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TRANSITION: THE JOURNEY FROM TRIBAL COLLEGES
TO FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Grand Forks, North Dakota

December

2010

This dissertation, submitted by Jeanette R. Graydahl in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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This dissertation meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.

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December 17, 2010
Date

PERMISSION

Title Transition: The Journey From Tribal Colleges to Four-year Institutions
Department Educational Leadership
Degree Doctor of Philosophy

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Signature *Jeanette Grandall*
Date *November 29, 2010*

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year institution. This qualitative study sought to find out what could be done by tribal colleges, receiving four-year institutions, family, and tribes to make the path smoother.

Fourteen former Little Hawk tribal college students participated in the study. They had earned at least 30 credits at Little Hawk tribal college, and transferred to one of two four-year institutions. The participants were all non-traditional students but their experiences differed depending on the institution they attended. The students that went to University of Somewhere were full-time students. Those that went to Anywhere College were part-time. The characteristics of the two institutions are quite different which resulted in different experiences. The participants' stories were recorded using the qualitative research method of storytelling. From the data two themes emerged, factors of adjustment and transition forces. Three categories emerged from the factors of adjustment theme: (a) academic adjustment, (b) social adjustment, and (c) personal adjustment. Two categories emerged from the transition forces theme: (a) forces that deterred and (b) forces that assisted.

Some of the recommendations derived from this study include:

1. Establish a position for a transfer officer to obtain articulation agreements, advise students, develop a curriculum for transfer, and provide encouragement.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the transfer journey transition faced by Native American students transferring from a tribal college to a four-

2. Develop a course in the curriculum for transfer students.
3. Have an education coordinator to be a contact person after transferring to assist the student.
4. Tribal college faculty provide more rigorous instruction and writing across the curriculum.
5. Tribal colleges and four-year institutions collaborate, have an articulation agreement, and work together on other transfer issues.
6. Have role models and mentors for transfer students.
7. The majority of students experienced hardships

The participants in the study had a strong desire for an education to better sustain their family, their extended family, and their tribe. They seem to have "fire in the belly" although some seemed to have had a brighter light than others. Even though they experienced major hardships, they still persevered.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

My story begins in the summer of 1981, when my husband made a job change and we moved with our children to Little Village, a community within a traditional tribal reservation. It is an open reservation, although the tribe retains authority over trust land and tribal members. At the 2000 census the population of Little Village was about 2,500, and the county about 10,000. The tribe has about 12,000 registered members. In 1981 Little Village became our home and we assimilated into the community.

Three years after moving to Little Village, I decided to go back to work outside of the home. I had a business education degree and secretarial experience along with teaching experience in a high school and a post-secondary business school. I looked in newspapers and inquired at Job Service for positions for which I was qualified. I found a position open as tribal chairman's secretary. I knew the tribal offices were located about eight miles south of town but had never been out there. I applied for the position and received an interview with the tribal chairman. He was very kind; however, he said I should be teaching at Little Hawk College, not applying for a secretarial position. What! A college, where was it? I had been in Little Village three years and did not know a college existed. I inquired and found out that the tribal community college was located in relatively the same proximity as the tribal offices so I submitted an application. In the fall of 1984, I began teaching night classes as adjunct faculty at Little Hawk College; the

next year I became full-time. I was teaching post-secondary students, a wonderful position, and I was so excited to be back teaching business classes.

I have been teaching at the tribal college for over 25 years and have seen many changes. When I began teaching at the college it had only been in existence for five years, three of those years it was strictly vocational and then academic classes were added. I have seen the college grow from a few students to almost 300. I have seen it change from having three academic classrooms to nine. When I first started teaching faculty had no desks or space in which to keep teaching materials, so we carried everything we needed around with us all day. Now each faculty member has an office equipped with a desk, bookcases, and a computer. The main building has doubled in size, a vocational building has been built, and a log cabin, which is used for cultural and community activities, has been added to the campus. There have been a lot of positive changes at Little Hawk College over the past 25 years.

Even with all the changes at Little Hawk College, my concern has always been for the students. The average age of the students has decreased from 27 in the spring of 2005 to 24 in 2010, even though the classroom is still made up of a majority of single mothers. My business classes contain a composite of the typical student at Little Hawk College. On February 25, 2008, I took a poll of the students in all five of my classes which was as follows:

- 14% single males (all having children who are living with the mother)
- 14% married males
- 5% married females
- 10% single female, no children

- 57% single mothers

My heart goes out to students, especially single mothers, as they share their experiences and struggles with sick children, being the only primary parent for their children, trying to go to school full time, depending on family for help with the children, caring for family members other than their children, the car breaking down, the water pipes freezing, no money for gas for transportation, and the list goes on. My heart breaks for these students as they work hard and try to overcome many trials to get an education.

On February 25, 2008 I asked students in my five classes why they were attending school. Students shared with me that they were going to school to be able to get better jobs, be a good example for their families, and be leaders in their tribe. I see a desire and determination for an education each semester when students register for school. Attending school to obtain a degree is important to students; they see it as an important asset for themselves and their families.

In my many years of teaching business courses at Little Hawk College I have seen Native American students leave the tribal college full of excitement and anticipation as they make plans to continue their education at a four-year public institution. Some of them persist and earn a bachelor's degree, others return before the first semester is over. Being both an advisor and faculty member in a college with a student population fewer than 300, I get very close to students. When a student shares that he/she is thinking about transferring to a four-year institution, the advisor researches the general education courses that are required at the prospective institution. Together they prepare an education plan for their time remaining at the tribal college. I give the business students my support and let them know how proud I am of them for having made the big decision

to venture on to pursue a baccalaureate degree. I sense excitement in students as they get ready for the next phase of their education. I am excited for the few who return having earned their baccalaureate degree, but feel sad for those who quit and return to Little Hawk College for they did not fulfill their dream.

I want to tell you three stories, each about a different Native American student who transferred to a four-year institution. The stories will be through my eyes as I have not questioned the students about their specific experiences. From my educational viewpoint and observations there are different outcomes from each story.

My first story is about a student I will call Liz. Liz was a typical female student at Little Hawk College, a female single parent with children, who wanted to get an education to make a difference for her children. Liz earned A's and B's in her courses at the tribal college, attended classes when she or her children were not sick, and held down a part-time job working 20-35 hours a week. When Liz came to me in the fall of her second year at Little Hawk College and shared that she was thinking of continuing her education after she graduated with her associate's degree, I was excited for her. She had not decided which school she was going to transfer to, but had a couple in mind. We researched the schools to determine which courses she could take while she was still at Little Hawk College that should transfer to either school. During spring semester Liz started making plans for her transfer and move. She had decided to transfer to University of Somewhere in Eastville, basically because it provided free tuition for Native American students. As she talked about her plans I could sense a feeling of anticipation about the new adventure, yet one of puzzlement as to what to expect. I tried to encourage her and have her focus on the outcome of a bachelor's degree. The following fall Liz quit her job

and went off to school. She did not take her children and move but instead decided to commute back and forth as she had family who offered to watch her children while she was attending classes. Two years later Liz earned her bachelor's degree, and is now working in one of the tribal offices as a program director. She has stopped in my office a couple of times and from her conversation about her job and education, I can tell she is very proud of the fact that she earned a bachelor's degree and, of course, I am very proud of her as well. Liz transferred to a four-year institution, earned a baccalaureate degree, obtained a job with the tribe, and is a great educational example for her children.

My second story is about a student I will call Karen. Karen was also a typical female Little Hawk College student, a single parent with a son, who wanted to get an education to make a difference for her son and to lead by example. Karen came to me, her advisor, during spring registration of her second year and told me she wanted to transfer to a four-year tribal university. I was very excited for her because I knew, from what she had shared previously, that family and Native American culture was very important to her; therefore, I felt a four-year tribal university should be a good fit. I worked with Karen to prepare her academically for transfer. The following fall Karen moved with her child to continue her education at a tribal university. When she returned during Christmas break, she came to the college and visited her friends and relatives. When I saw her I asked her how things were going at school and she responded, with her head hung low and in a despondent tone of voice "ok." I got the impression that she did not want to talk about it so I did not pursue the question. After our spring semester had started I still saw Karen around school. I inquired how she was doing; she responded by saying that she registered for classes on-line and did not yet need to be back at school yet.

Karen went back to school, but by the end of February, she was back at Little Hawk College visiting friends and relatives. She shared with me that the school was not a good fit for her. Karen wanted to continue her education but for some reason(s) chose to return home. She still has not gone back to continue her educational pursuit of a baccalaureate degree.

My third story is about a student I will call Tom. Tom was a single young man, in his early twenties, with a daughter in the custody of the mother. Tom was an intelligent and likable student with great potential and a beaming personality. When he came to class he contributed to discussions and worked on his homework. When he did not come to class, he got behind on his homework and often times failed. One day during spring semester, Tom came to accounting class all excited and said he was going to transfer to a university located out of state the following fall. I was excited for Tom but concerned because of poor attendance he demonstrated in my classes and his lack of completing assignments. I expressed my enthusiasm for his adventure and talked with him extensively about his great potential and that the important pieces for his success were to attend classes and stay caught up with his homework. He said he knew attendance was important and what it would take for him to pass his courses with me that semester as well as the courses he would be taking at the university the following fall. A couple of weeks later Tom quit coming to class and failed accounting. That fall I heard from our academic counselor that Tom was attending the university; I prayed that he would attend class and study hard. A few weeks later the counselor told me Tom quit school and he did not know where he went. Over a year later Tom came to spring registration all smiles and happy to announce that he was going to attend Little Hawk College to re-take the

accounting class, raise his grade point, and then go back to the university. Tom finished accounting with a B and the following fall took off for the big university again. He did not stay in touch with the counselor or me, but we heard from his friends that he quit school. The only thing I do know is that he has not returned to Little Hawk College. I enjoyed having Tom in class, when he was there, as he always richly added to the discussions. Tom wanted to complete a bachelor's degree, but as far as I know, has not yet conquered that goal.

