time was always negotiated around child care needs. Sandy explained that when she returns home from school her whole attention is on her children. Her brief explanation was

"when I get home, it is study time for their (children's) work. Have to get their homework." In addition to working on their homework Sandy also has to organize her time getting her children to school and picking them up from school, entertain her two year old and " get stuff done, baths taken, supper cooked then homework. That's my day." Iris has a similar routine of picking up her children from child care, "then everybody would eat, take showers, get ready for bed and go to bed." Amber finds arranging everything a little bit easier because she lives with her parents who assist with child care responsibilities. Her boyfriend is also helpful in carrying out cooking and child care activities, which supports her with her needed study time. "It's not difficult because I have so many people helping me out, my parents and especially my boyfriend, his parents. They will watch her without me really asking."

Robin also has to plan her schedule around her child's school schedule. In addition to the current day- to- day issues around school, for Robin, the decision to return to school for a degree was determined around when her child was able to enter school. She negotiated the timing with her husband. Robin explained some of the details:

We decided well if you want to stay home with her for a little while, whatever, you want to go back to work, that's fine, whatever you want to do. So he supported which ever way, whatever I decided to do. I said I'll stay home with her while she is three and four, whatever. When she goes to school I'll go back to school or back to work, or whatever.

Carl returns to his family home on a regular basis. He wants to be home to support his younger brother in his activities, which are "sports things, like little league, or golf or a piano recital or stuff like that. He's busy, he's eight." Carl's grandmother also has a strong influence on him. He didn't plan to attend graduation, but he changed his mind because of his grandmother's wishes. The following statement explained his feelings, "She's (grandmother) excited. I wouldn't

even go to my graduation if it wasn't for her. I'd just say mail my diploma. She wants to go watch me, so I said I'd go."

As a grandmother Ruby is actively involved in trying to teach her grandson the Coushatta language. She never learned the language growing up, but she wants her grandchildren to learn. She goes on the internet and gets pictures and cuts them out and spells out words in English and Coushatta. Her enthusiasm is captured in her description of what she is doing with her grandson:

> My grandson is 4 and my husband I have been trying since he was born to talk to him as much as possible in Coushatta. I give him pictures with Coushatta words to put on the icebox and send him home with them. It was too cute, he said mama, fly, in Coushatta you say, chocono. He was telling him mom and he was repeating it. And now the other day he comes over and we were trying to make him talk and all this and he says, how do you say Coushatta big? So he is even asking now. Which I think, shows we've made progress.

Family needs have also been a part of the career choice that the participants expect for themselves. Iris wants to build a business around her ceramic interest and work from home to be near her children. Robin wants to work in a school so that she can have the same time off as her daughter. Her goal for attending college is intimately linked with her desire to spend time with her daughter, which is apparent in her comment, "I want to get on the school board, either Terrebonne school board full time or even Lafourche parish full time, so that I could have the summers off, holidays off with my daughter. To have the same schedule as her."

Strong family connections are the norm for these participants. Attending college is made around family wants and needs. None of the participants indicated that their parents or spouses

had any problem with their decision. On the contrary, most family members have gone out of their way to support their family member in attending college.

Friends from home

All of the participants indicated that they had friends in the community in which they lived and maintained contact with them while they attended college. Only one of the participants gave any indication that friends presented a conflict for time with college responsibilities. The traditional age students indicated that their friends were mainly from high school. The non-traditional students who were employed had friends from work as well as other connections. Across the board, friends were from different races and not necessarily other Native Americans. Friends for at least one participant remain an important part of everyday life and offer a potential for distraction from college demands. The tight knit bond of friendship didn't occur in college. Rose describes where she met her friends, "friends… I didn't meet them in school; I met them outside of school." Rose continued by saying that her friends were not Native Americans, but were "African Americans and Caucasians." Rose spends a lot of time with her friends, which has distracted from her school demands. She explains it in this comment "It's more me getting distracted by them. They don't distract me. I always call them to do something. But I let them know when I have to study." Time away from her family has come to her attention and she is currently working on changing the amount of time spent with her friends. Her attempt to remediate was reflected in this comment, "I've been trying to spend time with my family now that I notice that I spend too much time with my friends."

The remainder of the participants did not express this pull from friends, but rather included them as part of their everyday life. An example was given by Iris, "if there is an event

happening, we get together with friends. Leave the kids at home, with a sitter and me and my husband go out with friends."

One of the participants' descriptions indicated more of isolation from friends and she spent more time with her family. Opal stated she had friends from high school, but she has maintained a distance from these friends since she has been attending college. "I haven't seen them since high school. They go to the same school, McNeese, but I barely see them back and forth."

Separation of friends from school responsibilities was apparent from other participants also. Ben commented that he primarily goes to school to learn and that his friends are primarily from around his home. He stated "I have friends around here." His contacts for these friends were from high school, but not exclusively so as he said "Some of them I knew from my original school, or just knew from around here." And Ben continued, "I have a lot of friends that don't go to school. Some of them tried or dropped out, or would have liked to have gone. They support me, they are proud of me because they never completed or went through with it."

Friendships are chosen for a variety of reasons. One of the participants explained a reason for not having more Native American friends. Ruby stated that sometimes she finds it hard in the Native American community because she felt like she is treated like an outsider, and indicates more friends who are a variety of different races, "lots of African American, Caucasians, Cajuns, Mexican-Americans." Ruby grew up in Texas and still feels separate from the Coushatta who grew up in the area.

Even though Carl lived away from home he visited home regularly and was able to maintain contact with his friends. He also kept in touch by phone and the internet. His

explanation in reference to his contact with friends while he was away from home was "maybe like a phone call. They have on-line social networking, when I'm over there."

Participants described friends from their home community as being supportive of them, which is one reason why contact is continued. Only one indicated that friends could be a deterrent from other responsibilities. One participant did not expand or indicate that there were friends in her daily life at this time.

Priorities

Priorities for the participants fluctuated between several main foci. Family was a strong pull for most of the participants. College was another main focus, which is what one would anticipate from a college student. Several of the non-traditional participants included work as a strong priority also. Additional priorities fluctuated with their focus.

Half of all of the participants placed their college education as the number one priority in their life. Several of them qualified that priority and indicated that if a crisis prevailed, their family would easily move to first place. Two of the participants indicated three aspects were all of equal importance. For Rose it was family, school and friends. Opal indicated it was school family and her culture. School was placed as most important for Adam, yet he indicated that school, job and his civic responsibilities were all very important. Pearl indicated that work was number one for her. Family was most important without qualifications for Robin, Amber and Sandy. Ruby placed God as first, yet said that was an everyday thing, after which family was second. College was located in third place for Pearl and Iris.

Priorities varied for participants. School is a priority most of the time, but family will bump that priority to number two easily. Job demands also are number one, which was

intimately connected to the value of college. Other priorities fluctuated depending on the situation.

Roles and Conflict

As would be expected the participants identified a number of roles in which they play an active role. For this study the most important role that students had was that of student. An understanding of how their various other roles impacted the student role was the focus of inquiry. Results from the interviews indicated that four other main roles contributed to student decisions about college in some way: family member, worker, civic responsibilities and the friendship role.

Various family roles predominated in these students' lives. Pressures with the role of parent had the most impact on student behavior. Several of the participants were negatively affected by this pressure in different ways. Both Sandy and Iris stopped out of school to have children. Their return to school occurred after they had some initial time with their new babies. They also needed to organize child care to their satisfaction while they attended school. Sandy is not achieving the grades that she knows she can obtain because of the demands that her children place on her. An explanation for how this happens was, "When I get home, it is study time for their work. I have to get to their homework. Then I have time to do mine, and sometimes it doesn't get done." She continued with saying "so I could be and do a lot better if I really tried, but it is just to get by." Iris is also feeling stressed with the demands her children place on her. At this time she is taking on-line classes so she can manage the stress.

Robin also has child- related priorities. Robin manages these two roles by scheduling her classes after her daughter goes to school. She is finished with her college classes in time to pick up her daughter from her school.

Employment also affected the student role, but had less overall impact. Adam worked his student schedule around his work needs. He usually scheduled class in the morning so that when he got to work he could concentrate. Summer classes were not scheduled because it would demand too much and take away from his ability to function well at work. Pearl took most of her classes at night, as her employment demanded her time during the day. Robin worked her schedule around her child as well as her part-time job. None of these worker roles produced a conflict that was not manageable by the student.

Adam indicated that at one point in his school career he had to stop out for a semester while he managed hurricane relief efforts in his home community. His civic responsibilities took precedence over college for a short time.

Only Rose indicated that her friendship role might interfere with her student role. This conflict could interfere with successful completion of college if organization of her time is not managed.

For the most part role conflict did not distract the participants' focus from school responsibilities. Conflict was strong enough to have several of the participants stop out of school until they felt they could again manage the two roles, student and mother, harmoniously. When child care needs were pressing or employment demanded more time, classes were scheduled to alleviate conflict. Most of the time class schedule rearrangement was a successful strategy employed to relieve dual demands.

Activities

Activities which the participants engaged in during their daily lives while attending college encompass a variety of interests. Different types of activities fit into several roles, most predominantly a family member. The most frequent activity was attending church. Most of them

are typical everyday activities such as watching TV, care of animals, hunting, playing with pets, shopping, decoration, photography, gardening, exercise and quilting. Some activities were child-based, such as helping with homework, babysitting grandkids, and teaching them the tribal language. Some activities were civic related activities. One participant was involved in the Knights of Columbus, acted as coach of a softball team and was a youth director. Other participants were involved in community tribal affairs and on civic boards. All of these activities represent a wide range of interest and community involvement.

After reviewing all the activities described by the participants, a series of categories emerged. Native American activities can be categorized in six ways. First are culturally specific traditionally recognized activities. Activities include powwows, dancing, basketry, learning traditional remedies, blessing a new site, smudging and food preparation can be placed in this category. Powwows in this category are those sponsored by the tribe. When using this category the use of the activities or engagement of the activity is for the tribe or family. Attending family reunions can also be placed in this category.

A second category of activity is those activities of traditional origin that are shared with others. Activities that were identified that can be placed in this category are selling Native American wares at jazz fest, selling Indian tacos at a McNeese college event and providing a feast with historic story telling on the Nicholls campus sponsored by the campus ministry. The powwow at LSU can also be placed in this category.

A third category includes activities that are more ethnic in nature where several groups of Native American people come together for a common cause. Some powwows can be placed in this category. What the participants described were conferences where high school students from various tribes get together to discuss political issues like USET. This conference takes place in

Washington, D.C. Other participants mentioned Unity, where the conference site is in different parts of the United States and is attended by high school students.

Activities that are sponsored by the tribe, yet are not traditionally Native American, are a fourth category. Examples cited by the participants were a golf tournament that was for Native Americans. Another example can be taken from use of the fitness center that is part of the recreational center on the reservation. These activities have been transformed into their own even though they are not traditional in nature.

Two of the participants had meaningful employment in agencies that were tribal sponsored. Employment activities comprise the fifth category of activity. A sixth category can be created when the church is included. No traditional Native America church is present in Louisiana. One of the participants attends a catholic church that has the largest Native American congregation in Louisiana. The priest is incorporating some traditional Native American practices within the church, such as drumming and smudging. Several other participants attend a congregation that is called the Indian Bible Church, whose teachings were described as similar to Baptist practices. Although these two churches are not traditional Native American in practice with the type of spirituality associated with Native American culture, there is identification with a group of Native Americans within a religious context. One effect this may have is to further support tribal values. A summary of Native American activities can be observed in Table 1.

Table 1: Native American Activities

CATEGORY OF ACTIVITY	SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES
Traditional tribal activity	Powwow, basketry, Camp Coushatta, teaching grandchildren the language, grant sponsored heritage research, council meetings, tribal affairs
Native American Cultural Activity, common interest with other tribes	USET, Unity
Cultural Activity Sharing	Jazzfest food booth, McNeese Banner series selling Indian tacos, campus ministry cultural event at Nicholls
Activity Sponsored by the tribe	Golf tournament, fitness center
Employment	United Houma Nation Vocational Rehabilitation, LA Intertribal Council
Church	Indian Bible Church, Catholic church with Indian congregation

Tribal Inspiration

A tribal effect emerged as a pattern that spread throughout the entire college experience. The impact the tribe had on the participants was direct as well as indirect on several levels. With both of the tribes that are predominantly represented in this study, education is valued. Influence from the tribe was present through formal and informal structures. The strongest formal structure was the education department with the Coushatta tribe. The educational director organizes events from pre-school through high school to stimulate educational aspirations in the children. A pre-school on the reservation focuses on the preservation of the language by teaching it to the children. Graduation banquets are held for high school as well as college graduates to share in the educational success of the tribal members. Children grow up with role models and discussions around education, success and college. Celebrations for graduations are also celebrated with the United Houma Nation.

Motivation that was generated from the tribe came from two directions. The Coushatta tribe has the financial resources to provide the necessary funds for any tribal member to attend the institution of higher education of their choice. Mileage, books, dormitory housing and other educationally related expenses are also covered. One agency sponsored by the United Houma Nation also has grant money that allows tuition to be paid for their counselors to get a degree.

Another way that motivation was noted was the underlying pride that impacted the participants' decision to attend college and to continue with their choice. Several of the participants used the word pride to describe the reason that they wanted to attend college.

Each of the participants indicated the intention of continuing their college education until they earned a degree. Many of the Coushatta participants felt that completing their education was important because they were being provided an opportunity to attend college, and they felt it was important to take it and do something useful with their lives.

Projected application of the degree was also directed toward the tribe. Nine of the twelve participants explained their vision of the future with their intended degree as benefiting the tribe in some way. The influence of the tribe came full circle when the participants indicated that they want to give back to those that supported them. The diagram in Figure 7 demonstrates that the degree is the goal or desired outcome. The middle of the diagram depicts the goals and commitments that are present as a student enters the higher education environment as described by Tinto (1993) and Guiffrida (2006). Components of the pre-entry commitments include motivation, intentions, goals, institutional commitment and external commitment. The tribe has had impact on the final of degree attainment goal through values, influence, motivation and their overall intention. This impact is indicated by the thin arrows. Influence was both formal and informal. Motivation was through the financial support provided by the tribe or through pride of

being a tribal member with a degree. The intention for some was to use the opportunity that was provided to them through financial support. Each of the various types of impact led toward the degree as a desired outcome, which are indicated by the arrows from the impact to the degree. After the degree is earned it will be applied to the participants' everyday life. For some of the participants the skills will be utilized in the workforce at large. For the majority of the participants the intent is to practice the skills that they have obtained in their degree in some way to benefit themselves, but also the tribe. A visual representation of the tribal connections described above can be noted in Figure 7. The end goal is the degree which is represented by the inverted triangle on the right of the figure. How that degree will be used in the everyday life of the student is the application of the degree and is indicated by the upright triangle on the right. Several of the participants indicated that they wanted to use their degree in the workforce at large, which is indicated by an arrow from the application triangle to the oval. The majority of the participants indicated that they wanted to use their degree in various ways to help their tribe, which is indicated by the thick arrow that moves back to the tribe from the application triangle.