I am proud of the Liz's that earn the baccalaureate degree, but my experience, over the last 25 years, indicates to me that there are too many Karens and Toms that do not. It saddens me to think that there are Native American students who have a desire to continue their education after Little Hawk College but do not succeed.

What is happening when Little Hawk College students transfer to four-year institutions for a baccalaureate degree and do not complete it? Is there something that people at Little Hawk College can do? Is there something that people at four-year institution can do? Is there something that family and friends can do? I want to research the transferring of Native American students from Little Hawk College to a four-year institution to see what tribal colleges, four-year institutions, and families can do to make the transition easier and help students to be successful in pursuit of a baccalaureate degree.

Education

The percentage of Native American high school graduates is lower than the United States population in general. According to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, 80% of the total United States population was high school graduates whereas only 72% of the

Native American population was high school graduates. In 2002, Native Americans made up 1.5% of the total population in the United States, however, only 1% of the total college and university enrollment (Freeman & Fox, 2005). In 2006 Native Americans continued to make up 1.5% of the total population in the United States but comprised 1.1% of the total college and university enrollment, up .1% from 2002 (DeVoe et al., 2008).

Post-secondary graduation rates are lower for Native American students than other minority students. Freeman and Fox (2005) issued a National Center for Education Statistics report on students who graduated from high school in 1992, to see where they were with their educational attainment in 2000. Table 1 shows the percentage distribution by race/ethnicity of the highest postsecondary attainment of 1992, 12th graders who were likely postsecondary participants (Freeman & Fox, 2005).

Table 1. Percentage Distribution of Highest Postsecondary Attainment of 1992 12th Graders in 2000.

Race/ethnicity	None	Certificate	Assoc	BS/BA	BS/BA+	Graduate	Total
White/non-Hispanic	37.3	4.0	8.5	33.8	9.0	6.4	99.9
Black, non-Hispanic	59.2	5.3	4.9	24.1	4.4	2.1	100.0
Hispanic	63.1	5.0	8.2	15.1	6.0	2.5	99.9
Asian/Pacific islander	36.5	4.5	7.6	33.6	9.7	8.1	100.0
American Indian/ Alaska Native	77.4	1.2	6.1	10.5	3.1	1.7	100.0
Total	42.1	4.9	8.1	31.0	8.2	5.7	100.0

Table 1 reveals that American Indian/Alaska Natives had the highest percentage of students that had received no degree and the lowest percentage of students that graduated with any degree except for Black, non-Hispanic Associate Degrees (Freeman & Fox, 2005). Several studies (American Indian College Fund, 2008; Voorhees, 2003) indicate that tribal colleges are responsible for the larger number of American Indians completing associate and bachelor degrees.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau for 2000 (United States Census Bureau, 2000), of the general population age 25 and over, 24% have bachelor's degrees or higher, but only 12% of the American Indians have a bachelor's degree or higher. The report, *Status and Trends in the Education of American Indians and Alaska Natives*, (Devoe, 2008) described the percentage of education adults over the age of 25 who have completed according to race in 2007 shown here in Table 2.

According to Table 2, 44% of American Indian/Alaska Natives attended some college which is lower than all others except Hispanics which is 32%. A lower percentage of American Indian/Alaska Natives completed a bachelor's degree than any other race/ethnicity; Hispanic is relatively close. A lower percentage of American Indian/Alaska Native obtained graduate degrees than their White or Asian peers but did have percentages relatively close to other racial and ethnic groups. American Indian/Alaska Natives have the largest percentage with some college but no degree beyond high school. Again these statistics confirm that American Indian/Alaskan is an underrepresented group in the higher education arena.

There are a high number of community college students that never make it to a four-year institution (Chen, 2009). Some of the reasons are stated as rising costs of

Table 2. Percentage Distribution of Adults Age 25 and Over, by Highest Level of Educational Attainment and Race/Ethnicity in 2007.

Race/ethnicity	Degrees Completed						
	Less Than High School	High School or GED	Some College	Assoc	BS/BA	Master's	Graduate
White	9.4	32.2	17.4	9.1	20.7	7.9	3.2
Black	17.2	36.3	18.9	8.8	13.0	4.4	1.3
Hispanic	39.7	28.4	13.0	6.2	9.4	2.4	0.9
Asian	12.1	19.9	9.3	6.3	31.7	13.6	7.1
American Indian/ Alaska Native	19.7	35.8	21.8	9.5	8.6	3.1	1.4
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	11.4	34.4	21.2	9.2	17.7	3.7	2.5

four-year institutions and confusing transfer requirements (Chen, 2009). A California report states that there is a large gap, which continues to grow, between the transfer rates for Native Americans and their white peers from community colleges to four-year institutions (Wagner, 2010). For economic and moral reasons, this educational gap affects everyone (Chen, 2009). According to Chen (2009), only seven percent of the low-income and minority community college students will attain a bachelor's degree within 10 years.

Native American students graduate with a postsecondary degree at a lower rate than the rest of the population (DeVoe, Darling-Churchill, & Snyder, 2008). More than 60% of the small number of Native American students who even attempt higher

education, drop out (Robinson-Zanartu, 2007). Native American is the minority group that has the greatest challenges of being successful in college. Therefore, it is important to uncover the challenges and overcome them.

Poverty level is especially high in the Native American population and family income is particularly low. According to the 2000 Census, 26% of Native Americans are below poverty level whereas 12% of the United States population is below the poverty level (U. S. Census Bureau, 2000). The median family income in 2000, for Native Americans was 34% below that of the United States population. In 2006, 27% of American Indian/Alaska Natives people lived in poverty compared to 13% of the general population (DeVoe et al., 2008). Poverty among Native Americans is very prevalent in the United States.

Looking at the 2000 Census of the United States for the population over the age of 25, the percentage of people with a high school or higher degree is 80% for the general population and 71% for Native Americans; for bachelor's degree or higher it is 24% for the general population and 9% for Native Americans (U. S. Census Bureau, 2000). In 2007 the population over the age of 25 in the same categories is seen by Figure 1 (Devoe et al., 2008). This shows there is still a much smaller percentage of Native American population with bachelor degrees and higher than for the overall population of the United States, in fact, less than half.

Tribal College Role and Purpose

Tribal colleges were created to give higher education opportunities to Native Americans. The first tribal college was created in 1968 with more to follow in 1971, and

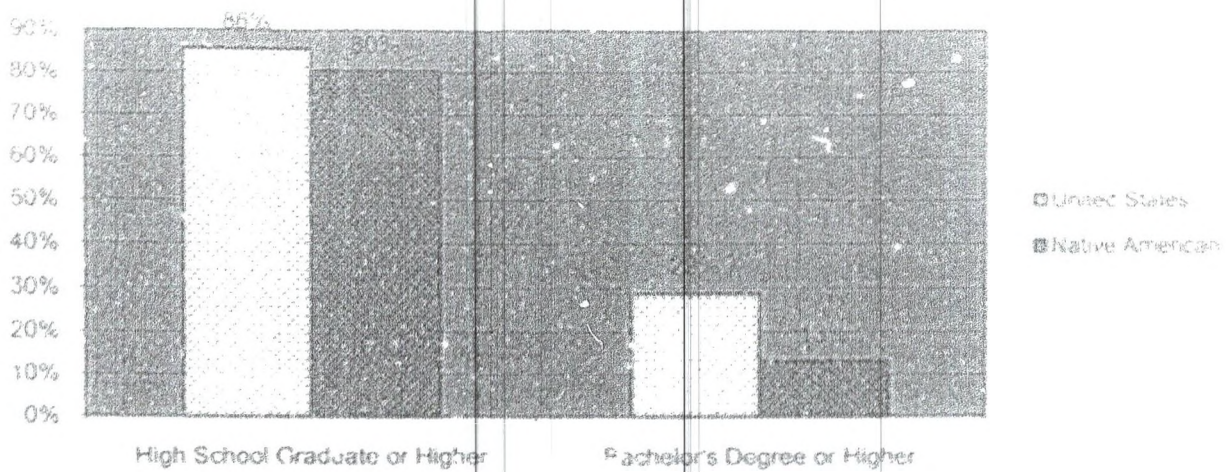


Figure 1. Population 25 years and over.

many more since that time in response to higher education needs of the isolated American Indian living on reservations (*"Tribal Colleges an Introduction"*, 1999). Reservations, where most tribal colleges are located, face high unemployment rates, low income, high suicide rates, large number of single parent households, and low participation in higher education. Tribal leaders recognized the importance of postsecondary education and decided to deal with the issue, thereby strengthening their reservations (*"Tribal Colleges an Introduction"*, 1999). Pavel, Larimore, and VanAlstine (2003) report that research shows native students' academic success is benefited by acknowledging their cultural identity and that "native students are influenced by their cultures to be peer-cooperative, visual learners who prefer to acquire competence privately before performing new skills publicly" (p. 195). Tribal colleges take the time to give students the necessary support, teach to the native learning style, and address the issues that are of importance to native students.

There are a limited number of tribal colleges available for Native Americans to attend. Of the 36 tribal colleges in the United States and Canada, six offer the bachelor's

as the highest degree, two offer the master's as the highest degree, and the remaining 28 offer the associate's as the highest degree (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2008). Because few tribal colleges offer more than an associate's degree, students need to transfer to a non-tribal college to continue their education beyond the associate's degree.

The percentage of Native American higher education students attending tribal colleges is increasing at a higher rate than at non-tribal colleges. From 1997 to 2002, Native American enrollment in tribal colleges increased by 32% while their enrollment at colleges and universities in general increased by 16% (Freeman & Fox, 2005). The enrollment of Native American students is increasing at tribal colleges at a higher rate than at non-tribal colleges because tribal colleges focus on Native American culture and the preservation of language and traditions (Cahalan, Farris, Pavel, Skinner, & Tippeconnic, 1998; "*Championing Success*", 2006). Tribal colleges help students overcome the economic and social barriers to a postsecondary education by providing students with personal attention (Cunningham, Parker, & Parker, 1998; "*Championing Success*", 2006). A commitment to strong personal relationships between students and faculty and a family-like atmosphere are fostered at tribal colleges (Tierney, 1992b). In 2002, nearly 16,000 students were enrolled in tribally controlled colleges, 13,000 of them were American Indians, which represented 8% of all American Indian college students (Freeman & Fox, 2005). In 2006, more than 17,000 students attended tribal colleges, 13,600 of which were American Indian (Devoe, 2008). The number of tribal colleges continues to grow along with the number of students attending tribal colleges.

Since most tribal colleges are community colleges, American Indian students must transfer to four-year institutions in order to complete their bachelor degrees, but at this transition point the percentages of graduates fall. The evidence shows that of the Native Americans starting higher education, a large percentage stop at associate's degree or drop out before obtaining a bachelor's degree. The high attrition rate at the undergraduate level severely restricts American Indian students' career opportunities (Brown & Kurpius, 1997). According to Tierney, (Jackson et al., 2003; Tierney, 1995) American Indians are the least likely ethnic or racial group to enter a postsecondary institution or graduate from one. Statistics are not encouraging for an American Indian to receive a bachelor's or advanced degree.

Tribal colleges are leaders in the economic development efforts of the tribe and combining the preservation of tribal history, culture, and traditions with academic preparation. There are obstacles to economic development on a reservation which include the following: low levels of education, low level of investment, shortage of skilled workers, high rates of poverty and unemployment, lack of management expertise, and more (Cunningham, Merisotis, O'Brien, & Gonzales, 2000). Tribal colleges can offer courses that are specific to local reservation needs (Cunningham, Merisotis, O'Brien, & Gonzales, 2000; Institute for Higher Education Policy for the American Indian College Fund, 2006). Tribal colleges take the lead in cultural values and economic development efforts.

Statement of the Problem

Native American students do not complete baccalaureate degrees at the same rate as their peers. According to Tierney (1995), most studies indicate that 35% of the Native

Americans that go to college will not receive a bachelor's degree. A solution suggested by Tierney (1992) is for Native American students to first attend a two-year institution and then move "successfully along in the pipeline" (p. 19). Unfortunately relatively few students who attend a tribal community college ever receive a bachelor's degree (Tierney, 1992b). Tribal colleges help students to develop the academic skills needed to be successful in predominately white institutions, but when transferring to four-year institutions the culture and values are different and they feel isolated and alienated; therefore, they find it difficult to succeed academically (Ortiz & HeavyRunner, 2003; Institute for Higher Education Policy for the American Indian College Fund, 2006). Students feel a lack of cultural support at mainstream institutions (Institute for Higher Education Policy for the American Indian College Fund, 2006). Little research has been conducted on the transfer of American Indian students. Part of the lack of research is due to the relative newness of the tribal colleges as well as the small percentage of American Indians attending postsecondary schools nationwide.

Purpose of the Study

The existing literature addresses the retention issue of Native Americans at tribal colleges and the general student population at non-tribal colleges, but it does not adequately examine the Native American transferring from a community tribal college to a baccalaureate degree granting institution. There is a limited amount of research targeting Native American students that start in non-tribal bachelor degree granting institutions and what leads to their retention or attrition. There is a need for a deeper understanding of the Native American students' transition in order to ascertain what leads to the few who successfully complete their higher educational goals. In order to address

the gaps in the research for the Native American transfer students' success and non-success, educational research needed to be conducted.

I felt it was necessary to interview Native American tribal college transfer students who transferred to a four-year institution in order to complete a baccalaureate degree. They needed to tell their transfer experience stories: how the tribal college helped or did not help, how the four-year institution helped or did not help, and how family and people outside of the schools helped or did not help them, during or after the transfer. By conducting an informal research interview with students who transferred from a tribal college to a four-year institution, they had an opportunity to tell their story. They talked about factors that led to their persistence, made their transfer difficult, and in some cases led to their "stopping out." They made recommendations for tribal college, four-year institution, family, and future transfer students. Listening to Native American students' transfer stories helped me to understand their experiences.

The findings of this study can be used by tribal colleges as well as with bachelor and higher degree granting institutions to which Native American students are transferring. The information will assist tribal colleges to provide better support services to their students. It will also aid the four-year institutions in determining what they can do individually and in collaboration with tribal colleges to aid transfer students to be successful in their educational pursuits. Some people perceive that four-year institutions recruit students to transfer to their school, but sometimes forget about them after they transfer. "The mainstream institutions do not reach out to them or provide the support students need when they work full time or support dependents" (Institute for Higher Education Policy for the American Indian College Fund, 2006, p. 3). There are programs

and assistance that can be provided for the students to make it more manageable for them to complete their degree such as Native American advisors, Native American centers, and Native American organizations to list a few.

Executive Director of Diversity and Multiculturalism of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system convened a forum in 2006, to discuss Indian education issues on Minnesota campuses. Items discussed were: access and success of American Indian students, and best practices for recruitment, retention, and graduation of American Indian students (Lawrence, 2007). Other universities are asking for the same information. Therefore, a summary report of this research will be shared with decision-makers at interested universities and prepared for publication in the Tribal College Journal.

Other tribal colleges are interested in knowing if and what they can do to support students in their transition to four-year institutions. Tribal colleges want their students to be successful in their educational pursuits, but are not aware of what they can do to assist in that process. The local tribe has already asked for me to share my information with them in case there is something they can do to assist their people when they leave the reservation to pursue baccalaureate and advanced degrees. The tribe encourages people to receive an education and return to the reservation to help in the management and running of the tribe and caring for the people. Families affect the transition. Families can be informed how they can support family members in their educational pursuit. The findings of this research will be shared with the local tribe, my tribal college, and submitted as an article for the Tribal College Journal

Conceptual Framework

I utilized theories and research that are relevant to Native American transfer students because the study of theories and research are essential to the understanding of what is happening with this group of people. Two theories that I felt provided insights for my research and broadened my understanding are from Schlossberg and Tierney.

Schlossberg's (1995) transition perspective "focuses on life events entailing change" (p. 18). To comprehend the transition meaning for an individual, an examination needed to be conducted on the "type of transition, the context of the transition, and the impact of the transition on the individual's life" (p. 35) (Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995). When in transition, people feel inadequate, unsure, and incompetent. If people have enough resources to bring to the transition, they can get through it successfully and discover how to overcome their weaknesses (Sargent & Schlossberg, 1988). This transition theory includes a 4 S System which "provides a way to identify the potential resources someone has to cope with the transition" (Schlossberg et al., 1995, p. 26). The 4 S's are a person's situation, self, support, and strategies which, if weak, can be strengthened (Sargent & Schlossberg, 1988; Schlossberg et al., 1995). The transition perspective is an important change in a person's life.

Tierney's research indicates that higher education institutions need to adapt and build bridges for Native American students as well as all minority students (Bensimon & Tierney, 1993; Tierney, 1991, 1992a, 1992b, 1995). In a summary of the presentation Tierney made to the RETAIN Conference (Retention in Education for Today's American Indian Nations) it says:

Tierney underlines the imperative for institutions of higher education to adapt to the needs of American Indian students to abandon “one size fits all” instructional and program development approaches that are at the root of minority students’ difficulties and to construct academic pathways for Indians and other minority learners in which “failure is not an option.”

(p. 3)

The building of bridges between tribal colleges and four-year institutions are essential for Native American transfer students (Tierney, 1991). Tierney (1995) contends that institution’s need to “develop culturally specific ways of creating mechanisms to involve American Indian students in the life of their institution” (p. 4) starting with the mission. He also provides research based suggestions for students to follow to aid in their graduation (Tierney, 1995). Tierney, Sallee, and Venegas (2007) state that a few Indian tribes provide some financial assistance to their people by providing colleges, but most of them are community colleges. Tribes need to provide financial assistance to their students who move on to a four-year institution (Tierney, Sallee, & Venegas, 2007). Everyone needs to work together: four-year institutions, tribal colleges, students, and tribes to build a bridge where “failure is not an option and excellence is expected” (Tierney, 1995, p. 4). Native Americans need an opportunity to attend a public four-year university and to increase the probability of graduation.