In summary the tribe contributed to the values, motivation and intention of the participants to attend college. This influence was both through formal and informal structures. Tribal influence affected entrance into the higher education environment and continued through to the decision to select a specific degree. Additionally the majority of the participants were then motivated to want to apply their future degree to benefit and support the tribe.

Figure 7: TRIBAL CONNECTION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Values

Informal

Influence

Formal

TRIBE

Degree

$ incentive

Motivation

Pride

Intention

Use

Opportunity

Application

Workforce
at large
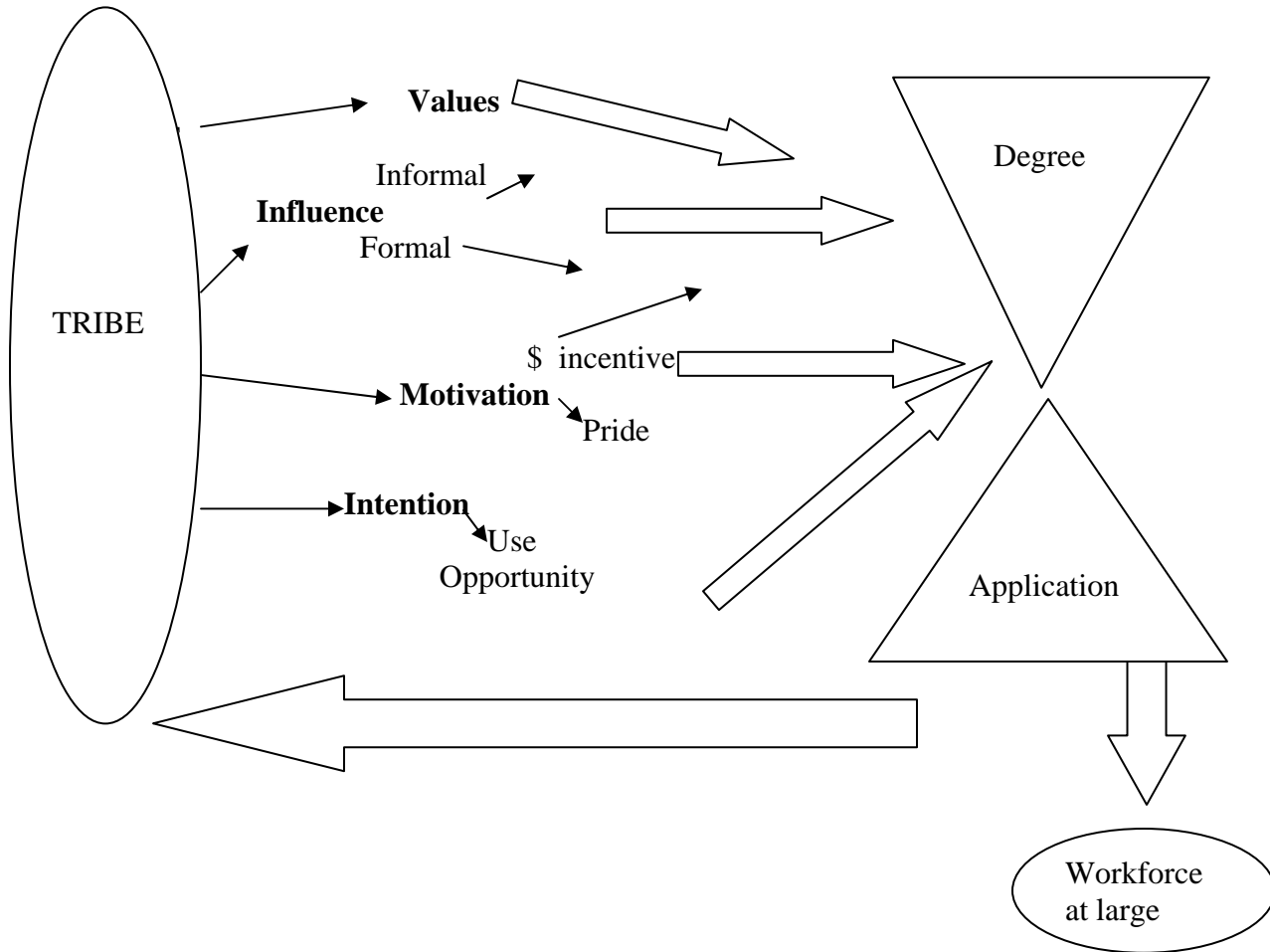
Summary

This chapter has presented the findings from the interviews. An introduction of the

participants began this chapter. Themes and patterns emerged from the data from which an

analysis was made. Chunks of data that were responses from the participants were divided into

the themes. A majority of the themes clustered around the components of the models of

departure as described by Tinto (1993) and Guiffrida (2006). The themes were divided into

preparation for college, academic connections, campus connections, and home connections.

Patterns of responses within these themes were presented in the section corresponding to that theme. Findings from this study are compared to the literature in chapter five.

After listening to the experiences of all of the participants and reading repeatedly all of the interviews, what seemed to stand out was the participants' ability to adapt to the environment. All of the participants developed strategies to cope with the college experience. All of their coping strategies have led to persistence. Most of the participants had support from their family as well as their Native community. A metaphor can further reduce the data into a major finding. To depict this ability of being able to adapt to two separate environments, an animal that adapts well to two environments was chosen as a metaphor, the turtle. The turtle is a symbol that represents longevity and perseverance and has some significance to Native Americans. A path was chosen as the college environment, which could be positive or negative. On either side of the path is the bank of support that is represented by support from the Native community and family. The turtle can either enter the land, the Native American environment or the water, the college environment. While in the educational environment experiences can be either positive or negative. Either way, the turtle adapts, just like the participants did in their experiences. This metaphor is depicted in Figure 8.

FIGURE 8: PATH OF HIGHER EDUCATION

+ *HIGHER EDUCATION* +

-    E X P E R I E N C E   -
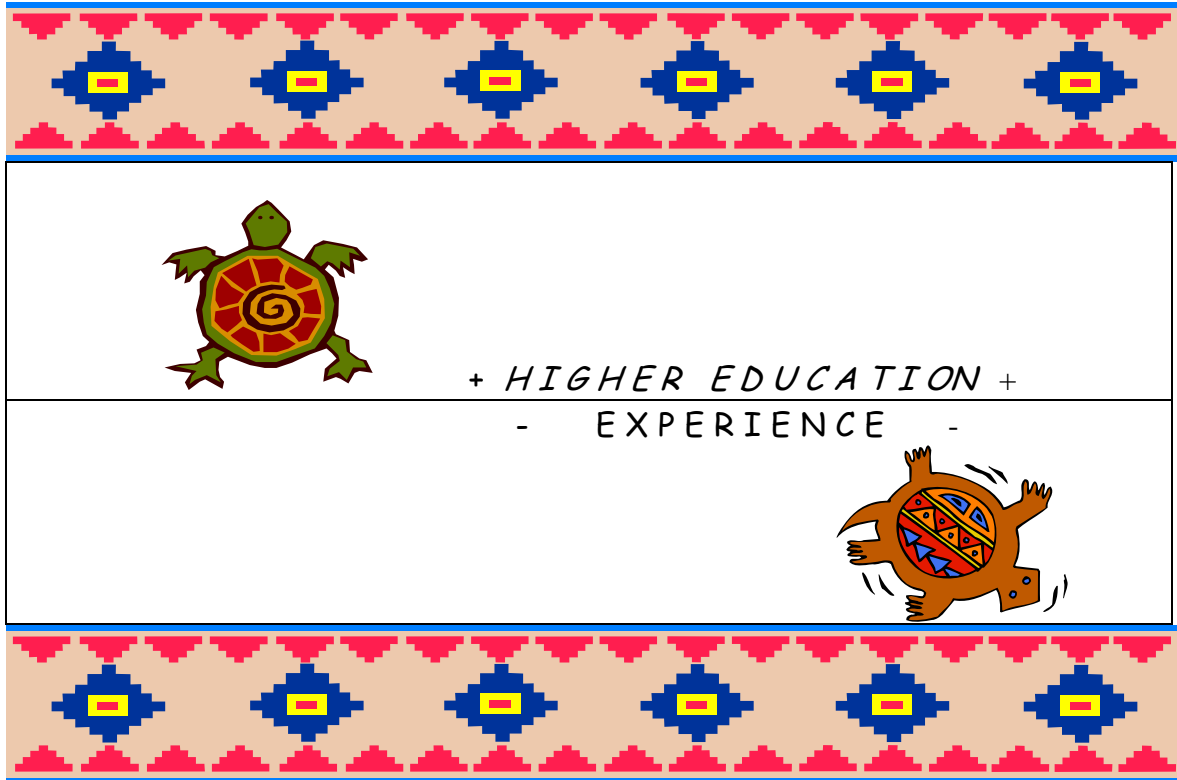
Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings

Chapter five presents a discussion of the findings that are described in chapter four. Results of this study are compared to models of departure that are currently in the literature, which answers the primary research question: *How can the educational experiences of Native Americans can be explained in models of persistence?* Related questions included the following; How do Louisiana's Native American college students perceive their higher education experience?, How does being Native American in a predominantly white institution affect one's higher education experience?, How is satisfaction or dissatisfaction perceived by Native American students during the college experience?, How can motivation of Native Americans towards education be described?, What are the expectations and goals that the Native American student has when entering the higher education environment?, and How does role conflict contribute to persistence decisions for native American students? The secondary research questions were analyzed in the context of the data in this study and with linkages with the literature. After addressing the questions which relate to the experience of the American Indian students, limitations of the study are presented, followed by implications of this research and recommendations for future research.

Tinto (1993) notes a change in the population that attends college. An increase in students who are older than 25 and the increase of diversity on campus change the dynamics of student departure. Tinto also notes that in spite of multiple demands on the student, which include family and work responsibilities, the internal factors at the institution still have a greater influence on departure. An increase in the number of part- time students makes it more of a challenge to track students over time. For these reasons it is critical to begin to determine what motivates students to attend college and what keeps them in college once they begin. Participants

in this study represent the changes in student demographics that Tinto describes, making this study one that can contribute to the literature on their experiences.

How can higher education experiences of Native Americans be explained in models of persistence?

Several models are presented in the literature that describe departure and persistence of university students. The most widely used model is Tinto's (1993) model of departure. Guiffrida (2006) has proposed adding several features that would be more appropriate for minorities. A success model is described by Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez and Trevino (1997). These models are used to analyze the data in this study.

Guiffrida's model

A need for expanding Tinto's (1993) model of departure to incorporate cultural components as suggested by Guiffrida (2006) is supported through the results of this study. Guiffrida suggests adding cultural norms and values to the pre-entry attributes, motivational orientation to goals and intention, and home social systems, which includes family and friends, to the institutional experience components of the model.

Results from this study indicate that influence from cultural values contribute to the pre-entry attributes of the students. Values derived from the tribe are part of the forces that drove the participants to enter college and continue with their studies. For two of the three tribes represented in this study, education is a primary goal for the members. The third tribe is only represented by one participant, which made it impossible to find similar responses with other tribal members. The Coushatta and United Houma Nation tribes recognize that education is the vehicle to enhance the tribe and move forward in the twenty first century to meet their members' needs. This value has been passed down to the participants through organized programs and

informal support. The aspect of the tribal support is strong enough for the participants that I would recommend adding it as a separate category to the model between the cultural norms and family background. Addition of the tribe to the model that was presented in the literature review is indicated in Figure 9.

The tribe is a separate entity that exerts an influence. Each tribe has a hierarchy of people that represent the whole group. To be part of a tribe involves membership. The Coushatta are a sovereign nation. Laws and a governing body are characteristic of a tribe. Culture is the total way of living. The tribe has a history of culture that has been passed down for generations. Culture as it is enacted on a day- to- day basis is dynamic and changing. The United Houma Nation is not a sovereign nation, yet they have a structural hierarchy of governance within the tribe. Thus, influence from the tribal body is a separate influence, apart from cultural norms and values. Individuals can be closely connected to the tribe or they may be on the periphery of the involvement with the governance of the tribe. Cultural values remain regardless of the leadership of the tribe. One has cultural values even if one is not a member of the tribe. The tribe is the enforcer of the laws of the tribe.

Guiffrida (2006) added motivational orientation to the goals and commitments component of Tinto's (1993) model. Results from this study indicate motivation can be described specifically for this group of Native American students. Motivation for the participants in this study can be described as linked between internal and external motivation. Both internal and external motivating factors were present. Internal motivation was described as being directed toward competence and a sense of belonging. This sense of belonging was linked to external motivation where application of the intended degree would be to provide support to the tribe. Parts of the external motivation that influenced participants were the family and tribe. Influences

from the tribe to which the participants belong are additional factors that are part of motivation. The strength of the motivation supports that it is a separate component to Tinto's (1993) model, which is suggested by Guiffrida (2006).

The responses from the participants in this study did not support the work of Allen (1999), Loo and Rolison (1986) and Stage (1989) who indicated that social integration into the institution was the most important factor for retention. All of the participants were academically integrated into the institution, but not very strongly socially integrated. The social connection that may have been more important for the students in this study is their integration at the home and social system level. All had family support and the majority had tribal support. This support system may have been more important in their persistence decision. The decision to persist is conditional, as this study only captures the current status of the student. A follow- up study would be needed to note if the same influences continued and lead to persistence to graduation.

What may be important here is to distinguish between social integration as Tinto (1993) suggests or social connections, as Guiffrida (2006) prefers to call them, and socialization. Tinto's implication of social integration refers to the student being involved with multiple layers of the campus culture which includes the dorm, recreational centers, clubs, student services, etc. The college campus and its environs are a 24- hour community. The majority of the participants were commuters. How one is socialized will be different because of geography and time. Commuters use the campus as a daily temporary community that can include use of classrooms, library, the student union and other aspects of the campus that are present. While in class students interact with each for discussion and group work. Social interaction may also take place after class to study or work on assignments together. All of these activities are part of being socialized. The

participants in this study were socialized to the campus. Social integration to the community in its entirety was not present

Guiffrida's (2006) inclusion of a home and social system section of the institutional experience component is supported by the results of this study. The family is a strong support system for these participants which influence their commitment to their educational goals. Support was noted from parents, grandparents, husbands and children. In addition the tribe as an entity exerted influence and support of their higher education experience. Results from this study support all of the additions that Guiffrida (2006) recommended to fit better with minority students. In addition, the tribe as an entity promotes education as a value that contributes to the pre-entry attributes of the student. At another point in the model, the tribe can be included as contributing to the institutional experience through the support it provides. Results from Native American students in this study suggest that the tribe should be included in Guiffrida's cultural model to more accurately describe the Native American experience in Louisiana. The revised model of persistence can be noted in Figure 9.