Schlossberg’s theory of transition and Tierney’s research about Native American college students helped me to make sense of what I saw in my research. Schlossberg refers to the transition experience of people in general, and Tierney refers specifically to Native American students. My research was drawn to the fact that in my study of

transfer the transition experiences affect all transfer students but impact some students more than others. The study of transfer involves not only the four-year institution, but also the tribal college, the students, the family, and the tribe. Everyone needs to work together to bridge the gap.

Research Questions

I asked the participants to tell their transfer journey story including transition into the four-year institution. Some of the questions I was able to address after hearing the stories were:

- What are Native American students' experiences with the transfer process and the transition to a new environment?
- What people or activities at the tribal college assisted with or deterred from the transfer and transition process?
- What people or activities at the four-year institution assisted with or deterred the transfer and transition process?
- What people or activities outside the institutions assisted with or deterred the transfer or transition process?
- How were the tribal college courses accepted at the four-year institution?
- What adjustments did the student have to make?

One question that I was surprised came out of the study was:

- How is the experience different depending on the institution?

Implications for the Study

Native American transfer students need to tell their stories of transfer in order for tribal colleges and four-year institutions to understand what support they can provide to

assist present and future transfer Native American students. It is important to acclimatize students to the education world and prepare them for either a better job or continuation of their education. By transfer students sharing their stories, they have acted as role models for other students. Native American students have used their custom of telling stories to help their fellow students and make the transfer path better for those that follow. It is my heartfelt desire to see all Native Americans follow their educational dreams and capabilities to become leaders in the community and country.

Definition of Terms

Native American/American Indian. A person who is an enrolled member of a tribe recognized by the federal government and/or has one fourth (1/4) degree of Indian blood. The experience of the researcher is that “Native American” is the preferred term used by the tribal members, therefore, it will be the term used in this dissertation. The term “American Indian” is used by some of the referenced documents.

Path. A way of life, conduct or pursuit (*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1988).

Resilience. One's ability to overcome, rise above, or recover from the difficulties in one's life and maintain a balance to complete or achieve goals (Ness, 2001).

Stop out. In this study the term refers to a person who temporarily leaves or withdraws from an educational institution for an unspecified period of time and returns later to complete a degree (*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*).

Transfer shock. The lack of success many students encounter in their transfer experiences as they transfer from community colleges to four-year institutions (Berger & Malaney, 2001).

tribal College. "An institution cited in section 532 of the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 301 note), any other institution that qualifies for funding under the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1978 (25 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.), and Dine' College, authorized in the Navajo Community College Assistance Act of 1978, Public Law 95-471, title II (25 U.S.C. 640a note)" (United States Department of Education).

Limitations

According to Creswell (2008), the researcher identifies possible problems and weaknesses that may result from the study. This study has the following limitations:

- The storytellers were all Native Americans who were former students at Little Hawk College. It is felt that these students are typical students from the area but not necessarily from all tribal colleges in the United States.
- Although the goal was to get an understanding of the Native American transfer experiences, the reader is cautioned to not assume that the experience would be the same at any four-year institution.
- I am an instructor at the tribal college which could have caused the participants to not be honest about comments concerning the college. At the time of the interview, I informed the participants that they could share whatever they wanted both positive and negative about the tribal college because the goal was for them to help make the transfer smoother for future students. My intent, as a researcher, was to gain insight in the transfer experience of the Native American transfer student rather than to allow my limitations to interfere.

- I only interviewed 14 participants which transferred to two different institutions.
- The characteristics of the two receiving institutions are quite different with one being a liberal arts college with traditional students and the other a branch campus of a college catering to non-traditional students.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to examine pertinent literature as a means of establishing background and foundation for the methodological approach used in this research of the transferring Native American student. It is important to first study the strengths and weaknesses of tribal colleges and four-year institutions and then examine how that affects a Native American transfer student who is transitioning from a tribal college to a four-year institution in order to complete a bachelor degree. There is very little research focusing on Native American student transitioning from a tribal college to a four-year institution.

The research fell into five basic themes. Theme one is the enrollment patterns of student transfers and graduation rates as found in the literature. Theme two is the tribal college, its strengths and weaknesses and how these affect the transfer issue. Theme three is the four-year institution, its strengths and weaknesses and how these affect the transfer student. Theme four is the student factors which affect the persistence, attrition, and transfer issues for students. Theme five is the recommendations, according to the literature, for the tribal college, the four-year institution, the student, and others in order to make the transition to the four-year institution a smooth and successful one.

Theme One: Enrollment Patterns

There are fewer Native American students persisting in colleges and/or graduating than non-Native Americans (Tate & Schwartz, 1993). Native American students who first attend a tribal college are four times more likely to complete their bachelor's degree after they transfer to a four-year institution than those who initially start in a four-year institution as freshmen (Boyer, 1997). The attrition rate for Native American students who do not first attend a tribal college is as high as 50 to 75% (Braithwaite, 1997). Of all the racial or ethnic groups, Native Americans are the least likely to enter higher education or earn a baccalaureate degree (Tierney, 1995). In order to assist tribal college students to obtain baccalaureate degrees, it is necessary to investigate what is happening at tribal colleges and the four-year institutions that the students are transferring to and research recommendations.

Theme Two: Tribal Colleges

Strengths

The foundation of the tribal college system, according to an activist interviewed by Talahongva (2010), is the comingling of the Western education and the traditional values. Native American students are taught how the Western education is connected to the tribal "experiences and knowledge of the traditional and contemporary worlds" (Braithwaite, 1997, p. 20). Students are taught that it is their responsibility to be successful and productive for they have a unique place in the world (Braithwaite, 1997). They are made aware of the fact that not only is education important to assist them in achieving their goals but also to assist them in problems they may encounter along the way (Braithwaite, 1997). Tribal colleges, like community colleges, play a significant

role in the national system of higher education (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1998; Talahongva, 2010). Preparing students for transfer is a major piece of that role (Harbin, 1997).

The Family Education Model was developed to examine why some Indian students stay in college and others drop out. It was developed by five institutions: Fort Peck Community College, Stone Child College, Salish Kootenai College, Blackfeet Community College, and the University of Montana, the director was Iris HeavyRunner. As of 2003, it was being used by four tribal colleges in Montana (HeavyRunner, Murray, & Shanley, 2003). It promotes family resilience through a) cultural/family activities; b) counseling; c) mentoring; and d) life-skills (Mainor, 2001). Since family support is a student's primary source of strength, the student's family, including spouse and children, are regularly invited to be included in social and sports activities. In this way, the entire family develops a part ownership in the college and are not resentful of the time that the student spends on campus (HeavyRunner & DeCelles, 2002). Some of the activities that Fort Peck Community College is getting involved in is sponsoring round dances, pow-wows, and storytelling as well as workshops on stress management, parenting skills, anger management and the Seven Laws of Life. The Seven Laws of Life are "generosity, compassion, respect for others, patience, open-mindedness, humility, and courage" (Mainor, 2001, p. 11). Another tribal college is energizing the educational experience by developing learning communities and cohort groups which provide peer support. The personal interaction with students and their families allows teachers, counselors, and tutors to identify problems early and deal with them head on. The Family Education

Model tackles issues and obstacles for student success (Hernandez, 2006). The tribal colleges show by their efforts that they care about students.

Because tribal colleges are small, they can function culturally as a family and address the basic needs of students necessary for them to remain in class (Hernandez, 2006). Students surveyed at 24 tribal colleges said that there is warmth and encouragement that is felt from both faculty and staff and that is "the real key to success" (Boyer, 1997). They can instill in students the significance of an education, how it will serve them and their family, the problems that may be encountered, and their responsibility to be productive and successful in life (Braithwaite, 1997). The tribal college faculty, students, and staff develop a closeness that functions as a family unit (Boyer, 1997).

Boyer (1997) surveyed over 1600 students in 24 tribal colleges. The following was reported by the students concerning the faculty: 1) highly regarded by students for their teaching, 2) 94% believed the faculty were accessible outside the classroom, 3) students referred to faculty as "accessible" "supportive," and "caring" (p. 37) 4) teachers even assist students that are not enrolled in their classes 5) tribal college faculty emerge as "heroic figures" (p. 37). Students indicated by their survey responses that the facilities were the weakest link of the college (Boyer, 1997). Their highest rated wants were: campus housing, better security, recreational facilities, water fountains, and control of the heat (Boyer, 1997). Boyer's survey of 24 tribal colleges projects a good representation since in 1997 there were only 31 tribal colleges, which means he surveyed more than 75 % of them.

There is a lack of research for tribal colleges therefore it is necessary to look at non-tribal/mainstream community college research. There will be some differences and some similarities but in most cases is the best comparison. Both types of colleges work closely with the community, have a focus on instruction rather than research, have comparable issues, have remediation available, and have a curriculum tailored to the specific needs of the surrounding communities. Both have a student body that is slightly older, working, and may have a family. Community college faculty will search out a student having difficulties where a four-year institution faculty is reluctant to give direct assistance to a student who "lacks appropriate academic background" (Townsend, 1995). Faculty are often accused of coddling students, but without this help many students may never reach the level of being able to transfer (Carlan, 2000). Community college faculty have positive interaction with students which directly affects the students' academic achievement, intellectual development, and career exploration (Volkwein, King, & Terenzini, 1986). While the faculty at community colleges mean well, sometimes they are too indulgent with the students.