The rectangles in the left hand column represent the various pre-entry attributes with which a student enters the educational environment. These attributes include prior schooling, skills and abilities, family background, cultural values and norms and tribe. Each of these attributes will influence the goals and commitments that the student has toward their education, as can be noted with arrows. The components that comprise the goals and commitments are motivational orientation, intentions, goal and institutional commitment and external commitments which are represented in the second column of rectangles. Goals and commitments will influence the institutional experiences as indicated by the arrows.

The third column of rectangles represents the institutional experiences. These components are the formal and informal academic, social and home systems. Responses to the various institutional experiences will further influence the academic and social connections as indicated with arrows. These connections are the fourth column of rectangles. The fifth column of rectangles represents goals and commitments after the influence of the connections, as indicated with arrows. These components are the same type of influences that were present at the pre-entry phase, but now they have been tempered through experience. The end result of all of the influences is represented in the purple triangle of persistence. Persistence is the end result of all the influences that have affected the participants in this study at the time of the data collection.

Figure 9: Revised Cultural Identity and Persistence Model

Pre-entry attributes goals/ commitments institutional experiences connections goals/commitments outcome
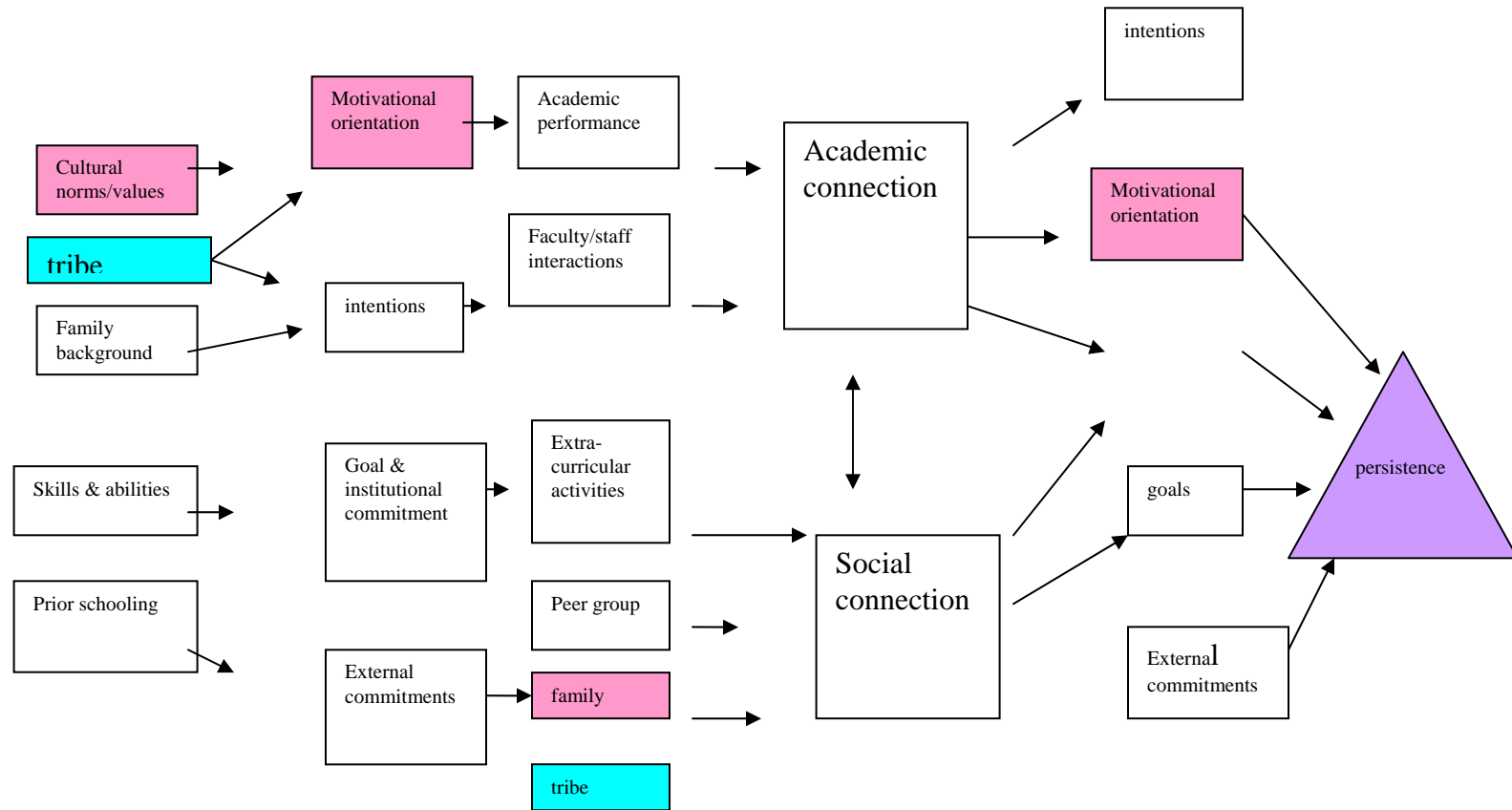
Expertise Model

The expertise model of successful college students as presented by Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez and Trevino (1997) can be utilized to describe some of the responses and strategies employed by the participants in this study. Four barriers to success provide the skeleton of the model, which are discontinuity, lack of nurturing, lack of presence and resources. Successful students are able to be aware of the barriers, seek knowledge to manage the barriers and develop strategies to overcome them. Although Padilla et al.'s study attempts to use the model at one institution in the Southwest to identify how students overcame barriers and were able to be successful through development of strategies, a similar approach can applied to the overall responses of the participants in this study. Students in this study did notice the lack of nurturing as a barrier. Like in Padilla et al.'s study, they were able to develop strategies to be successful. One example of a strategy used to overcome this barrier is to develop a relationship with a faculty member to support their educational efforts. The majority of the participants connected with at least one instructor who assisted them with developing confidence to succeed. Some of the participants were able to identify peers with whom they studied to master the course content. Another important source of support was their family, which was also identified by the participants in Padilla et al.'s study. The use of family as a support is also congruent with Guiffrida's (2006) model where the home environment is included as a factor contributing to commitment and integration within the institution.

A second barrier uncovered in Padilla et al.'s (1997) study was the lack of presence. Native Americans were mostly absent in the curriculum, the institution's programs, the general population of students, faculty and staff at each of the institutions represented in this study. Institutional culture at the represented institutions mostly omitted Native Americans. Participants

in this study did not have or utilize Native American student organizations or clubs to assist with this barrier. With one exception, they did not have that resource. Like Padilla et al.'s study, the students were grounded in their own ethnic and cultural identity and used this ability to cope with the lack of other Native Americans or tribal members at their institution. The strategy employed most frequently by the participants in this study was to focus on their academic skills and develop the knowledge base to obtain their degree.

A third barrier noted in Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez and Trevino's (1997) study was resources. A lack of money was not mentioned as a concern by any of the participants in this study. All of the Coushatta participants were able to address this barrier through tribal support. The United Houma Nation participants had some support from either their place of employment or they utilized personal resources. The Choctaw-Apache participant had a state supported program to financially support his education. Participants in this study had the available resources which allowed them to persist with their educational goals. Two participants received state funding through the TOPS program. One was provided tuition through a grant from her place of employment. All seven of the Coushatta participants received financial assistance from tribal monies. Three of the United Houma Nation were paying for their education through their own financial budgeting. When resources are provided, it allows for anticipation and realization of educational goals.

The last barrier identified in Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez and Trevino's (1997) study was the discontinuity barrier. These researchers identified a difficulty coming to terms with the value of education versus immediate employment opportunities. None of the participants in this study expressed this dilemma. In fact, the opposite comment emerged where more than one participant

noted that they wanted to do something with their lives and not just work at a local fast food restaurant.

The use of the expertise model has been useful in describing the participants' responses in this study. Strategies are employed by the Native Americans in this study to manage the challenges in their college experience. Successful use of strategies has allowed the students to persist in their educational goals. The focus on what were the successful strategies, or what students do to actively overcome challenges is important in understanding persistence. Success relates to resilience. Participants in this study exhibit resilience.

How do Louisiana's Native American college students perceive their higher education experience?

For the most part each of the participants in this study indicated that their experience at college was positive. Frequent responses were that they learned a lot, liked it, found it different but they were getting used to it. This positive reaction is present in spite of some experiences that were not pleasant. Students who had negative experiences were able to separate them out as isolated incidents, which allowed them to maintain their positive regard toward higher education.

Responses from the participants in this study are much like that of tribal college graduates who are satisfied with their overall college experience (Cunningham & Redd, 2000). According to these researchers the students who attend tribal colleges are also satisfied with courses, class size, instruction, faculty and administrators. The only areas in which the tribal college students were less satisfied were with the labs, inadequate career counseling and job placement services. For the most part, all of the participants would concur with the areas of satisfaction that the tribal college students indicated, but did not find fault with the same areas.

Cole and Denzine (2002) compared white and Native American students in their level of satisfaction with the college experience. Both groups had relatively high levels of satisfaction with their overall experience. Southwest American Indians in Cole and Denzine's study indicated a 90% positive experience compared to 75% of the white students. Although both were high, the Native students were more satisfied. This same study indicated that there was not a difference between white and Native American students in the amount of interaction with the faculty, though they may have differed on the reason they sought contact. The current study also indicates a high level of satisfaction with the college experience. Literature states that Native Americans find their college experience more satisfying than do white students. This is not a comparative study, but all respondents described their college experience as a good one.

Pavel and Padilla (1993) note that one of the important components of Tinto's (1993) model for Native Americans is integration into the academic system from both the formal (academic performance) and informal (faculty/staff interactions) aspects when determining outcome of the educational experience. Other important components were the postsecondary intention and goals. All of the participants in this study were integrated into the formal academic structure. Grades were at least adequate to good. Informally the majority of the participants identified at least one instructor who was supportive of them, usually in the major that the student had chosen. The goals and intentions of the participants in this study were directed and strong. This study confirms Pavel and Padilla's research that intentions and goal commitment are important factors that influence academic integration of Native American college students.

How does being Native American in a PWI affect college experience?

Many studies (Dodd, Garcia, Meccage & Nelson 1995; Jones, Castellanos & Cole, 2002; Minner et al, 1995; Perry, 2002; Taylor 1999, 2000) have indicated that Native Americans experience a sense of isolation and discrimination, and the subjects in this study are no different. The participants in this study experienced a sense of isolation and aloneness in college. They knew they were the only Native Americans around on campus and for some this was awkward. A lack of other visible Native Americans was underscored by the lack of anything Native American around them on campus. The curricula in the institutions represented in this study do not include Native American content. One exception to this is McNeese which does offer two history courses on Native America. The isolation that was felt did make the students uncomfortable, but no one voiced the sentiment that they felt that they did not belong. One of the main objectives for the participants was to get their degree, and whatever was presented to them, they adapted. An ability to adapt was what they expected of themselves.

A couple of the respondents described themselves as not looking Native. In Jones, Castellanos and Cole's (2002) study, some Native Americans reported having fewer problems than others because they looked white. It is possible that some of the participants had this experience when they reported not looking Indian. A different response was mentioned by a couple of participants in that they thought that others didn't know that they were Native American, but thought perhaps they were Mexican or some other nationality. This comment surfaced when the participants reported stereotypical responses and felt that the insensitive comment could only have been made if they had been misidentified as another race. The participants could not imagine why else the insensitive comment would have been made with them present in the room.

Participants in this study note that they are the only Native Americans around campus and that other students do not recognize them as being Native American. This exemplifies a sense of invisibility that has been reported in the literature (Stebbins, 1998). The strategy that some of the students in Stebbins study did to combat the feeling of being invisible was to start a club for Native Americans. This is the same strategy that Jamie Billiot used at LSU when she had a difficult time entering a PWI. Stereotyping has been felt by the participants in reference to the casino and alcoholism. Similar types of responses are described in the literature, as American Indians all over the United States have been the recipients of various stereotypes (Huffman, 1991; Perry, 2002; Stewart & Post, 1990; Taylor, 1999, 2000). Prejudice was mentioned as something that was felt several times by the participants, yet they found ways to cope with it. None of the situations that were reported made the students feel that it affected their academics in any way. Incidents of felt prejudice were not overwhelming, nor pervasive in the collegial experience of these participants. Infrequent incidents of prejudice were mentioned by the participants in this study, which is contrary to other studies. Ambler (2003) reported that American Indian students reported daily encounters with racism. In Dodd, Garcia, Meccage and Nelson's (1995) study, prejudice was reported by their subjects frequently and the majority of those individuals indicated that it affected success in college. Minner et al. (1995) also found that negative campus attitudes influenced Native American students in Arizona to leave college. Racism has been reported as being experienced by American Indians in higher education environment (Stewart & Post, 1990). The current study found different reactions to collegial prejudice. Extreme instances of ethnoviolence such as verbal threats, leaflets and graffiti that were reported at Northern Arizona University by Perry (2002) and overt racism and hostility as

reported by Huffman (1991) from a small Midwestern university were not felt by the participants in this study.

It is of note that the participants in this study did not feel pervasive discrimination as noted by Dodd, Garcia, Meccage and Nelson (1995), Huffman (1991), Perry (2002) and Taylor (1999, 2000). Several factors may be responsible for this finding. The one individual who responded the strongest to discriminatory remarks was one of the older students who experienced discrimination pervasively as a child. Her response was emphatic in the sense of discrimination she felt at the remarks made by her instructor. The younger students did not comment as forcefully. The discriminatory comments that were made about Native Americans was just as offensive to the younger students and made them feel uncomfortable, yet the manner in which they spoke about it was not as insistent. Even this older student noted that the younger students treated her kindly and with respect. Differences in response may be generational. Traditional age students did not experience overt discrimination like the students did who grew up before the 1960's. This timing may be influencing the intensity of feeling. Another possibility to speculate about the difference is one which may be termed critical mass. There are not enough Native American students in any one institution to make a difference. Each may be a novelty and present no perceived threat to the majority population. Prejudice and discrimination often stem from a perceived threat to power and valuable resources. With few numbers of Native American students no threat is felt by the dominant population. Related to the point of resources is that the comments that the participants did feel as negative were related to the casino. The casino provides resources which the majority population does not receive. Some of the majority, in this study the instructor and other students, may feel that the Native students represent a threat to some perceived power and resources that might otherwise be theirs.