Native Americans often times grow up being confused about their heritage not knowing if it is good or bad to be Native American. Tribal colleges are a safe place for students to go to begin higher education and learn about their heritage, improve their self-esteem, and blossom (Boyer, 1997; Ness, 2001). At a tribal college students can receive individual attention and support, be provided with culturally relevant services and instruction, and receive the extra support that is needed to assist them in earning a good general studies education (Ambler, 1999; Fox, 2006; Ness, 2001). A tribal college experience will help to prepare Native American students for transfer to a four-year

institution to complete another degree as well as ensure that students are well grounded in their native history and cultures so they can serve as leaders in the tribal community (Boyer, 2003).

Weaknesses

Most community colleges, as well as tribal colleges, have open enrollment thereby accepting lower achievement levels for entrance which often times requires students to enroll in some foundation courses or receive special help from faculty or learning centers (Lee & Frank, 1990). As a result of the less academically prepared student, community college faculty lower the standards to reach the students rather than teaching at a college pace and preparing students for competition at a four-year institution (Townsend, 1995). In some cases the degree program requirements are reduced to better fit the lower achieving student (Grubb, 1991). Community college faculty are accused of excessively coddling and enabling students by lowering standards, being too tolerant of ineffective behaviors, and watering down course content which is detrimental to the transfer student (Carlan, 2000). There is concern that the faculty are not properly preparing students for the upper level division courses (Lee & Frank, 1990; Townsend, 2001).

Operating funds are always an issue with tribal colleges. Because of limited funds, tribal colleges do not have a good system for data-gathering in order to provide a complete profile of their students (Boyer, 1997). Tribal colleges have a limited variety of courses and degrees because of funding (Boyer, 1997).

Transfer Issues

One of the community college's functions should be the transfer function. It is a "second chance" institution providing an opportunity for students to attend a four-year institution and earn a baccalaureate degree when they may not have been initially able to gain access (Grubb, 1991). Higher education tests the acceptability of community colleges by the ability of its transfer students to a four-year institution to compete as equals with those who began in a four-year institution (Grubb, 1991). The academic success of the transfer student should be one of the major standards for the assessment of the community college (Glass & Harrington, 2002; Grubb, 1991).

Transfer students deal with a lot of issues when transferring. The credits earned by students attending a community college do not all transfer to a four-year institution (Lee & Frank, 1990). Sometimes the community colleges cannot offer the courses required for transfer (Grubb, 1991). Community college classes are often slower paced and not as much is expected of students. When students transfer to a four-year institution the pace is faster and more is expected of them in order to keep up as well as earn passing grades; most students prefer the faster pace (Townsend, 1995). The transfer of credits and caliber of courses are big transfer issues for students.

In the first year transfer students have a sharp decline in grades. This often stems from the fact that four-year institutions have tougher standards than community colleges and that community colleges grade according to the class norm and do not enforce high academic standards (Carlan, 2000; Dougherty, 1992; Townsend, 2001). Community colleges do not stress writing as much as four-year institutions. When students transfer from a community college to a four-year institution they often lack the writing skills that are expected of a junior which causes a serious damaging effect for the students and their

grades (Dougherty, 1992; Townsend, 1995). After the first semester differences in grades from transfer students to students who had started at four-year institutions rarely exist and have no noticeable difference by graduation time (Carlan, 2000).

Theme Three: Four-year Institution

Strengths

Brigham Young University administered a program for Native Americans and found many factors that led to student success. Some of the factors include:

(1) administration backing including the creation of a separate academic department for Native American students, (2) careful selection of faculty, (3) classes created and recommended for Native American students but not limited to them, (4) strong Native American Studies undergraduate minor, (5) financial aid office working closely with students to apply for scholarships and grants as well as providing help in setting up budgets and achieving part-time employment, (6) academic advising office closely monitoring student progress, (7) tutoring labs, (8) campus-wide Native American clubs, (9) annual Indian week, (10) funding development program (Osborne & Cranney, 1985).

This program resembles other college developmental programs for minority groups (Osborne & Cranney, 1985).

When high achieving students from low-income backgrounds become engaged on campus and in the classroom, they add depth to classroom discussions; in fact, according to a national initiative study, faculty stated that they provide unique insights that enrich classroom discussions (Dembicki, 2010). The Native Americans are part of the low-income background students.

Weaknesses

Four-year institutions can cause some frustrations for students. Four-year institutional systems often label students as deficient when their behavior fails to meet the preordained analysis of the dominant culture's view of persistence (Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman, 1993). When minority students enter a four-year institution at the beginning of their journey, rather than going to a community college first and then transferring, their grades are usually lower and their chances for success are less (Carlan, 2000). Students become frustrated when the institution fails to accommodate their Native American culture (Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman, 1993; Institute for Higher Education Policy for the American Indian College Fund, 2006).

There are a lot of frustrations the transfer student faces when transferring from a community college to a four-year institution. The four-year institution expends little effort to facilitate the transferee and often times ignores and neglects him/her compared to the effort exerted on the freshman student (Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Sometimes four-year institutions do not accept all the community college credits a student has earned and also limits the number of credits that can be transferred into a program (Dougherty, 1992). Orientation programs to school, clubs, and organizations are provided for freshman students at four-year institutions but are very seldom provided for transfer students (Dougherty, 1992). The minority student entering a four-year institution has even more frustrations. The typical four-year institution has a small minority population which often times causes some racial tension (Dougherty, 1992). The transferee experiences stressful situations which need to be faced and overcome in order to be successful at a four-year institution.

Theme Four: Student Factors

Persistence and Student Success

There are a number of factors that contribute to Native American students persisting in college. Some of these factors are family support, structured social support, faculty/staff warmth, exposure to college and vocations, developing independence and assertiveness, and reliance on spiritual resources (Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003). The desire to receive an education and return to the reservation to help their people is another driving force for them to continue with their education (McKinley & Brayboy, 2004). That desire includes helping family, friends, and tribe. Indian culture is that education is not for personal and financial status but how it will raise the level of family members, and how it will make a difference for the tribe (E. Lawrence, personal communication, October 27, 2010). When a student makes a commitment early to attend college, the proficiency for success is enhanced (Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman, 1993). Cultural heritage is to have a vision and work to reach that vision one day at a time; every day keeping that vision in mind and every day getting a little closer (E. Lawrence, personal communication, October 27, 2010). A Native American student must make a heartfelt commitment to him/herself and family in order to persist in college.

People and activities can help the Native American student to persist. Family support and encouragement by family members is valuable for all college students. This includes financial support (Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003; Ness, 2001; Institute for Higher Education Policy for the American Indian College Fund, 2006). Structural support such as Native American clubs, multicultural offices, and clubs provide needed social support (Brown & Kurpius, 1997; Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003). This includes participation both

on and off campus in cultural activities (Ness, 2001). Falk and Aitken's (1984) research showed Native American students ranked Indian student organizations as the third most significant factor that contributed to their retention. Student participation and engagement in these activities is a predictor of their success in college (Kinzie & Kuh, 2004). It takes a variety of people and activities both on and off campus to assist the student in being persistent.

A warm and positive staff/faculty relationship provides Native American students with the confidence to ask questions about the institution or help with an assignment. This rapport and trusting relationship needs to be established early because it provides an important personal connection to the college (Brown & Kurpius, 1997; Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004). Faculty practicing an open-door policy to welcome students and providing individualized help worked well at Brigham Young University (Osborne & Cranney, 1985). When a positive interaction takes place between faculty and student, there is progress in the student's career and intellectual development. Problem solving skills increase because there is a sense of caring. Students reported that if they have some faculty feedback they will work harder to meet that faculty's expectations (Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004). In an ethnographic study conducted by McKinley and Brayboy (2004) a student indicated that she protected her cultural integrity by not asking questions in class but rather by visiting with professors during office hours. Before she visited the faculty person she would write out the questions and then tell the professor that she was just checking to see if she understood the issue correctly, thereby creating a conversation with the professor and being able to excel academically (McKinley & Brayboy, 2004). Native American faculty and staff were considered by a

group of Native American students to be the most significant factor for student retention with special counseling programs being the second (Falk & Aitken, 1984). Supportive relations with faculty provide students with self assurance to aid them in remaining in school.

Students found it important to have exposure to college and experiences before they actually enroll and attend the institution (Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003; Osborne & Cranney, 1985). Orientation programs or a special class were listed by minority students as an indicator of transfer success (Harbin, 1997).

Development of independence and assertiveness is important for retention of college students. Native American students reported in Jackson's (Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003) research that they had to shift to being more independent which was not easy since they had to try to stay connected with their home and community and yet not feel bound by it. They also had to adapt to the dominant culture since they were the minorities. Jackson, Smith and Hill reported (2003) "Our findings offer general support for the idea that confidence and self-efficacy, based on experiences that lead to more independent and assertive attitudes, are related to academic persistence" (p. 555).

The reliance on spiritual resources and traditional cultural practices, for some students, is a significant resource of strength in finishing their education (Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003). That traditional cultural practice caused a student to walk the long route to classes rather than the shorter one so she was visible by fewer people and did not have to hang out with others, be stared at, or answer questions about her reservation (McKinley & Brayboy, 2004).