Evans, Forney and Guido-DiBrito (1998) describe Chickering's theory of identity development. Chickering recognized that identity development was one of the important aspects that students struggle with during college years. With this understanding the identified key components of the college environment that influence development should be enhanced and ways to enhance student growth need to be recommended. One of the seven vectors of psychosocial development that Chickering describes is establishing identity. Acknowledging differences based on ethnic background and having a sense of one's cultural heritage are part of this vector. The educational environment can play a strong role in development of students while they are in college. The faculty, curriculum, teaching, student communities, services, are all areas in which the college can promote growth in the student. For the most part the participants in this study had negative experiences with the vector of identity development. Only a few instances can be cited where cultural identity was reinforced and cultural identity could be explored.

Phinney's (1990) stage of identity achievement includes a new awareness of self that causes the individual to reexamine the significance of a personal ethnic background. Re-examination may occur with experiences of racism, or it may be the opposite where something new is learned. A college environment has the potential to provide both. In fact this is what happened to the participants in this study. Several overt instances of prejudice were encountered. All of them were faculty directed. The peers at college did perpetuate the stereotype during conversations in places other than the classroom. Stereotyping was noted at only one of the institutions in which the participants are enrolled. At a different institution the student was subjected to a negative iteration of Native Americans during a history class when Columbus was described.

The end result is that the students were not provided experiences that can enhance their development. What was more distressing is that many of the participants indicated an interest in pursuing information and were open to learning and this was blocked by lack of opportunity.

Phinney (1990) describes three key factors of ethnic identity that could be applied to any ethnic group, self-identification, a sense of belonging and pride in one's group. With this definition, each of the participants can be described as having a strong sense of identity, as each of them verbalized these three factors as part of who they were.

Enculturation has been described as participating in traditional activities, identification with the American Indian culture and traditional spiritual involvement (LaFromboise, Hoyt, Oliver & Whitbeck, 2006). Newman (2005) adds that enculturation has an achievement component to the definition, which has occurred after exploration has taken place. With these two views of enculturation, all the participants can be described as enculturated. The only difference is that these participants for the most part do not engage in traditional spiritual activities, but spirituality is a component of their identity.

Literature suggests that enculturation or tribal connections can influence persistence. Responses from the participants in this study support this finding. Federally recognized tribes in the southern region of Louisiana have relatively small reservations, which limits the amount of housing available on the reservation per se. Reservation land is frequently used to build offices, support services and cultural facilities. This focus means that the Coushatta live primarily in surrounding communities, one of which is predominantly Native American. United Houma Nation members live either in a small city or smaller communities that are predominantly Native American. The area of residence makes these individuals more likely to be acculturated to the

dominant culture, as it is part of their everyday life. This outward acculturation does not preempt strong enculturation with their tribe.

Resilience in the educational environment has been associated with a strong sense of identity (Holt, Mahowald & DeVore, 2002; Waller, Okamoto, Hankerson, Hibbeler, McIntyre & McAllen-Walker, 2002). Factors that contribute to resilience are an internal motivation, family support, scholarships and financial support (Holt et al.). All of the participants demonstrated resilience. Each of the participants had family support and an internal motivation to succeed. Tribal pride also was present which indicated that they had a sense of enculturation, which can also be contributing to resilience.

Huffman, Sill and Brokenleg (1986) report that cultural identity was related to success of Sioux students. Retention of a cultural heritage, this strong sense of identity, parental encouragement and GPA together painted the picture of persistence for the Sioux students. Self pride was also noted as important in the success of Native American students in North Carolina by Ting and Bryant (2001). Ting and Bryant also noted that acculturation affected the success of their Indian subjects. Each of the subjects in this current study reports an ease in the dominant culture. This same picture of strong identity and acculturation can be used to define the responses of the participants in this study.

Bicultural is a term that several researchers use to describe one level of the amount of cultural orientation a person exhibits (Brown & Smirles, 2003; Choney, Berryhill-Paapke & Robbins, 1995; Ducheneax & McDonald, 1999; Herring, 1998; Phinney 1990; Rendon, Jalomo & Nora, 2000). Most typically biculturalism refers to the ability to equally function in the dominant culture as well as the ethnic culture. This bicultural level is consistent with all participants. All the levels of acculturation as described by Herring, for example, do not fit with

this group of participants. The level that most appropriately reflects each of participants in this study is the bicultural level.

I propose a new concept of identity that will fit the participants in this study which I call the Enculturation Identity Model. All of the participants can be identified as bicultural in the model presented by Choney, Berryhill-Paapke and Robbins (1995) in that they function well in the dominant culture as well as their own tribal culture. Each participant interacts in all four areas of the human personality, behavior, cognitive, affective and social areas consistently at the bicultural level. Because of the consistent bicultural level that was manifest in the findings, additional levels do not need to be included in the description. The level of adaptation is bicultural. Within this level all of the participants can be identified as having reached the level of achieved identity as described by Phinney (1990). Phinney indicates that the key components of ethnic identity are self-identification, a sense of belonging and pride in one's group. Each of the participants described these components without hesitation or question. Each of the participants can be described as enculturated as Newman (2005) and LaFromboise, Hoyt, Oliver and Whitbeck (2006) explain in their research. Components of enculturation include participation in traditional activities, identification with the Native American culture and spiritual involvement, though not necessarily in a traditional format.

To incorporate all of these components together I propose the use of the structure of a dream catcher which is depicted in Figure 10. The circle represents the bicultural level. Surrounding the circle are the four areas of personality which are part of this level. Descriptors of these areas are included in the small circles that are scattered along the large outer circle. The three that are most important for identity are the sense of belonging which is in the social area, a sense of pride which is in the affective area, and self-identity, which is in the cognitive area. All

three of these components of identity are depicted with a feather. The feather in the middle of the dream catcher represents achieved identity.

Around the circle are the various Native American activities that participants note as integral parts of their lives. Examples of the items included in the social area are family, Indian friends, sense of belonging and living in an Indian community. The items in the behavioral part of the circle are tribal meetings, performing traditional crafts, powwows, Indian conferences. Aspects included in the affective area of the circle are tribal behavior, pride and spirituality. In the cognitive area are traditional language, self identity and customs.

When the person is engaged in any of the activities or beliefs that are represented on the outer circle, then a line is added from that point to the center feather. The minimal amount of lines or webs that must be present for a cultural identity is three, which are the same as Phinney (1990) describes as part of a cultural identity: sense of belonging, self-identity and self-pride. When you add a fourth web, which would be the engagement in tribal activities, then enculturation is achieved. The engagement in activities is in the behavioral area. A web forms in the middle from all four areas of the personality areas. Lines or webs can be drawn to touch each of the lines from the other areas when they are connected. An example would be language. If any part of a traditional language is spoken, then a connecting line would be drawn between family and language. The connecting points are depicted with the small colored circles which are like the gems in a dream catcher. Each Native American will have more or less of these activities, and they can alter over time. The end result is a web that describes the depth of enculturation of the identity of the person. See Figure 10 for a visual representation of this model.

Figure 10: Enculturation Identity Wheel
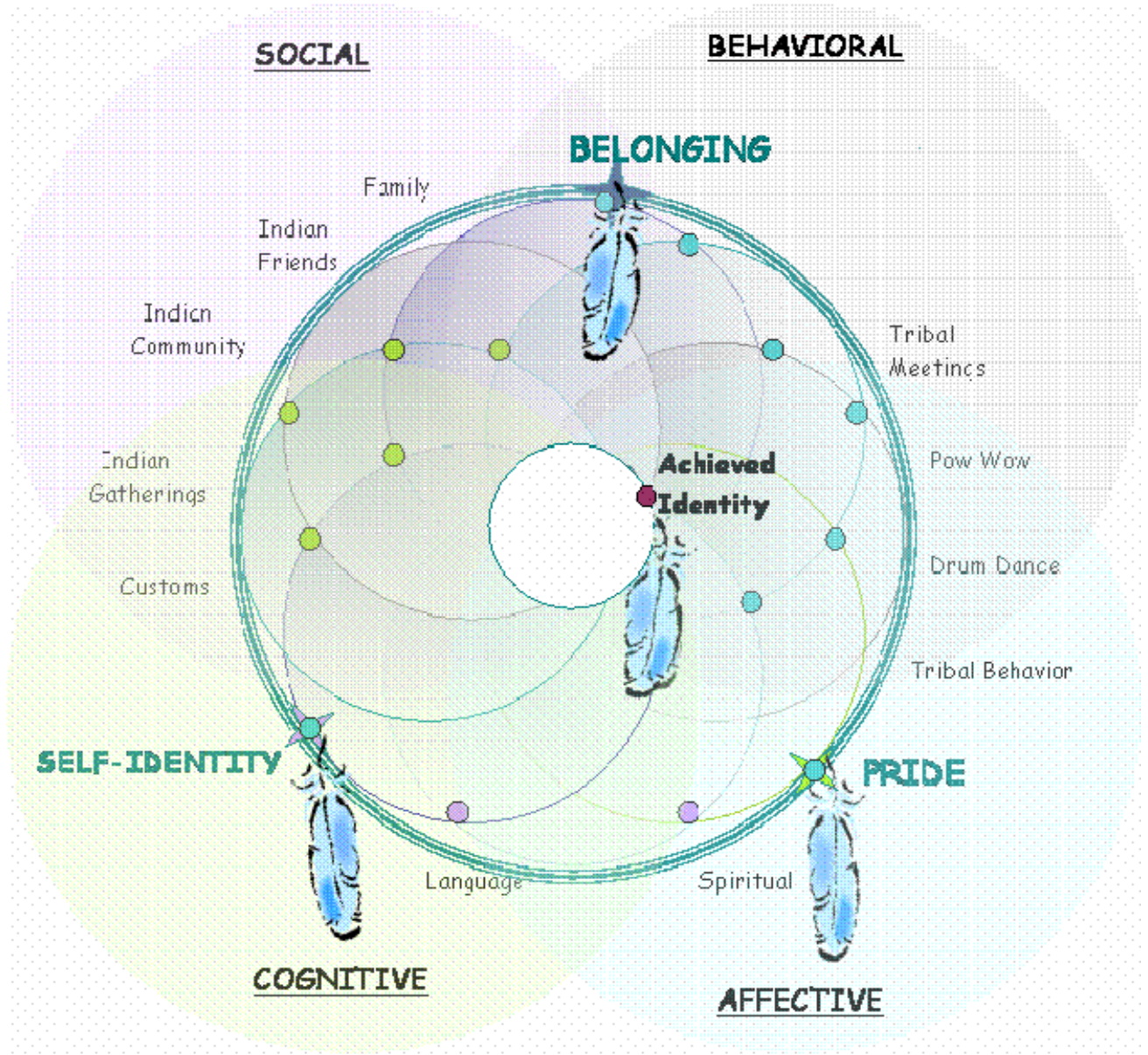
Diversity is increasing on college campuses and learning about it is essential. The majority of the participants found that it was very important to promote an interracial understanding. They also felt that they were fairly open to diversity and liked the fact that their campus environments provided them with an opportunity to learn about others. The racial climate of a campus has an effect on persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The more diverse a campus is, the more likely it is that students will socialize with students from a different racial group than their own. The participants in this study reinforce this contention by Pascarella and Terenzini by reinforcing the point that they welcomed diversity and that was one thing that they liked about their campus. The participants also stated they felt that it was very important to promote racial understanding. Being a minority on a PWI was not viewed as negative. The majority of the participants welcomed diversity that was present, even though they attended a PWI.

Which aspects of the college experience contribute to satisfaction and dissatisfaction with that experience?

All of the participants indicated that they were satisfied with their collegial experience. This positive regard was present in spite of the cultural isolation that was experienced. Areas in which these students found satisfaction were proximity to home, the convenience of class offerings, size of classes, and the diversity that was present on campus. Being close to home was important for minorities in the Midwest who were part of Stewart and Post's (1990) study. The importance of family for Native Americans generally and specifically in this study make this aspect of their college choice an important one.

Specific areas that the subjects mentioned that they didn't like were mostly structural in nature, such as at one college where one student noticed that the desks were uncomfortable and

the air conditioning wasn't strong enough for all of the students that were crammed into the lecture hall. Other aspects were that classes were not convenient or the diversity of classes was limited. One student has difficulty with child care. All of the available spaces were taken, which required her to look elsewhere for support.

Most of the faculty were held in high regard by the participants and some faculty were identified as particularly supportive of the students. Most of the participants were able to identify at least one faculty member who was especially supportive of them as an individual. Frequently this faculty was in the department which in the student declared as a major. In an older study by Loo and Rolison (1986), minorities who were Black or Chicano reported a similar sentiment. The positive relationships that were formed with the faculty tended to counteract any sense of alienation that the students felt. Although no American Indians were part of that study, a similar response was felt by the participants in the current study.

Family support has been identified as one of the factors that contribute to persistence of Native American students. Family support has been identified as influencing academic success of Native Americans by Jenkins (1999). Participants in this study all had family that supported their college- going behavior, which would support Jenkins findings. Saggio and Rendon (2004) noted that family support is important even with simple tasks such as filling out forms, setting an example of success or encouraging the student to make something of themselves or validating the student's attempts at success. Families were mentioned as being supportive with each of the participants. Family importance is validated with the responses in this study.

Family background has also been linked to persistence in a different vein. Students who are first generation college students and come from poor backgrounds tend to not persist in college (Thayer, 2000). All but one of the participants in this study are first generation college

222

students and all of them are still continuing students. Socioeconomic status was not part of the questioning of these students.

In the model presented in the literature review I suggested a satisfaction spiral that potentially would connect with the various institutional experiences along with cultural identity. Positive experiences could be noted when the spiral entered the individual component of the institutional experience. A negative experience would be indicated when the spiral did not intersect with either the institutional experience or with cultural identity. I suggested that when the satisfaction spiral connected with the institutional experience as well as the cultural identity component, a strong bond would be formed.

What has been noted in this study is that both positive and negative experiences have been felt in several areas. Cultural identity has been reinforced primarily with the family and with the tribe. As noted in Figure 11, intersection of both aspects occurred mainly in two areas, the family and the tribe. What this implies is that cultural identity is not reinforced in the institutions of higher education in Louisiana. Satisfaction is experienced in all levels of the college experience, yet at the same time negativity has been experienced. Two exceptions may be noted. At one of the institutions a Native American Student Association exists. The participant in this study did not choose to avail himself of this organization, which potentially could have been a support system. At a different institution a course on Native American history is available. To date, none of the participants explored this course, though one did express an interest. Only one institution was mentioned as offering courses that provided Native American content. For several of the participants there was a negative connection with their culture and the classroom. Most of the negativity expressed was faculty initiated. Discussion of the negative impact of faculty has been discussed and is depicted in Figure 6.

In the satisfaction spiral there was very little connection with cultural identity. On two occasions the class materials contained Native American components, which the participants identified with when it was presented. On one other occasion a participant attended a special lecture, which reinforced her identity and she felt proud. In the formal social area, Native American culture was part of a special occasion at least once on three different campuses.

In most instances when the spiral connected with the academic environment, negativity was experienced. This occurred in classroom discussions on history and in discussions around the casino. In the peer environment stereotypes of rich Indians and that all Indians were alcoholic were expressed. Negativity occurred on two levels: in the academic classroom with the faculty and with peers. The participants were firm in their identity and they did not report that the comments impacted them in their personal identity. What appears to have happened is that enculturation acted as a buffer to negativity which promoted resilience. See Figure 11 for a visual representation of the connections described.

Boxes in figure 11 represent the institutional experiences defined in the literature as well as my proposed addition. The first two boxes represent the formal academic environment described by Tinto (1993) and Guiffrida (2006) where academic performance is the first box and faculty and staff are represented in the second box. Boxes three and four represent the informal institutional experiences, social organizations and clubs and peers, described by Tinto and Guiffrida. The fifth and sixth boxes represent the cultural addition of the home and social system that Guiffrida added to Tinto's original model. The last box represents the tribe, which is my addition to the institutional experience, as the tribe as a social entity did influence the college experience. It is appropriate to be placed in the home and social system depiction in Guiffrida's model.

In Figure 11 the green spiral represents satisfaction when it connects with either the institutional or cultural identity components. When the spiral intersects with the academic, social or home systems there is satisfaction with that component of the educational experience. When the green spiral intersects with cultural identity, represented by the blue oval, it indicates that the experience allows for cultural congruence by allowing for exploration or reinforcement of cultural values, beliefs or activities. When the green spiral intersects with both the institutional experience and cultural identity, there is a connection between the institution and their culture. This connection can strengthen the experience or make it relevant with other aspects of the student's life. When an experience has been negative, the spiral does not connect with either the cultural identity or the institutional experience. As can be noted in Figure 11, formal and informal academic experiences have been positive. There is infrequent connection to culture. The family is the component that most strongly connects the college experience and culture. Support is evidenced by encouragement to attend, pride, caring for children, and investigating scholarship options. The tribe as an entity is supportive through financial assistance as well as influential people in the administration of the tribe providing support through encouragement. The collegial experience is enhanced with this support. Louisiana's Native Americans find the majority of cultural identity reinforced outside of the college environment. The majority of events during the collegial experience do not connect with cultural identity. Cultural identity development is mostly absent from the college experience in Louisiana.

Figure 11: Satisfaction Spiral

ACADEMIC

FACULTY

CLUBS AND
ORGANIZATIONS

PEERS

FAMILY

FRIENDS

TRIBE

CULTURAL
IDENTITY
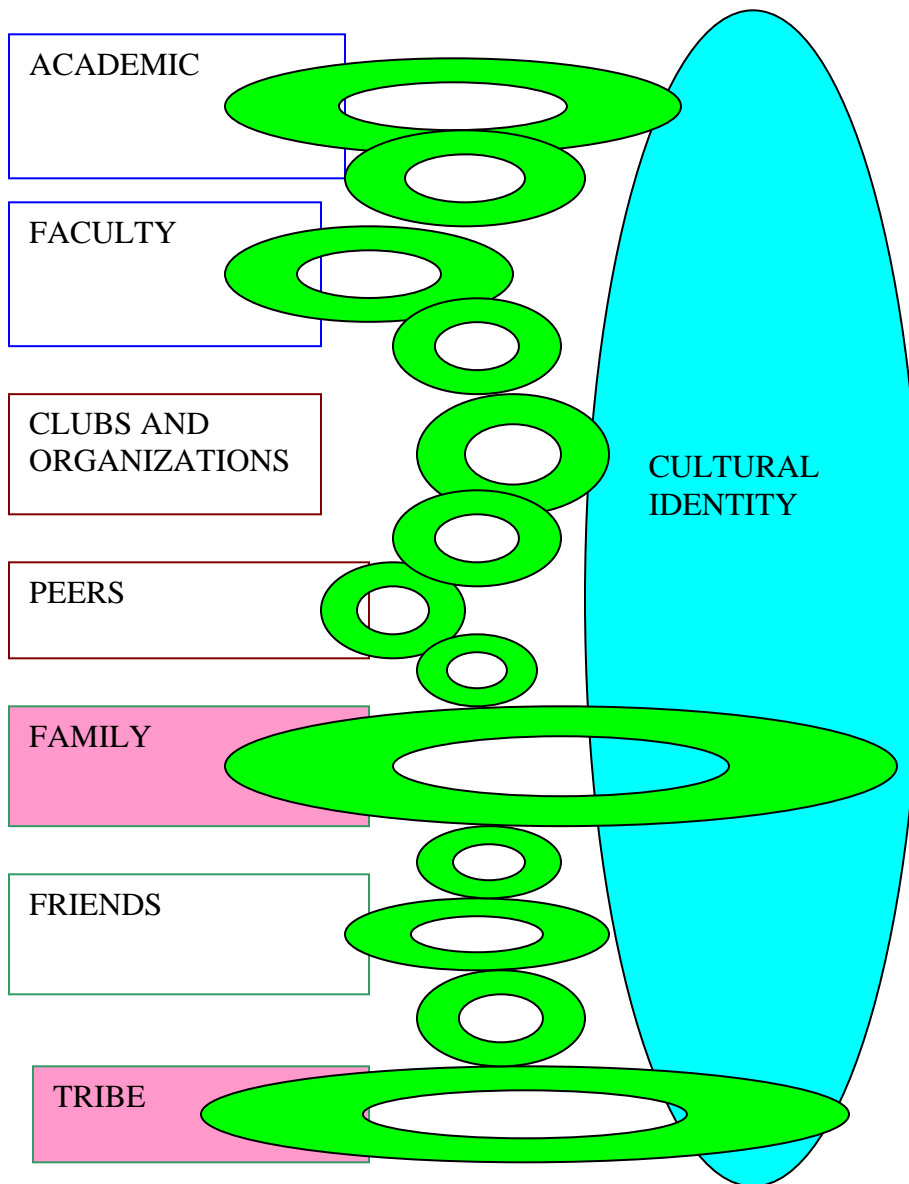
How can motivation of Native Americans towards education be described?

Motivation can be described in terms of internal and external motivation. Each of the participants had external and internal motivators to attend college. Most frequently the intrinsic motivator of competence, or desire to gain a skill, was mentioned. This component was coupled with the sense of belonging aspect of intrinsic motivation. How this was noted was through their long term goal of applying their degree to benefit their community. A sense of pride in belonging to their specific tribe was noted. The desire to give back to their tribe for assisting them, as was more common with the Coushatta students, was one way this sense of belonging was manifest. The other way was their desire to help their Indian people or their community which was the way this was phrased with the United Houma Nation students.

Extrinsic motivation was also a strong factor in the whole college process, from intention, selection of college, motivation and application of that education. For two of the major tribes represented in the participant pool there is a push for education. With the Coushatta tribe this influence was more formal and structured, though informal influence is apparent with the size of the community. The United Houma Nation does not have a department of education, and they are not federally recognized to give them the support they need to do so. Nevertheless, the tribe exerts an influence on its members through more informal means. Newsletters, celebrations and meetings and informal Indian gatherings are some of these mechanisms. Representation from the Choctaw-Apache group with one person did not allow for understanding the tribal priorities of that group.

Participants in this study were motivated to give back to their tribe for giving them so much and others wanted to help their Indian community. This response was pervasive for these students. This study's responses are similar to the study of Native American doctorate recipients

in Montana, where Garcia (2000) found that graduates chose to live in rural areas or on reservations where they could live among their people and help their people. One of their motivations was to give back to their family, tribe or community.

Giving back to the community was also a component of the graduates from Dartmouth who are represented in Garrod and Larimore's (1997) book. This book contains the narratives of thirteen graduates and their perception of their college experience. Eleven of the thirteen graduates have worked or are working in some type of employment that directly supports Native Americans. Although the participants in this current study are still in school, working in a similar capacity is what they desire for their future. Mankiller (1991) comments that there is interdependence among Native people which may be an underlying factor influencing the participants in this study.

Jackson and Smith (2001) noted in their study that Navajo students had strong ties to their homeland, which made them feel restricted in the careers that were available to them. They felt that if they couldn't use the degree on the reservation, then it wouldn't be of use to them. In contrast, the participants in this study found new options in college that they could bring back to their home community. Part of this may stem from the type of community in which the students live. Participants in this study do not live on a reservation where they are removed from interaction with the dominant culture.

Reasons for persistence of Native American students in a large PWI were investigated by Taylor (1999). Taylor noted that students who continued in college had supportive people in their lives, such as family, instructors, advisors and self determination. Taylor also observed that her subjects indicated a desired to return to help Indian people, or as close as they can get with the degree they are pursuing. This desire to assist their people may have been a contributing

factor to persistence and participants' determination to help. Participants in this study do have this underlying desire to help their people however they are able. Education will give them that potential.

Motivation for many of the participants in this study had a tribal influence. The form of this motivation was slightly different for the different groups. Financial support was a given for the Coushatta participants. This by itself was a motivator for the participants to attend college. Their response to help was voiced as more of an obligation to support those who helped them. With the United Houma Nation students motivation exhibited tribal influence without the financial support. In only one previous study was the tribe mentioned as an influencing factor in the success of the student (Dodd, Garcia, Meccage & Nelson, 1995). Louisiana students may have this as a different focus than has been reported in the literature.

Responses from the participants support the conceptualization introduced by Guiffrida (2006) that suggests that motivation may be different for minorities. Native Americans in this study had strong internalized motivation with tribal education values. In addition this was coupled with the intrinsic need for relatedness and connected with the desire to have a specific skill set offered in a degree.

Choice of major is something that was not explored in detail. Participants in the study did choose a wide variety of majors. Babco (2003) notes that Native Americans are not well represented in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) majors. Babco states that this is due to a lack of rigor in math and science in the high schools where Native Americans attend. The students who participated in this study reflect this lack of engagement in these types of careers, which according to Babco are critical with the challenges of globalization, technology

229

and equity. This concern is reflected with this group of participants. However students who were not interviewed may be in these fields or may be attending other out -of -state universities.

What are the expectations and goals that the student has when entering the higher education environment?

Each of the participants indicated that they want a degree and want to complete their education. Some participants responded simply that they want to get a degree. Others want to get a job, and to do so they need the degree. Some indicated the specific degree they wanted and one qualified the level of graduation he wanted, which was with honors. The primary, if not the only, reason these students wanted to attend college was to learn and to get an education. They did not expect to be culturally nurtured, and they were not. Most often cultural identity was not reinforced in the college environment. For most of the participants cultural support happened elsewhere.

Behind all of the goals that the participants named was the expectation of success. This stance of expectation is similar to the strategy utilized by the participants in Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez and Trevino's (1997) study where the participants were determined to continue because of the job potential when they graduated. The majority of the participants in this study had previous success in the high school educational environment and they expected more of the same. All of the participants entered college with a specific goal in mind. None of these participants were undecided about what to study or what they wanted. Every one of the participants was very goal directed. The shorter term goal was to get a degree.

A long term goal was also present, which relates to the application of that degree. In addition to having an end goal, a specific degree, in mind, each of the participants knew what they wanted that degree to do for them in their life. More often than not, the participants wanted

to work in their community to support other Indians or their tribe specifically. This giving back was part of the goal before they even entered college.

Each participant was strongly connected to their goals which provided the intention to attend college. Influence and their own motivation gave them the fuel to begin and continue their journey in higher education. Tinto (1993) admits that when students have a strong commitment or high expectations they may persist in college regardless of unrewarding interactions while attending college. Tinto continues that this persistence may be stronger when college goals are linked to occupational goals. Participants in this study fit into this description.

None of the participants expected to be treated any differently than anyone else. They did not feel that they were singled out in any way. The price of adapting to the environment is that there was little cultural support. If there was an opportunity to develop and explore their cultural identity on campus, they may have had a more holistic education, one that included them instead of excluding their cultural heritage.

Resiliency may be defined as a positive or successful adaptive response in the presence of surrounding negative environmental elements. Identifying which factors contribute to success in the academic environment can be useful in strategic planning to promote persistence and success for other similar students.

Several participants identified that their college enrollment provided an opportunity to be a role model for other family members or for other members in the tribe. This finding was similar to Holt, Mahowald and DeVore (2002) who found students in education were motivated by the knowledge that they could be role models for other minority students.

Spirituality is a component of support that was expressed by the majority of the participants. None of the students indicated that a traditional Native American religion was

practiced, although one did indicate that the Catholic Church he attended incorporated some Native American components. At least three attended a church that involved attendance on more than one day of the week. Two of the participants attended a church that indicated it was a Native American church. Other participants attended their church of choice on a regular basis. Spirituality was a factor that provided support for the participants in this study. Spirituality was identified as a component that contributed to the support that was needed to continue with educational goals. This result is consistent with the findings by Saggio and Rendon (2004) who noted that faith in God and the church provided encouragement to students attending a Bible college in Arizona. The spirituality that was felt in Saggio and Rendon's study was pervasive and affected all aspects of the life of the students. Spirituality was reported as an important aspect in Ambler's (2003) study by Native Americans in Montana. Glatzmaier, Myers and Bordogna (2000) noted that spirituality was a component of the cultural identity described by the respondents of their study. Spirituality is a component that contributes to persistence with the Native participants in this study which is supported in studies by others. Spirituality remains important regardless of religious affiliation. Belonging to a traditional Native American religion was not imperative.

How is role conflict felt by Louisiana's Native American students?

Various degrees of role conflict were exhibited by the participants in this study. Several of the participants felt conflict when they had to balance the role of parent that of the student. Other participants had a full- time job which needed to be considered when scheduling classes. One participant experienced conflict when community needs were paramount and more important for him than college classes. Strategies were taken to combat role conflict, such as timing of classes, number of classes taken, or method of class delivery, such as on-line classes.

At least one participant lowered her level of expectation to meet the demands of college and motherhood. Single mothering interfered with the educational demands of her degree program.

Home's (1998) study noted that income played a difference in the amount of role conflict that was experienced, where a lower income had more impact when financial concerns were an issue. Students in this study did not appear to be in this category. The Coushatta participants did not have to be concerned about financial aid, at least for their college education. The United Houma Nation participants were employed or had a second income in the household, which allowed for less focus on financial concerns for attending college. Home found student perceptions the best predictor of managing conflict. All of the participants in this study had the perception that they could manage their situation through some action that they took. Strategies to manage conflict included online courses, scaling back on hours per semester, or lowering grade expectations. All of the participants indicated that they had family support for their decision to attend college as well as manage the rest of their roles. Role strain as discussed by Home indicates that overload of responsibility is not affected by support. It appears that role strain has been a condition that at least two of the participants felt when attempting to balance the student and parent role.