Barriers to Retention

It is difficult for Native American families to provide moral support. Many years ago education was the primary weapon used to directly assault the native language, religion, culture and rational practices. Children were taken from their homes and sent to boarding schools. Dr. Elden Lawrence (personal communication, October 27, 2010) said "Because of the boarding schools, grandparents and great-grandparents are not as encouraging about their children going off to school, some feel the education system educates their children away from the native culture." To some extent, all Indians have a historical distrust for government and educational institutions (Lawrence, 2007). Often times family members have not personally experienced college life and, therefore, have difficulty understanding the commitment that is required to complete class work. There are times when this commitment may mean not being around for important famil, and cultural events (Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003; Osborne & Cranney, 1985). Families may insist the student return home for a special ceremony or event which could mean missing a class or even an exam (Tierney, 1991). Students' culture draws them back to their roots rather than pushing them forward which causes confusion for the students and they end up with a "foot in each culture" (p. 613) until they cut those roots (Tierney, 1992a).

E. Lawrence shared (personal communication, October 27, 2010) Indians place a high value on their relatives and people; family concerns take precedence. Mainor (2001) found that at Fort Peck Community College students indicated that "family problems" was the main reason they left college because without the family support, "the already difficult pathway to self-improvement can become a rocky road" (p. 10). Other family issues that require students to "stop out" is the need to get a job in order to financially

support their family, the lack of reliable child care, inadequate transportation, alcoholism, drug abuse, and domestic violence (HeavyRunner & DeCelles, 2002; Tate & Schwartz, 1993). None of the 15 students in the Jackson, Smith, and Hill (2003) survey went straight through their academic career without attending at least two schools or without "stopping out" for a period of time to help family or address personal needs. Families want to support their students but often times, without realizing it, make it difficult for them.

In 1990 Indian reservations had some of the worst poverty in the United States with 80% unemployment (Tierney, 1991). In 2002 the poverty rate on the reservations was 60% which is three times the national average (Ambler, 1999). Indian reservations continue to exist as poverty pockets in an affluent mainstream society; Indian families constantly struggle with meeting physiological needs (Lawrence, 2007). The poverty rate goes hand in hand with a self-destructive behavior (Ambler, 1999). Students indicated that alcohol is a problem for Native Americans which has resulted from unemployment and always being put down because of their race (Tierney, 1991). "While education can be a hope of the future, most Indian people don't realize how it can be a means for having choices and a way out of their hopelessness" (Lawrence, 2007, p. 16)

Native American students face some serious roadblocks. Study habits, time management, and lack of preparation are often times inadequate along with not having any long range goals (Osborne & Cranney, 1985). Some students are unwilling to meet the demands of higher education while others find that higher education is not appealing to them (Tinto, 1982). Transfer students often feel academically unprepared for a four-year institution and that the faculty require more writing, both for assignments and for

tests (Townsend, 1995). A lack of proper preparation for college rigor causes frustration for students (Tierney, 1991). E. Lawrence (personal communication, October 27, 2010) stated that the American Indian takes one day at a time, each day has its share of problems and they face them day by day. It is these daily problems that can be an obstacle for education. All these roadblocks become hurdles for students; some students cannot make the climb.

Both active and passive racism is experienced by Native Americans. Passive racism occurs when the student is ignored or singled out in a class which leads to isolation or social pressure. Often times the offenders are prejudiced out of ignorance of the customs and cultures of Native Americans. Some cultural customs are not looking directly into someone's eyes, respect for elders, and not bringing attention to oneself by raising your hand or answering questions. Active racism examples are a campus climate that is hostile and not accommodating to minorities. An example is when instructors or fellow students are discussing Native American history and/or culture and are inaccurate or are degrading to Native Americans (Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003). Racism and hostility issues cause Native American students to forego an education and go back home (Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman, 1993; Kanu, 2006; Tierney, 1991).

Being in a non-tribal college, a Native American student will feel isolated and lonely as well as being a target for hostility (Institute for Higher Education Policy for the American Indian College Fund, 2006). Depending on the sense of the isolation and the severity of hostility, the student's grades may fluctuate from semester to semester or the student may quit school and return home (Lin, LaCounte, & Eder, 1988). According to Lin, LaCounte, and Elder's (1988) survey, 40% of the Native American students in the

sample felt hostility from their professors whereas only 15% of the white students felt hostility (Lin, LaCounte, & Eder, 1988). The lack of faculty support for the Native American student which is found in most four-year institutions, causes difficulty for the students (Tate & Schwartz, 1993).

There is a discontinuity between the home culture of Native American students who have lived on the reservation and the environment that is on a college campus (Kanu, 2006). Students often face pressures to conform which causes conflicts between being successful in college and still maintaining their identity as a member of their tribal community (Tate & Schwartz, 1993). The delivery method along with the pedagogical practices are often times foreign to students (Kanu, 2006). Family and community support academic efforts while at the same time make students feel uncertain about their chosen discipline or profession and the fact that they left the reservation and think they can return and change things (Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003). Even when students keep in touch with their own traditions, they can be affected by the changes that take place in society (Edgewater, 1981).

Transfer Issues

Students transferring to a four-year institution have issues that need to be addressed. It is believed that transfer students are considered as 'second-class citizens' in some schools and no attention is paid to them nor orientation provided for them upon entering a new institution (Jacobs, Busby, & Leath, 1992). Following are issues faced by students: 1) feeling isolated, 2) not knowing where to go or who to ask about financial aid issues or academic advice, 3) not knowing how to use the library, 4) a feeling of starting over again (Harbin, 1997). Students give up one institution for another when they

transfer (Volkwein, King, & Terenzini, 1986). The idea of transfer and everything being different usually causes a "transfer shock" for the student during the first and second semester which causes the GPA to go down for a period of time, but it usually comes back up by the second year (Glass & Harrington, 2002; House, 1989). Part of the "transfer shock" and the grade reduction was found to be from the different grading standards (House, 1989). Students who transfer into a four-year institution as a junior have higher graduation rates (68.8%) than those that enter as freshmen or sophomores (49.7%) (House, 1989). Another source of the "transfer shock" is the higher level of competition at the four-year institution versus the community college (Townsend, 1995). All transfer students face situations to conquer and/or deal with when transferring to a four-year institution.

Minority transfer students who attend a community college and transfer to a four-year institution often times have transfer issues. According to Harbin's (1997) study minority transfer students indicated that their community college instructors focused only on their course rather than the impact of the course on the transfer student's future success. They also concluded that the counseling faculty provided very little information about transferring (Harbin, 1997). Townsend's (1995) research on minority student transfers revealed that the community college studied was not very helpful in the transfer mainly because of inadequate communication; students and other staff and faculty were not aware a transfer counselor was even available. On the other hand, the four-year institution in the study was very helpful and even provided an orientation for transfer students (Townsend, 1995).

Native American students have many grave concerns about attending an educational institution off the reservation. They may be confronted with stereotyping in that most non-Indians think all Native Americans are poverty stricken, alcoholics, practice traditional healing and religion, and dress in buckskins (Braithwaite, 1997). In a tribal college, students can count on encountering relatives as fellow students, administrators, faculty, or staff and receiving both social and academic support. This is not the case in non-tribal four-year institutions (Braithwaite, 1997). To attend a four-year institution it is usually necessary to move away from home for several years and away from family; this can create a feeling of loneliness and cause a barrier for some students (Dougherty, 1992; Tierney, 1991). Four-year institutions are not trying to sabotage the Native American student in the majority of schools, but they are not assisting them in achieving housing, daycare, or becoming acclimated to the institution (Braithwaite, 1997).

Students transferring to a four-year institution felt that there was a different learning atmosphere between the community college and the four-year institution. At the community college level you not only learn from the instructors but also from your fellow classmates as the sharing of experiences take place as well as the collaboration of learning (Townsend, 1995). At the four-year institution there is a more competitive classroom atmosphere and because of the peer pressure students are not interested in helping each other (Townsend, 1995). The student body in each institution adds to the difference in atmosphere. Students felt that at the four-year institution students were more goal oriented, more prepared for college work upon entering, more responsible, and more dedicated (Townsend, 1995). The student body in each institution adds to the difference

in atmosphere. The difference in learning atmospheres between the community college and the four-year institution is one more hurdle the transfer student must encounter and conquer to be persistent to graduation.

Theme Five: Recommendations from Literature

For Community and Tribal Colleges

Family support is a primary source of strength for Native American students. It is important that tribal colleges reach out to the families and communities of the students to educate them concerning the importance of their positive influence and to encourage them to support students that are family, extended family, or friends who are transferring to a four-year institution (Falk & Aitken, 1984; Strand & Peacock, 2002). Students need family support.

Tribal colleges need to provide encouragement and information to students who are interested in transferring (Dougherty, 1992; Herman & Lewis, 2004). A class should be developed for students transferring to a four-year institution that would include survival skills: such as: (1) public speaking skills, (2) coping skills to respond to possible encountered stereotyping, (3) isolation and alienation skills, (4) leadership skills, (5) character building skills, (6) other topics which would be unique to a Native American or any student on a four-year institution campus (Braithwaite, 1997; Brown & Kurpius, 1997; Worley, 2010). The course could also contain general transfer information such as academic advising on transfer, the complete enrollment process, learning about deadlines, and general information for the students to become more familiar with the prospective four-year institution (Herman & Lewis, 2004). The community college needs to provide better advising for potential transfer students and

disseminate transfer information to them (Dougherty, 1992; Herman & Lewis, 2004). This would include providing information to faculty and advisors concerning transfer issues and potential transfer students (Harbin, 1997). Community colleges need to work with the four-year institutions to streamline the transfer process (Wagner, 2010). A computerized system could be developed to track a potential transfer student's progress on meeting the transfer requirements of the anticipated four-year institution (Dougherty, 1992). Tribal colleges need to assist their potential transfer students.