Four of the participants indicated that some type of family obligation affected their progress in school. Three of the participants had children, one had an ailing mother. Two of the participants altered the timing of their education by stopping out while they had children. Now, they alter the schedule of classes to meet the needs of balancing their roles. The student who had a dying mother also stopped out of school for a semester to care for her. Her priorities were clear. She took care of her mother, and then returned to school. Family obligations were indicated as a reason to drop out of school in Minner et al.'s (1995) study for Northern Arizona students.

Family obligations were a factor for some of these participants, but not a deterrent for these students. Continuance of college in a linear manner was influenced.

One participant stopped out of school to help his Indian community recover after a hurricane. This sense of obligation was to his community, which for him could be considered his extended family. Depending on how family is defined, his involvement with the community may also be put into the category of extended family obligations. Assisting other tribal members was his priority. His sense of community obligation was, and is strong.

Those participants in this study who had employment did not indicate any notable problem balancing their worker and student role together. Each had a strategy to manage the demands from work with the demands of being a student. A common strategy was to adjust the school schedule around work. Both of these roles were important to the students which made the strategic planning important. Most of the participants did not report any change in their grades because of their work load. One student did indicate that his grades were not as high as they were in high school, however his focus was balancing many interests and that was the result which he could manage without regret. These results coincide with the results of Swanson, Broadbridge and Karatzias (2006) whose study indicated that balancing the worker and student role did not create adjustment problems in college. The researchers found that roles were perceived as balanced and did not affect grades. A balance of the worker and student role was also perceived in this study. Swanson, Broadbridge and Karatzias also indicated that psychological factors may contribute to this ability to balance roles. Perception played a key role in the study conducted by these researchers and may also be a contributing factor with the participants in the current study.

Cultural traditions were sometimes a barrier for Native American students completing their course work or not attending classes (Minner et al., 1995). In no circumstance did traditions

234

interfere with the college experience of the participants in this study. Minner et al. also noted that finances were a factor that contributed to students dropping out of college. None of the participants expressed this concern. All of the Coushatta students were financially supported by the tribe. Most of the United Houma Nation students paid out of pocket for their education, but did not express a concern with paying for their tuition.

Role conflict did affect the college experience for the participants in this study, but not in a detrimental way. Effects were observed in class schedules, choice of class delivery and lengthening the experience by stopping out as needed. Long term persistence was not affected. Fairchild (2003) describes adult learners as making the most of their college experience, though they are not involved in campus organizations and social groups on campus. Many of the participants fit Fairchild's description. They have made the most out of their experience from their perspective.

Summary

Chapter five began with the discussion around the questions that initiated the research. Responses from the participants are compared to the literature surrounding each question. Several unique results have emerged from the research. One important issue is that responses in this study are the first that document higher education experiences of Native Americans in Louisiana. Another unique result is the use of a satisfaction spiral to describe the type of connection between the student and the components of their college experience. Connecting satisfaction with their cultural identity also highlighted the lack of support for student development in the area of ethnic identity at the higher education institutions in which the students were enrolled.

A third result that is unique is the inclusion of the tribe as a separate component in the model of persistence for Native American students. Tribal influences are apparent both as pre-entry attributes as well as part of the college experience.

A fourth result is that goals and intentions are strongly connected to both internal and external motivation. Students who are motivated by a degree are also motivated to bring their newly gained information and skills back to the tribe or community to help others. The application of that degree is strongly connected to the intrinsic motivation of a sense of belonging.

Lastly the level of acculturation for each of the participants can be described as bicultural, which is another unique description that emerged from this research. With biculturalism as a starting point, identity can be presented on a wheel that represents the enculturation which all of the participants possessed.

The remainder of the chapter presents limitations, implications of this research and suggestions for future research.

Limitations

This current study is only the beginning of documenting the voice of Native American students in Louisiana. It does not represent all of the possible Native American voices which are present in Louisiana institutions. Some of this voice has been limited by the number of participants. An expanded number may have provided more variation on the type of experience.

Several higher education institutions are represented in this study, yet all types of institutions are not included in this study. Voices from students who attend private institutions or parochial institutions are not part of this study. Additional voices of this type could broaden the experience that would be reported.

Most of the participants in this study were working either toward an associate or bachelor level degree. Only one participant was working toward a Master level degree. Experiences from students who were working on a Master's degree are only partially explored. No doctorate level student voice has been included. More variance in types of degrees could expand the experience reported.

This study was limited by the location of the institutions in Louisiana. Representative institutions are from the west and south only, no northern institutions or mid state institutions are represented in this study. Students who attend institutions in these areas may have a different experience of their education.

Several types of voices have not been represented in this study which would expand the type of experience if included. Students who attend structured clubs and organizations are not represented in this group of participants. A college experience that includes participation in any type of organization will allow the student to feel differently about their experience. Support through a Native American organization has the potential of providing a different experience of college, which was not captured with the participants in this study. Additional voices of students who live on campus would expand the type of experience that would be reported.

Delimitation

By design, Louisiana was the only state represented in this study. Only Native Americans who are state recognized were part of this study. By limiting in this way, other Native voices were not part of this study.

Implications

Implications for Theory

Results from this study suggest several implications for theory. Existing theories can be amended to fit a Native American population. Models for presentation of information can be informative to future researchers. The following are considerations for theory:

- Data from this study support use of a cultural framework when describing Native American students with their persistence decisions. In this study I have suggested framing a model in terms of persistence. Guiffrida (2006) recommended adding components to the existing Tinto's (1993) departure model to be culturally relevant for students. This structure also works for persistence decisions. This model allows for a way to structure information concerning students' decisions to remain with their educational plans. Adding cultural norms and values is useful when describing Native American students. Guiffrida's addition of adding the home social system is also supported when describing Native American students. The same concept can be utilized with departure decisions.

- When describing Native Americans, influence from the tribe should also be considered. Reference to the tribe as a separate influencing factor is suggested with the results of this study. Tribe can be added at two points on the cultural model. One is with the pre-entry attributes. Secondly, tribe can be added as an influencing factor in the formal social home system. The same concept can utilized .with departure decisions if that is the focus.

- Motivation is a complex factor in college persistence decisions. Results from this study support the importance of cultural variation when describing motivational factors in college decisions. The tribe has surfaced as an influence which can be placed as an

external motivating force. Identity with the tribe can internalize tribal influence and it

will be noted with intrinsic motivation in the sense of belonging.

- Satisfaction can be viewed within a context of combining positive and negative

  experiences. A spiral can be used to depict various responses. When a satisfaction spiral

  is used with a model of persistence or departure, the balance of the two types of

  experience can be observed.

- Enculturation can be depicted using a dream catcher as a model. When a person has

  achieved a Native American identity a balance on the dream catcher is present. Values,

  beliefs, interactions and activities can be added to the web. Each individual will have a

  variation to their enculturation and can change with time.

Implications for Practice

Several implications for change in facets of the college environment surfaced through the

process of this study. Several suggestions can be implemented to enhance the experience of

Native Americans while they are students actively engaged in higher education. As student

centered learning is becoming the focus of many institutions of higher education, it is imperative

to address the needs of Native American Indian students as they journey through the college

experience. Many levels of the college can be charged with participation in the process of

making the college more student-centered for all students, but in particular for Native American

students, since this was the focus of this study. Examples would include faculty commitment,

student centered commitment through the college mission and policies, faculty development and

planning for student service events. To implement this suggestion many levels of the campus

need to be involved including the student, faculty, administrators, student services and policy

makers. Several ways in which this can be accomplished are included in this section.

Native American Students. Native American students need to be aware of the whole campus and what is available as they enter the institution. This can be a daunting task from the students' perspective. Addressing various important services and protocols required for success would be useful. Suggestions include:

- An orientation for new students that includes the services that are available, including tutoring and counseling would be helpful. This orientation can include the step- by- step process for registering for classes, dropping classes, and timelines for tuition payment.

- Inclusion in a student community where a group of students take the general courses together and develop a social network for support.

- Connecting with a faculty member in the first semester that can act as an advisor for the student's selected major. This may need to be implemented through the college structure. An early connection with faculty may promote the engagement of the student.

Faculty. An individual faculty member can have a strong impact on students generally, and can be a critical influence for an individual student. This impact was discussed and noted with Figure 6. This impact can be a positive or negative experience. When the interaction is positive it can promote learning, develop self esteem and confidence in the student. Positive interactions promote academic integration into the institution for the student. When the experience is negative it contributes to potential disengagement of the student from the institution. Several suggestions can be made for the faculty.

- Be proactive and be aware of the diversity of their students and implications of that diversity.

- Take a course in cultural diversity as part of faculty development. There is a need to promote cultural sensitivity and awareness of the diversity that is present on campus. Training in cultural awareness needs to be a part of faculty development.

- Be culturally sensitive and aware that communication styles vary between students. Silence in some students may indicate respect rather than lack of interest or agreement with what was presented in class.

College Administrators. College administrators need to be aware of the isolation that Native Americans feel on campus. This awareness can relate to all of the diversity that is present on any campus. Some of the suggestions to support Native Americans include the following:

- Have at least a day during the Native American month in November where Native Americans are given remembrance for their contributions to our society, as African-Americans are given during Black History month.

- Work with the local tribes to promote the institution and ask about the needs of the tribe. Share information with the tribes about how the college can benefit their members.

- Hire faculty who can be role models for the Native American student.

- Make the environment welcoming for diversity, including for Native students.

- Offer continuing education on diversity and cultural awareness for faculty development. A course on diversity can enhance information for all students.

- Provide information on the campus website about the diversity of the students who attend the institution. This can be in the form of a fact sheet and include differences in communication style and other information that can be critical in understanding students. This website can be useful for faculty as well as students.

- Include classes in the curriculum with Native content.

- Identify some Native American students who may have leadership skills to initiate a club or organization to support Native Americans while they are on campus.

- Integrate American Indian history, culture and literature into general classes.

Student Services. As students who enter the college environment are more diverse and of nontraditional age, services need to be expanded to meet their needs if engagement of these students are desired. Some suggestions are the following:

- More students are non traditional and/or have a parental role. Student activities need to include families to be more welcoming to this student population.

- To meet the new demands that the student role places on the student, student services can include sessions on managing multiple roles, stress management, study skills and time management skills.

- When planning special events, incorporate American Indian content as appropriate.

- Support resources that contribute to the undergraduate experience and retention. Staff members should attend courses for cultural diversity inclusion in counseling approaches. Conduct research to discover the interests of the student population and incorporate their interests in planned events and activities.

Policy Makers. As programming for future directions and students is made within the college, incorporate strategies to support Native American Indian students.

- Be active in recruitment and retention programs that include high schools where Native Americans attend.

- Have the campus represented during college nights on the high school campus.

- Be cognizant of the diversity in the extended community which includes tribal entities.

- Hire faculty who can be role models for diverse students.

- Provide services on a campus- wide basis to educate the various constituents about the diverse student population.

- Offer mentoring programs to promote retention of faculty of color.

Future Research

This study has added a Louisiana voice to the literature on Native American experience in higher education. It is, however, only a beginning and further research can enhance the information that was uncovered in the present study. Several responses that were pronounced deserve further investigation.

One voice that has still not been heard is Louisiana's Native American experience in campus clubs and organizations. This voice still needs to be documented. In addition to this, those who participate in sororities and fraternities were not represented in this study. This experience is another that remains to be documented.

Only one of the participants in this study lived away from his home environment. It is important to hear more voices like his to understand the range of experiences of Native American college students. To understand the experience from those students who live on campus, further research needs to be done.

To understand how Louisiana's American Indians experience education while attending institutions outside of the state, interviews could be conducted with this population. Native Americans from out- of- state or who do not belong to any of the local tribes and are attending Louisiana's institutions are another group who could be interviewed for a more global understanding of the Native American experience.

Faculty perceptions were not part of this study. It would be informative to gain insight from the faculty about their awareness of different ethnic groups and how they believe that they support the diversity at their institution in their classes.

A follow-up study in two to three years time could be structured with the participants in this study. This would allow for observation whether or not their intentions are realized. It would also provide information about long term motivation and persistence.

A longitudinal study to follow through with intentions and actual performance would be informative. The voices of those Native Americans who left school are not documented. It could be informative to note what factors were the same and which were different for those who persisted and those who left. Investigating the experience of the students who departed would be another voice to include in a research study. Did those who persist use different strategies, or what other variance is present?

Financial concerns were not a focus for the students in this study. It would be of interest to include more students who are not financially supported to note if this factor alone is strong enough to exclude a contingency of students.

It would be of interest to note if the tribal influence that was prominent in this study is the same with other tribal entities. The influence that is felt may be different from tribe to tribe or region to region. Is tribal influence pervasive across the country with college choice and persistence decisions?

A comparison with other minorities would enhance the understanding of how Native Americans are similar to and different from other minorities that are present in the Louisiana institutions. Quantitative research would also add to the Native voice on scales of diversity, satisfaction and motivation.

This section has offered some suggestions for additional research that could be investigated to further enhance the understanding of the Native American experience in higher education in Louisiana.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the findings from a phenomenological study on Native American experiences in higher education in Louisiana. Limitations of the study were presented. Implications of this research were presented for the various levels of higher education planning. Further research has been suggested to continue the dialog about Native American student experiences in Louisiana.

This dissertation has addressed the issue of Native American student persistence in the higher education environment. Experiences of Native Americans in PWIs have also been introduced. The lack of literature on Native American students in Louisiana prompted the inquiry initiated in this study. Questions about the experience of Native American students in higher education institutions in Louisiana guided the structure of this research.

A phenomenological study was designed to uncover the experiences of Native American students in Louisiana to address the lack of information. Responses of the participants of this study were described and placed into themes and patterns.

Discussion of the results of this study is compared to the literature on topics that emerged. The uniqueness of the responses from the Native American students in Louisiana has been displayed in figures throughout this manuscript. Additions to the cultural model of persistence have been presented. An enculturation identity model for Native Americans in Louisiana using a dreamcatcher model was presented.

Implications for college- wide personnel were discussed that would enhance the experience of Native American students while engaged in higher education. Suggestions for future research were presented.

References

Allen, D. (1999). Desire to finish college: An empirical link between motivation and persistence. *Research in Higher Education*, *40*(4), 461-485.

Ambler, M. (2003). Putting a name to cultural resilience. *Tribal College Journal*, *14*(4), 8-9.

American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) & The Institute for Higher Education Policy (1999, February). *Tribal colleges: An introduction*. Prepared for the Tribal College Research and Database Initiative. Washington, DC. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED462098)

AIHEC & The Institute for Higher Education Policy (2000, May). *Creating role models for change: A survey of tribal college graduates.*

Aragon, S. R. (2002). An investigation of factors influencing classroom motivation for postsecondary American Indian/Alaska Native students. *Journal of American Indian Education*, *41*(1), 1-18.

Astin, A. (1996). Studying college impact. In F.K. Stage, G.L. Anaya, J.B. Bean, D. Hossler & G.D. Kuh (Eds.), *College students: The evolving nature of the research* (pp. 66-82). Neeham Heights, MA: Simon & Schuster.

Badwound, E. & Tierney, W. G. (1988). Leadership and American Indian values: The tribal college dilemma. *Journal of American Indian Education*, *28*(1), 9-15.

Bean, J.P. & Metzner, B.M. (1996). A conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition. In F.K. Stage, G.L. Anaya, J.B. Bean, D. Hossler & G.D. Kuh (Eds.), *College students: The evolving nature of the research* (pp. 137-173). Neeham Heights, MA: Simon & Schuster.

Benham, M. K. P. & Mann, H. (2003). Culture and language matters: Defining, implementing, and evaluating. In M.K.P. Benham & W.J. Stein (Eds.), *The renaissance of American Indian higher education* (pp. 167-191). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. Publishers.

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

Berger, J.B. (2000). Optimizing capital, social reproduction, and undergraduate persistence. In J.M. Braxton (ed.) Reworking *the student departure puzzle* (pp. 95-124). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Boyer, E. L. (1989). *Tribal colleges: Shaping the future of Native America*. Lawrenceville, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Brown, C. M. & Smirles, K. E. (2003). Examining the bicultural identity of American Indian adolescents. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Psychological Association, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, August 2003. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED480493)

Campisi, J. & Starna, W. A. (2004). Another view on "ethnogenesis of the new Houma Indians". *Ethnohistory, 51*(4), 779-791.

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

Castagno, A. E. (2005). Extending the bounds of race and racism: Indigenous women and persistence of the black-white paradigm of race. *The Urban Review*, *37*(5), 447-468.

Chang, J. (2002).Student involvement. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED470922)

Chapman, D. W. (1981). A model of student college choice. *Journal of Higher Education*, *52*(5), 490-505.

Choney, S. K., Berryhill-Paapke, E. & Robbins, R. R. (1995).The acculturation of American Indians. In J. G. Ponterotto (ed.) *Handbook of multicultural counseling* (pp.73-92). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.

Cole, J. S. & Denzine, G. M. (2002). Comparing the academic engagement of American Indian and White college students. *Journal of American Indian Education*, *41*(1), 19-34.

Creswell, J.W. (2002). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Columbus, OH: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Cunningham, A. F & Redd, K. E. (2000). *Creating role models for change: A survey of tribal college graduates.* AIHEC & The Institute for Higher Education Policy. Washington, DC. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED456947)

Curran, D. B. (1995, May/June). No matter what others think you can reach the stars. *Mercury, 24*(3), 17-19.

Dardar, T.M. (n.d.). Istrouma; Houma manifesto. Part four: The international identity of the Houma. Retrieved 1/19/2007 from http://www.unitedhoumanation.org/michaeldardarwritings.htm

Decheneaux, T. & McDonald, J. D. (1999). Biculturalism and Native American college students' performance on the WAIS-III. Unpublished Master's thesis, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks. (ERIC Document Reproductions Service No.ED453463)

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

Demmert, W. G. (2001). Improving performance among Native American Students: A review of the research literature. (ERIC Document Reproductions Service No.ED463917)

Dine College, (n.d.).History. Retrieved July 11, 2005, from
http://www.dinecollege.edu/aboutdc/history.php

Dodd, J. M., Garcia, F. M., Meccage, C. & Nelson, J. R. (1995). American Indian student retention. *NASPA*, *33*(1), 72-78.

Evans, N. J., Forney, D. S. & Guido-DiBrito, F. (1998). *Student development in college.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Fairchild, E. E. (2003, summer). Multiple roles of adult learners. In D. Kilgore & R.J. Rice (Eds.) *Meeting the special needs of adult students (pp.*11-16). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Falk, D. R. & Aitken, L.P. (1984). Promoting retention among American Indian college students. *Journal of American Indian Education*, *23*(2), 24-31.

Fant, H.J., Betz, M. & Leftwich, C. (n.d.).A proposal to improve retention rates of culturally diverse students in the college and university setting using interpreters, go-between, and models. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED400138)

Freebody, P. (2003). *Qualitative research in education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Garcia, F. M. (2000). Warriors in education: Persistence among American Indian doctoral recipients. *Tribal College*, *11*(3), 46-9.

Garrett, M. T. (1996). "Two people": An American Indian narrative of bicultural identity. *Journal of American Indian Education*, *36*(1), 1-21.

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

Gay, L.R. & Airasian, P. (2000) (6th edition). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and application.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Glatzmaier, L, Myers, M., & Bordogna, M.A. (2000). American Indians' construction of cultural identity. (ERIC Document Reproductions Service No. ED454011)

Goldsmith, S. S. & Mueller, T. (2003).Nations within: The four sovereign tribes of Louisiana. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press.

Griffith, N. M. (2000). The relationship between biculturalism and stress among Northern Plains Indian College students. Unpublished Master's thesis, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks. (ERIC Document Reproductions Service No. ED462662)

Guiffrida, D.A. (2006). Toward a cultural advancement of Tinto's theory. *The Review of Higher Education, 29*(4), 451-472.

Guiffrida, D. A. (2003, May/June). African American student organizations as agents of social integration. *Journal of College Student Development*, *44*(3), 304-319.

Hammer, L. B., Grigsby, T. D. & Woods, S. (1998). The conflicting demands of work, family, and school among students at an urban university. *The Journal of Psycholog*y, *132*(2), 220-226.

Harris, E. & McFarland, J. (2000). The assessment of culture as a protective factor among Native Americans: A survey of Nez Perce culture. Paper presented at Annual Meeting of the American Evaluation Association, Honolulu, HI, November 2000 (ERIC Document Reproductions Service No ED449941)

HeavyRunner, I. & DeCelles, R. (2002). Family education model: Meeting the student retention challenge. *Journal of American Indian Education*, *41*(2) 29-37.

Herring, R. D. (1998). Native American Indian college students: Implication for college counseling practice. *Journal of College Counseling*, *1*(2), 169-181.

Hill, J. P. (1994). Tribal colleges: A success story. (ERIC Document Reproductions Service No. ED370623)

Hodgkinson, H. (1992). The current condition of Native Americans. (ERIC Document Reproductions Service No. ED348202)

Home, A. M. (1998). Predicting role conflict, overload and contagion in adult women university students with families and jobs. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *48*(2), 85-98.

Horse, P. G. (2005, spring). Native American identity. *New Directions for Student Services*, (109), 61-68.

Holt, J. L., Mahowald, B. G. & DeVore, C. J. (2002). What helps students of color succeed? Resiliency factors for students enrolled in multicultural education programs. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED473903)

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

Huffman, T. E., Sill, M. L., & Brokenleg, M. (1986). College achievement among Sioux and white South Dakota Students. *Journal of American Indian Education*, *25*(2), 32-38.

Hurtado, S., Milem, J. F., Clayton-Pedersen & Allen, W. R. (1998). Enhancing campus climates for racial/ethnic diversity: Educational policy and practice. *The Review of Higher Education*, *21*(3), 279-302.

Inglebret, E. & Pavel, D.M. (2000). Curriculum planning and development for Native Americans and Alaska Natives in higher education. (ERIC Document Reproductions Service No. ED448963)

Jackson, A.P. (2003). Academic persistence among Native American college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, *44*(4), 548-565.

Jackson, A. P. & Smith, S. A. (2001). Postsecondary transitions among Navajo Indians. *Journal of American Indian Education*, *40*(2), 28-47.

Jackson, A. P., Smith, S. A. & Hill, C. L. (2003). Academic persistence among Native American college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 44(4), 548-565.

Jenkins, M. (1999). Factors which influence the success or failure of American Indian/Native American college students. *Research & Teaching in Developmental Education, 15*(2), 49-53.

Jones, L., Castellanos, J. & Cole, D. (2002). Examining the ethnic minority student experience at predominantly white institutions: A case study. *Journal o f Hispanic Higher Education, 1*(1), 19-39.

Kalsner, L. & Pistole, M. C. (2003). College adjustment in a multiethnic sample: Attachment, separation-individuation, and ethnic identity. *Journal of College Student Development*, *44*(1), 92-108.

Kerbo, H. R. (1981). College achievement among Native Americans: A research note. *Social Forces*, *59*(4), 1275-1280.

Krum, B. L. (1995). Tribal colleges: A study of development, mission, and leadership. . (ERIC Document Reproductions Service No. ED404064)

Kuh, G. D. & Love, P. G. (2000). A cultural perspective on student departure. In J.M. Braxton (Ed.) Reworking *the student departure puzzle* (pp.196-212). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

LaFromboise, T. D., Hoyt, D. R. & Whitbeck, L. B. (2006). Family, community and school influences on resilience among American Indian Adolescents in the upper Midwest. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *34*(2), 193-209.

Larimore, J. A. & McClellan, G. S. (2005, spring). Native American student retention in U. S. postsecondary education. In M. J. T. Fox & S. C. Lowe (Eds.) *Serving Native American students* (pp. 17-32). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

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

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

Loo, C.M. & Rolison, G. (1986). Alienation of ethnic minority students at a predominantly white university. *Journal of Higher Education*, *57*(1), 58-77.

Lounsbury, J. W., Huffstetler, B. C., Leong, F. T. & Gibson, L.W. (2005). Sense of identity and collegiate academic achievement. *Journal of College Student Development*, *46*(5), 501-514.

Lowe, S. C. (2005, spring). This is who I am: Experiences of Native American students. . In M. J. T. Fox & S. C. Lowe (Eds.) *Serving Native American students* (pp. 33-40). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Louisiana Office of Indian Affairs (n.d.). Office of Indian Affairs, Louisiana Tribes. Retrieved September 7, 2006, from http://www.indianaffairs.com/tribes.htm

Mankiller, W. (1991, spring). Education and Native Americans. *National Forum*, *71*, (2), 5-6.

McFee, M. (1968, Dec.). The 150% man, a product of Blackfeet acculturation. *American Anthropologist*, *70*(6), 1096-1107.

McInerney, D.M. (1998). School motivation and cultural context: An overview of research. (ERIC Document Reproductions Service No. ED 419050)

McLeod, M. (2002). Keeping the circle strong. *Tribal College*, *13*(4), 10-14.

Mihesuah, D. A. (Ed.) (1998). *Natives and academics: Researching and writing about Native Americans.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Minner, S., Bizardi, V., Arthur, V., Chischille, J., Holiday, J., Pyron, R., Rezzonico, A. & Yellowhair, B. (1995). Completing university degrees: Barriers for Native Americans. (ERIC Document Reproductions Service No. ED 381302)

Montelongo, R. (2003). Latina/o undergraduate involvement with college student organizations and its effects on specific student outcomes at two, large, predominantly white Midwestern universities. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL, April 2003. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED477440)

Moran, J. R. (1998). Measuring ethnic identity among American Indian adolescents: A factor analytic study. (ERIC Document Reproductions Service No. ED 432867)

Mossakowski, K. N. (2003, Sept.). Coping with perceived discrimination: Does ethnic identity protect mental health? *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, *44*(3), 318-331.

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

Nagasawa, R. & Wong, P. (1999). A theory of minority students' survival in college. *Sociological Inquiry*, 69(1), 76-90.

National Center for Educational Statistics (2003). Table 6. Total fall enrollment in degree granting institutions, by type and control of institution and race/ethnicity of student, 1976-2000. Retrieved April 23, 2004 from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2003.

National Center for Educational Statistics (2006). State education data profiles. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS): fall 2005 and spring 2006.

National Center for Educational Statistics (2006). Dartmouth College. Retrieved November 16, 2007 from http://nces.ed.gov/globallocator/col_info_popup.asp?ID=182670

Newman, D. L. (2005). Ego development and ethnic identity formation in rural American Indian adolescents. *Child Development*, *76(*3), 734-746.

Ogunwole, S. (2002). The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2000. Census Brief. USCENSUSBUREAU, United States Census 2000.

Oishi, S. (2000).Goals as cornerstones of subjective well-being: Linking individuals and cultures. In E. Diener & E. M. Suh (Eds.), Culture and subjective well-being (pp. 87-112), Cambridge, MA: Bradford.

Ortiz, A. M. & HeavyRunner, I. (2003). Student access, retention, and success: Models of inclusion and support. In M. K. P. Benham & W. J. Stein (Eds.), *The Renaissance of*

American Indian higher education (pp. 215-240). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Padilla, R. V., Trevino, J., Gonzalez, K. & Trevino, J. (1997, March/April). Developing local models of minority student success in college. *Journal of College Student Development*, *38*(2), 125-135.

Pascarella, E. T. & Terenzini, P.T. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Paulsen, M.B. (2001). The economics of human capital and investment in higher education. In Paulsen, M. B. & Smart, J. C. (Eds) *The finance of higher education: Theory, research, policy & practice (pp. 55-94).* New York: Agathon Press.

Pavel, D. M. (1992). American Indians and Alaska Natives in higher education: Research on participation and graduation. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED348197)

Pavel, D. M. and Padilla, R. V. (1993). American Indian and Alaska Native postsecondary departure: An example of assessing a mainstream model using national longitudinal data. *Journal of American Indian Education*, *32*(2), 1-23.

Pavel, D. M., Skinner, R. R., Farris, E., Cahalan, M., Tippeconnic, J. & Stein, W. (1998). *American Indians and Alaska Natives in postsecondary education*. Washington, D.C.: U. S. Department of Education. National Center for Educational Statistics, NCES 98-291.

Perry, B. (2002). American Indian victims of campus ethnoviolence. *Journal of American Indian Education*, *31*(1), 35-55.

Phinney, J. S. (1990). Ethnic identity in adolescents and adults: Review of research. *Psychological Bulletin*, *108*(3), 499-514.

Phinney, J. S. (1996). When we talk about ethnic groups, what do we mean? *American Psychologist*, *51*(9), 918-927.

Pottinger, R. (1989). Disjunction to higher education: American Indian students in the Southwest. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, *20*, 4, 326-344.

Rendon, L. I., Jalomo, R. E. & Nora, A. (2004). Theoretical considerations in the study of minority student retention in higher education. In J.M. Braxton (Ed.)*, Reworking the student departure puzzle* (pp. 127-156). Nashville, TN; Vanderbilt University Press.

Reyhner, J. (2002). American Indian/Alaska Native Education: An Overview. Retrieved 10/31/2003 from http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/AIE/Ind_Ed.html.

Reyhner, J. & Dodd, J. (1995). Factors affecting the retention of American Indian and Alaska Native students in higher education. Presented at the expanding the minority

opportunities: First annual national conference, Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona January 19-21 1995. http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/Factors.html retrieved 10/31/2003.