Faculty at the community college can add to the success of transfer students. Faculty can increase the academic quality and grading standards of the transfer classes, increase writing assignments, and talk with prospective transfer students about expectations at four-year institutions (Townsend, 1995). The community college needs to rigorously test students that are interested in transferring to a four-year institution and have them function at a collegiate level before they are allowed to take transfer courses (Dougherty, 1992). Along with this would include requiring more writing for class assignments and tests. Writing is the key to success at four-year institutions (Townsend, 1995). Faculty plays a key role in the successful transfer of students.

For Four-year Institution

Minority students are more diverse today than thirty years ago; therefore, it is essential that four-year institutions analyze their diversity programs and provide minority students with the necessary programs, organizations, and assistance to be a graduate from their institution (Harris, 2007). The programs and assistance can include a modification of the curricular offerings to include study skills, career development, and reading and

vocabulary development. The organizations and programs can be minority specific.

Diversity on campuses has become an important entity.

In order to meet the needs of the Native American and all students when they transfer to four-year institutions, it is necessary for four-year institutions to collaborate and build alliances with tribal college officials to discover how they can work together to make the transition a positive and successful one, in other words, create a bridge (Capriccioso, 2006; Rivas, Perezs, Alvarez, & Solorzano, 2007). They need to discuss what facilitates transfer students to persist and what procedures campuses nationwide can take to provide a healthy experience for all transfer students, including the Native American (Capriccioso, 2006). The four-year institution and faculty need to familiarize the tribal college teachers and advisors with the academic expectations for students who transfer into the institution and work together regarding the transferability of courses and improving the performance of students (Carlan, 2000; Dougherty, 1992; Townsend & Wilson, 2006). This may include setting up a course-by-course equivalency agreement along with an articulation agreement which would cover an entire program to ensure consistency and make for a smoother transition (Herman & Lewis, 2004; Prager, 1993; Townsend, 2001; Townsend & Wilson, 2006; Rivera, (2010). Partnerships could be created between the tribal college and the four-year institution (Pavel, Larimore, & VanAlstine, 2003). These agreements could provide a seamless transfer by including: advising by the community college and the four-year institution, an orientation to and availability of support service at the receiving institution, a program illuminating the opportunities for a student to become socially and academically integrated into the four-year institution (Tierney, 1991; Townsend & Wilson, 2006). A bridge could be provided

through a summer program where four-year institutions invite community college students and faculty to discuss transfer-specific programs that would help to provide a bridge (Rivas, Perez, Alvarez, & Solorzano, 2007). Four-year institutions can develop a strong relationship with tribal colleges and provide information for staff, faculty and students; hold special programs for prospective students; have institutional buy-in from all levels from the president to the staff and faculty; assign a senior-level person to handle the project; fund a full-time transfer liaison; and recruit people to campus with community college experience (Dembicki, 2010). By working together, mainstream four-year institutions and tribal colleges can assist the transfer student.

An institutional "transfer culture" is needed in order to standardize the process for a qualified student transferring from a community college to a four-year institution. The process should guarantee that the transfer takes place in an efficient and timely manner (Rivas, Perez, Alvarez, & Solorzano, 2007). An orientation program could be provided just for transfer students. The program could introduce them to the campus service offices, labs, advisement offices, financial aid office, and counseling center to name a few (Falk & Aitken, 1984; Herman & Lewis, 2004; Osborne & Cranney, 1985; Townsend & Wilson, 2006). The orientation program could also include the following: discussion of the institutional policies and procedures, honors program and other school activities and organizations; discussion of financial assistance and work opportunities, meeting with academic advisors, participation in social integration activities, and hearing of testimonies from upper level transfer students (Herman & Lewis, 2004; Jacobs, Busby, & Leath, 1992). An orientation center could be developed that would be staffed by upper class students, be open day and evening hours, and provide assistance and immediate

answers to all students, both regular and transfer, concerning four-year institution issues (Herman & Lewis, 2004). All of these would help to provide a smooth transfer for all students.

Native American student support organizations, multicultural offices, and programs are important to the Native American student's success. A structured mentoring program that connects an advanced Native American student with a transfer student adds to success (Braithwaite, 1997; Brown & Kurpius, 1997; Falk & Aitken, 1984; Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003; Tate & Schwartz, 1993). Cultural centers provide a safe and comfortable place for students to gather for support and cultural activities (Ness, 2001; Tierney, 1991). Minority students, like non-minority students, need to feel they are a part of a group and have a sense of belonging (Phinney & Alipuria, 1990). Institutions can assist the Native American to be successful by providing support services.

Faculty plays an important part in retaining students. Greater persistence of Native American and all students has been found when there is positive interaction with faculty; therefore, advice needs to be shared with the student as to how to get to know faculty quickly (Brown & Kurpius, 1997; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Tinto, 1982; Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Even a close influential relationship with just one faculty member who is genuinely interested in the student is important to a transfer student (Brown & Kurpius, 1997; Volkwein, King, & Terenzini, 1986). Schools need to structure regular student-faculty interactions outside the classroom and over informal dinners (Tinto, 1982). Faculty should be encouraged to use techniques in the classroom to enable students to get to know each other (Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Schools need

to see diversity among their faculty as students are more comfortable with faculty of their own race (Falk & Aitken, 1984; Kanu, 2006; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Tierney, 1991). Kinzie and Kuh (2004) suggest that faculty “instill a ‘no-fail’ attitude” (p. 4) in order to help students develop their self-confidence and instill in them a commitment to excellence so that they can see that success is within their reach and that “failure is not an option” (p. 4). It is important for faculty to develop a degree of patience and appreciation for the silence of the Native American students “both in and out of the classroom” (p. 4). Just because students are quiet and do not respond immediately, does not mean they do not comprehend a thought or agree with a statement, but rather require a longer response time. Faculty must initiate the communication between themselves and the student whether it be face-to-face or through the use of e-mail or other form of technology (Braithwaite, 1997; HeavyRunner & Morris, 1997). Learning can be fostered by incorporating more cooperative learning activities, respecting the individual, being more flexible with timelines, and respecting that learning can occur through listening and in silence (HeavyRunner & Morris, 1997). Faculty need to have high expectations for the student’s work (Talahongva, 2010). Research has shown that “students learn more when more is expected of them” (Tierney, 1995, p. 5). Providing immediate, in-depth, and on-going feedback is necessary for students to know their progress in the class (Tierney, 1995). Faculty need to recognize the vital role played by the extended family and elders and seek their involvement as well as encourage and openly discuss their students’ spiritual development (HeavyRunner & Morris, 1997). Faculty need training to be aware of the cultural differences, learn about the Native American students’ backgrounds, and be aware of what occurs in tribal communities in order to be an

effective instructor as well as integrate the cultural knowledge and perspectives into the curriculum (Falk & Aitken, 1984; Karu, 2006; Ness, 2001; Osborne & Cranney, 1985; Tierney, 1991, 1995). The administration needs to support the faculty by providing time for them to expand their advising roles, to provide early intervention when students begin to have personal and school related problems, and to provide emotional support (Ness, 2001; Tate & Schwartz, 1993; Tierney, 1991). Faculty need to be supportive of students (Ness, 2001).

The academic affairs and student affairs departments must work together with faculty in taking an active role in educational quality and student learning, for when they do, significant progress is made for student success (Berson et al., 1998; Kinzie & Kuh, 2004). Minority student predictors for success include student affairs working together with faculty to provide guidance, emotional support, peer mentoring, and setting up of study groups (Dennis, Phinney, & Chuateco, 2005; Tierney, 1991, 1995). Social integration could be provided by connecting upper-division students with incoming transfers (Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Cultural awareness experiences could be created for both the Native American and the non-Native American students in order to reduce prejudice and bias by learning about the cultural differences and an appreciation for those differences (Tate & Schwartz, 1993). Transfer students may need a little hand holding (Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Student success must be at the center of the goals for the administration, staff, and the faculty, and all must share the responsibility for the quality of the student's education (Kinzie & Kuh, 2004). Student success is a responsibility of everyone involved with a school from the president to the custodian. All gestures,

regardless of size, cause an impact on the student and can create and sustain a caring institution (Kinzie & Kuh, 2004; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005).

The condition of a student's finances plays an important role in college success. In most cases the Native American student's financial situation is tight and there are little or no funds for rent, childcare, transportation, and food (Ness, 2001; Strand & Peacock, 2002). Research indicated that the majority of Native American students lacked adequate funds to take care of transportation, food, clothing, child care, and medical expenses, therefore a more complete financial package should be investigated (Falk, 1984; "*Championing Success*", 2006). The report on *Championing Success* found financial aid to be a major concern for American Indian students ("*Championing Success*", 2006). Four-year institutions could work with tribal colleges to look into programs to complete a better financial package for the transfer student. Research has found that minorities receive very limited scholarships when they enter a school as a transfer student, so more financial sources should be found for them so they have a chance to reach graduation (Dougherty, 1992).

For Students

Transfer students need to be prepared for the transfer. This starts with building academic skills in reading, writing, and math and leads to being prepared for the academic rigor of upper level courses (Harbin, 1997). Students can begin to build these skills early in their community college academic life (Harbin, 1997).