Saggio, J. J. (2001). Family and its effect on institutional choice and post-freshman retention of American Indian/Alaska Native students at a bible college. Presented at the annual meeting of the association for the study of higher education, Richmond, VA, November 15-18, 2001. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED460810)

Saggio, J. J. & Rendon, L. I. (2004). Persistence among American Indians and Alaska natives at a bible college: The importance of family, spirituality and validation. *Christian Higher Education*, *3,* 223-240.

Schram, T. H. (2006). *Conceptualizing and proposing qualitative research.* Columbus, OH: Pearson Education, Inc.

Senecal, C., Julien, E. & Guay, F. (2003). Role conflict and academic procrastination: self-determination perspective. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *33*, 135-145.

Shields, C. M. (1999), Learning from students about representation, identity and community. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *35*(1), 106-129.

Smith, L. T. (2001). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples* (3rd impression). New York: Zed Books, Ltd.

Smith, T. Y. (1995). The retention status of underrepresented minority students: An analysis of survey results from sixty-seven U.S. colleges and universities. Paper presented at the annual forum of the association for institutional research, Boston, MA, May 28-31. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED386989)

Spencer, M. B., Swanson, D. P. & Cunningham, M. (1991). Ethnicity, ethnic identity, and competence formation: Adolescent transition and cultural transformation. *The Journal of Negro Education, 60*(3), 366-387.

Stage, F. K. (1989). Motivation, academic and social integration, and the early dropout. *American Educational Research Journal*, *26*(3), 385-402.

Stage, F.K. & Hossler, D. (2000). Where is the student? Linking student behaviors, college choice and college persistence. In J. M. Braxton (Ed.), Reworking the student departure puzzle (pp. 170-191). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Stamey, M. (2007, Tuesday January 2). Houma Indians face unique hurdles. *Houma Courie*r. Retrieved 1/19/2007 from http://www.wwltv.com/local/lafourche/stories/ww1010206jbhouma.17ae9b.html

St. Germaine, R. (1995). Drop-Out rates among American Indian and Alaska students: Beyond cultural discontinuity. (ERIC Document Reproduction service No. ED388492)

Stebbins, S. (1998). Educational needs assessment of St.Regis/Akwesasne Mohawk college students at the state university of New York college at Potsdam. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED425881)

Stewart, M.A. & Post, P. (1990). Minority students' perceptions of variables affecting their selection of a large university. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development*, *18*(4), 154-162.

Suarez-Balcazar, Y., Orellana-Damacela, L., Portillo, N., Rowan, J. M., & Andrews-Guillen, C. (2003, July/August). Experiences of differential treatment among college students of color. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *74*(4), 428-444.

Swanson, V., Broadbridge, A. & Karatzias, A. (2006). Earning and learning: Role congruence, state/trait factors and adjustment to university life. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 76*, 895-914.

Szasz, M. C. (1999). *Education and the American Indian: The road to self-determination since 1928 (*3ʳᵈ Ed.*).* Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.

Tanaka, G. (2002, March/April). Higher education's self-reflexive turn. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *73*(2), 263-296.

Taylor, J. S. (1999). America's first people. Factors which affect their persistence in higher education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED437874)

Taylor, J. S. (2000). Portrait in alienation: Native American students on a predominantly white campus. Paper presented at the CIC Graduate Research Conference, Iowa City, IA, April 6-7, 2000. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED478059)

Taylor, J.S. (2001). Through a critical lens: Native American alienation from higher education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED452753)

Thayer, P. B. (2000). Retention of students from first generation and low income backgrounds. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED446633)

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

Tierney, W. G. (1999). Models of minority college-going and retention: Cultural integrity versus cultural suicide. *Journal of Negro Education*, *68*(1), 80-91.

Tierney, W. G. & Kidwell, C. S. (1991). The quiet crisis. *Change*, *23*(2), 4-5.

Tijerina, K. H. & Biemer, P.P. (1988). The dance of higher education: One step forward, two steps back. *The Educational Record*, *68*(4), 86-91.

Ting, S-M. R. & Bryant, A. (2001, spring). The impact of acculturation and psychosocial variables on academic performance of Native American and Caucasian college freshman. *Journal of College Admission*, (171), 22-28.

Tinto, V. (1993). Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition (2nd Ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (1998). Colleges as communities: Taking research on student persistence seriously. *The Review of Higher Education*, *21*(2), 167-177.

U. S. Bureau of the Census (2002, Sept. 19). Census 2000 PHC-T-18. American Indian & Alaska Tribes in LA: 2000. Population Division, Racial Statistics Branch. Retrieved Nov. 21, 2007, from http:www.census.gov/population/cen2000/phc-t18/tabu33.pdf.

Waller, M. A., Okamoto, S. K., Hankerson, A.A., Hibbeler, T., Hibbeler, P., McIntyre, P., McAllen-Walker, R. (2002). The hoop of learning: A holistic, multisystemic model for facilitating educational resilience among Indigenous students. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 29*(1), 97-116.

Weaver, H. N. (2001). Indigenous identity: What is it, and who really has it? *American Indian Quarterly*, *25*(2), 240-255.

Wells, S. & Black, R. (2000). *Cultural competency for health professionals*. Bethesda, MD: American Occupational Therapy Association.

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

Wright, B. & Head, P. W. (1990). Tribally controlled community colleges: A student outcomes assessment of associate degree recipients. *Community College Review*, *18*(3), 28-33.

Appendix A

Interview format

Code Name

Age

Gender

Are you currently living on campus or in the community?

If living on campus, how far is your family home from the university?

Where is your family home?

How do your parents feel about you attending college?

Did they attend college?

Who influenced you to attend college?

How do you find college in general?

What type of scholarship do you have?

What is your major?

How long have you attended school?

Why have you chosen to study at this institution at this time?

What are your goals for attending college?

Of which tribal group are you on the membership roll?

What does it mean for you to be a member of your tribe?

What roles and responsibilities do you have besides being a student?

In which clubs or organizations on campus do you participate?

How would you describe your involvement in the campus life?

How would you describe the faculty? Are there any faculty that have been particularly supportive to you?

Do you have friends who also American Indian? Friends who are other races?

Have you experienced a change in your acceptance of other races/cultures since attending college?

How much have you learned about your own racial/cultural identity while in college?

Is it important to you to promote inter-racial understanding?

Is it a priority to increase the number of minorities in the faculty & administration?

How would you describe the Native community on campus?

As an American Indian, would you describe how do you find the campus environment and include overall impressions, the courses you've had, the faculty and student services experiences?

What keeps you motivated to stay in school?

Describe a typical week at school which includes who you spend time with.

Describe the activities you are engaged in throughout the year whether in school or not.

Which would you classify as extremely important? Least important?

Which of these activities would you categorize as being Native American related?

Can you describe aspects of campus life you find satisfying? Dissatisfying? How so?

Are your goals for attending college currently being met?

Is there anything you would alter to make the campus more supportive to Native Americans?

(if not mentioned earlier) Have you experienced discrimination in any way during your college experience?

Appendix B

THE UNIVERSITY *of*
NEW ORLEANS

Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling and Foundations
INFORMED CONSENT
Project: *Experiencing Higher Education in Louisiana through a Native American Lens*

1.   Linda Kelly (lkelly@uno.edu, 504-485-2372), student at the University of New Orleans
      and Dr. Jim Killacky (ckillack@uno.edu, 504-280-6449), associate professor at the
      University of New Orleans, are requesting your participation in a research study entitled
      Experiencing Higher Education in Louisiana through a Native American Lens. The
      purpose of the research is to better understand the Native American students' experience
      while they attend college. Approximately twelve students in public four year institutions
      in Louisiana will be interviewed. Your participation will involve an interview of about an
      hour. Participants will be asked for information about family support and acculturation
      toward higher education, ethnic identity, institutional support, and possibly financial and
      social support.

2.   The study is designed to minimize risk to you, however if you are uncomfortable
      answering any of the questions you are free to decline to respond. Since the college you
      attend is a close environment there is a potential for your responses to be identified by
      other students. I will keep this risk to a minimum and maintain confidentiality. No
      information that you provide will be shared with other participants.

3.   The benefits accruing to you personally from your participation are minimal. You will be
      making scholarly research about the Native American collegial experience in Louisiana
      possible. These experiences have not yet been documented.

4.   There are no feasible alternatives to the interview for this study.

5.   The results of this study will be published as a dissertation at the University of New
      Orleans, but your name and identity will not be revealed. You will be assigned an alias
      and that alias will be used in any reporting of your comments. The interview will be
      audiotaped and transcribed. Your name will be known only to the researchers and any
      transcriptions of the interviews will be known only to the researchers and any
      transcriptions of the interview will be kept in a locked cabinet accessible only to the
      researchers in number 1 above. Audiotapes will be erased after the dissertation is written
      when all reference to the material for accuracy is no longer needed as part of the research
      documentation.

6.   Participants may become tired or have some discomfort talking about college
      experiences. As such, you are free to request a break as needed or decline to respond to
      any question.

7.   Any questions you have about the study should be addressed to the researchers in number 1 above. Any other questions regarding research subjects' rights should be addressed to Dr. Richard Speaker at 504-280-6534.

8. Your participation is voluntary and will not be compensated. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty. Participation will not provide extra credit in any academic course. You may discontinue participation at any time.

Participant:

                                                    Researchers:

_____

                              _____

                              Linda Kelly, PhD candidate

                              _____

                              Jim Killacky, EdD

Appendix C

Greetings;

I am a graduate student at the University of New Orleans working a PhD in educational administration. My research topic is "Experiencing higher education in Louisiana through a Native American Lens". I would like to interview Native American students who fit the following criteria:

- are a member of a Louisiana recognized American Indian tribe
- are in at least their second year of study
- are currently enrolled in a four year public institution of higher education

This study is being supervised by Dr. Jim Killacky. His contact information is as follows; (504) 280-6449, ckillack@uno.edu. If you have any questions feel free to contact him.

My goal is to understand how Louisiana's Native American students experience higher education. If you choose to participate, you will need approximately one hour to one and a half hours for an interview. You will sign a consent form explaining that your identity will remain confidential and your rights as a participant will be explained to you fully.

Thank you for your consideration.

Gratefully,
Linda Kelly
Doctoral candidate
cell (217) 714-8722 or work (504) 671-6241
lkelly@uno.edu or lkelly@dcc.edu

Appendix D: University of New Orleans IRB Approval Form

University Committee for the Protection
of Human Subjects in Research
University of New Orleans

Form Number: 07mar07

(please refer to this number in all future correspondence concerning this protocol)

Principal Investigator: Jim Killacky   **Title:** Associate professor
                          Linda Kelly   Graduate student

Department: ELCF   **College:** Education

Project Title: Experiencing higher education in Louisiana through a Native American lens

Dates of Proposed Project Period   From   3.1.07   to   3.1.08

Approval Status:

☐ **Full Board Review**   ☒ Approved Date: 4-26-07

☐ **Expedite**   ☐ Deferred Date:

☐ **Exempt**   ☐ Disapproved Date:

☐ **Project requires review more than annually.** Review every _____ months.

*approval is for 1 year from approval date only and may be renewed yearly.

1st continuation Signature of IRB Chair   Date:

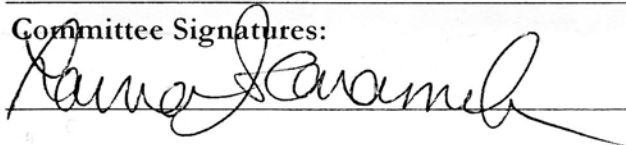2nd continuation Signature of IRB Chair   Date:

3rd continuation Signature of IRB Chair   Date:

4th continuation Signature of IRB Chair   Date:

Committee Signatures:

[signature]   Laura Scaramella, Ph.D. (Chair)

                                 James Evans, LCSW

                                 Pamela Jenkins, Ph.D.

                                 Isabelle Maret, Ph.D.

                                 Ann O'Hanlon, Ph.D.

                                 Richard B. Speaker, Ph.D.

                                 Kari Walsh

                                 Kathleen Whalen, LCSW

Cecil J Killacky

From:	Laura Scaramella
Sent:	Thursday, April 26, 2007 12:43 PM
To:	Cecil J Killacky; lkelly@dcc.edu
Cc:	Kari E Walsh

Subject: 07mar07 approval letter

University Committee for the Protection
of Human Subjects in Research
University of New Orleans

Campus Correspondence

Dr. Jim Killacky, PI
Linda Kelly, Co-I

4/26/2007

RE: Experiencing higher education in Louisiana through a Native American lens

IRB#:   07mar07

The IRB has deemed that the research and procedures are compliant with the University of New Orleans and federal guidelines.

Please remember that approval is only valid for one year from the approval date. Any changes to the procedures or protocols must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

If an adverse, unforeseen event occurs (e.g., physical, social, or emotional harm), you are required to inform the IRB as soon as possible after the event.

Best of luck with your project!
Sincerely,

Laura Scaramella, Ph.D.
Chair, University Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

HSIRB
Human Subjects Institutional Review Board
McNeese State University
P.O. Box 90415
Lake Charles, LA 70609
(318) 475-5753

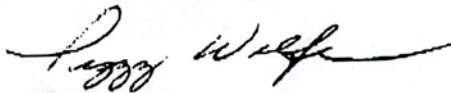TO: Linda Kelly

DATE: May 11, 2007

SUBJECT: Research

Dear Linda:

We are pleased to inform you that the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board of McNeese State University has approved your research project, entitled "Experiencing Higher Education in Louisiana through a Native American Lens." Your proposal appears to be in compliance with the federal regulations concerning the use of human subjects.

Please retain this letter of approval and the proposal you submitted. If you have any questions, please contact me at (337) 475-5753.

Sincerely,

Peggy Wolfe, Ph.D.
HSIRB Chairperson

PW/dg

Vita

Linda Kelly is a full time professor at Delgado Community College as the Occupational Therapy Assistant Program director where she has worked for the past twelve and a half years. She has received an endowed professorship while working at Delgado. She received a bachelor's degree in occupational therapy from the University of Illinois at the medical center in 1971. Her master's degree was received in 1986 from the University of New Mexico in special education.

Her love of travel has allowed the experiences of working as an occupational therapist in Brazil, Germany and Zimbabwe. When in the United States, one of her favorite jobs was working with Indian Health Services and providing consultation to various tribes in Arizona and New Mexico. She is an active member of her American Occupational Therapy Association and has been most recently the second alternate delegate to the World Federation of Occupational Therapy.

Her professional career has provided the venue for presentations at conferences around the world including Portugal, Germany, Belgium, Sweden, Canada, and Australia. She has published some of these papers in foreign journals. She has written a chapter in a book on Native American fraternities and sororities that is in press. Currently she resides in New Orleans with her cat.