Transfer students must put forth some hard work if they want to graduate. Dr. Gagnon's formula for success as stated in his brochure for students is very simple, but does require some dedication from the student, such as: "go to class, find help, take part

in as many activities as possible, strive to be a good student, remember where you come from, and learn about your culture and history” (p. 3) (Gagnon, 1998). Students need to take the initiative to speak with instructors outside of class concerning questions about assignments or material covered. They need to form a relationship with at least one instructor with whom they feel comfortable asking questions about school courses, activities, and classes (Tierney, 1995). Abilities that must be instinctive to students is the “ability to take advantage of opportunities on campus, the ability to feel part of a culture without being bound by it, the ability to adapt to a different culture, and the ability to effectively deal with racism” (Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003, p. 562). If an education is really important to a student, it is necessary for him/her to put forth an effort to being resilient and overcoming obstacles.

Students need to have personal motivation and a personal goal in order to persevere through the difficult times in order to continue their education (Strand & Peacock, 2002). Students need that desire, that “fire in the belly” (E. Lawrence personal communication, October 27, 2010) Along with this goes a strong self-esteem and a sense of resilience so the student has the ability to “bounce back” (Ness, 2001). The institution, family, and tribe cannot do everything; the student is the one that must persevere through many difficult times (Falk & Aitken, 1984). Students will have a greater chance of graduating if they set high achievable goals and pace themselves in their achievement of those goals (Tierney, 1995).

For Others

Family, tribal, and community leaders can support the Native American students’ efforts when they leave the reservation in order to pursue a baccalaureate degree. They

can furnish spiritual and financial support to them as well as align traditional spiritual practices with college in order to minimize what seems to be the conflict between college success and cultural identity (Falk & Aitken, 1984; Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003). According to Tierney (1995) Native American families can help their students' college retention in several ways: (1) talking about college, visiting one, and learning about a college education, (2) being a constant support and asking questions about classes, (3) educating the faculty and staff about the culture, (4) creating high expectations for the student and doing whatever is necessary to insure that the student will excel, (5) working with the high schools to ensure adequate preparation for college.

Tribal agencies and colleges may need to get involved to educate families on how to show support for their college students (Ness, 2001). The high school faculty and administration as well as the elementary schools can have a positive influence on transfer students by providing a good basic education (Harbin, 1997). Policymakers at all levels need to get involved to help Native American students. Consistent long-term funding could be provided for student scholarships and for tribal colleges. Tribal council could make a resolution to implement the following: hire tribal college graduates when they return, to assist them with scholarships for school and then later loans for business opportunities, and/or to provide them with adequate transportation in order to travel to school and work (Ness, 2001). When the tribal community and family work together, they can provide an unending amount of positive support for their higher education students.

Summary

This chapter examined the relevant literature pertinent to this study. The chapter contains the supportive thoughts which express the situations that are faced by transfer students in general as well as minority students and more specifically, Native American students. There is very little literature about Native American transfer students. It is important to study both the white and minority students to see what four-year institutions are doing or not doing to help them with transferring and then to study Native American transfer students specifically. The chapter begins with a discussion of enrollment patterns for graduation and attrition for whites, minorities, and Native Americans. It then focuses on the tribal college and four-year institution strengths, weaknesses, and transfer issues. Students are the ones who experienced transfer; therefore research was done asking students what led them to persistence, what problems and concerns they had, and what transfer issues they faced. Theme five presented recommendations from the literature for the community and tribal colleges, four-year institutions, and the students in order to provide a smooth transition for the transfer students as well as leading to the successful completion of the baccalaureate degree.

Even though some of the literature may be considered outdated, it does contain some relevant information for tribal colleges, four-year institutions, and Native American transfer students. While there are some tribal colleges and four-year institutions already doing as the literature suggests, there are some that are doing none or very few of the literature suggestions.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Statement of the Problem, Purpose and Research Question

I have been part of the Little Hawk College for over 20 years, and have seen students leave the community college to go on to a four-year institution. Some obtain a baccalaureate degree and others return home without one. More than 70% of the small number of Native American students who even attempt higher education, drop out (Robinson-Zanartu, 1996). Research substantiates the generalization that Native Americans are the minority group that has the greatest challenge, except Hispanic, of being successful in college (Lundberg, 2007). Twenty-seven years of my life have been devoted to teaching at a tribal college and working with Native American students. I am committed to seeing more students continue their education and earn a baccalaureate degree; therefore, I studied the transitioning journey of Native American students from the community tribal college to a four-year institution. The purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of the experiences of Native American tribal college students upon transferring from a two-year tribal college institution to a four-year predominantly Caucasian institution when in pursuit of a baccalaureate degree.

The issues that are addressed in this study are as follows:

1. The transfer experience from tribal college to two different four-year institutions and how it differs depending on the institution and student needs.

2. The academic, social, and personal adjustments that were faced by students attending the University of Somewhere and Anywhere College.
3. The transition factors that assisted and deterred the students who attended the University of Somewhere and Anywhere College.

Approach to Research

According to Dr. Elden Lawrence (2007) Native Americans are storytellers; Native Americans teach lessons through the use of stories. Elders tell stories to their children and grandchildren; it is part of their culture. Storytelling is an art that Native Americans do well because they have been listening to stories and telling them since they have been small children.

The book "First Person, First Peoples" is a collection of Native Americans telling their stories. It is a collection of 13 stories written by Native Americans to help Native Americans. The stories are written by college graduates telling their higher education stories in hopes that it might help others in their educational pursuits (Garrod & Larimore, 1997).

According to Gilliland (1992) a good way to teach Native Americans a concept is through a story. The story presents a situation and the students discuss it. He says the discussion is most successful in a "relaxed, informal, open atmosphere" (p. 71) (Gilliland, 1992). In his book he encouraged teachers to have Native American students talk to parents, grandparents, and elders to collect stories and then to write the stories. Again we see the concept of storytelling.

Since storytelling is second nature to many Native Americans, the journey of Native American transfer students to a four-year institution could not be fully understood

without including them as a human story teller in the research which can only be provided through a qualitative study. The way institutional practice affects student behavior, and the understanding of how that impacts students must be documented (Tinto, 1998). Qualitative research is a social research design answering practical questions which have implications for social policy which are insightful, functional, and emancipating (Ezzy, 2002). The simple social concern here was transfer issues, which included the transitions that Native Americans faced when transferring from a tribal community college to a four-year institution.

Having the participants tell their story was used as a tool for analyzing their reality (Carson & Fairbairn, 2002; Cunliffe, Luhman, & Boje, 2004). The stories were of a past personal experienced event of a social practice that could be analyzed and researched (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Georgakopoulou, 2006; Moen, 2006; Rhodes & Brown, 2005). The research of the barriers, adjustments, and the forces that deterred and assisted Native Americans while attending a four-year institution will, hopefully, lead to more Native Americans obtaining advanced degrees. The information was gathered through interviews and informal conversations where the participants told their stories. This provided raw data to analyze and to retell the story based on the elements (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). An advantage of this form of research was to feel engaged with the lived experience and realities of the participants and the "truth" they lived through every day as well as understanding an individual's thinking, actions, and reactions (Moen, 2006; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002; Rhodes & Brown, 2005). The researcher takes the lives of others seriously and sympathetically in order to "understand rather than control, to accept ambiguity rather than demand certainty, and to engage with

lived experience rather than to abstract from it" (Rhodes & Brown, 2005, p. 182).

Quoting Serrant-Green (Serrant-Green, 2006):

As human beings, our experiences and those of others are often recounted as 'stories'. These stories and our interpretation of them go on to shape our future actions, impact on our views of the world and enrich us with a continuing ability to review and reflect on ourselves and others. The value of a story lies not only in the detail that is contained in it, but in the relationships and contexts that enable it to be 'heard'. The story has a valuable role to play in our ability to understand the diverse experiences of others and to appreciate the similarities of such experiences with our own. (p. 3)

Stories are a powerful medium to bring about change in people and schools. They aid people to understand values, involve people in a change process, and envision possible future realities from the interpretations of past experiences making it a valuable research tool. Listening to stories, learning from them, and leading the way to help was my research plan and is a basis for analysis.

The lives of Native Americans and their wellbeing, as it affects their advanced education, is the focus of this research. The narrative research method of storytelling was chosen as a good fit for this research (Carson & Fairbairn, 2002). People, especially Native Americans, communicate primarily through storytelling (Cunliffe, Luhman, & Boje, 2004). Therefore, I used this approach to explore the inward consciousness of the Native American's transfer journey by having them recount their experience and trying to create some order out of it (Moen, 2006), and, thereby, be able to help future Native American transfer students to have a smoother journey. There should be an equal

opportunity for all students regardless of age, gender or ethnicity, to achieve and participate fully in school (Lawson, Parker, & Sikes, 2006); therefore, this research shows to what extent this is or is not taking place for Native American transfer students. I now have a little better understanding of their transition experiences and hope to make the journey better for future transferees which will lead to more Native Americans receiving baccalaureate degrees.

This study is about the transfer of Native American students; therefore, I chose Native American students to tell their lived stories about their transition to a four-year institution. Being able to comprehend the plight of the students can lead to making the journey for future transferees smoother and seamless.

Research Design

In July of 2008, I received permission from the Institutional Review Board to conduct my study. I then sought permission from the Little Hawk tribe and the Little Hawk College President to interview the participants.

Permission for Use of Participants.

Since Native Americans from the Little Hawk tribe were going to be asked to participate in the research, it was necessary to get permission from the Little Hawk tribe in order to ask tribal members to be a part of the research. I sent a letter to the tribal chairman explaining the research and asked for approval to interview Little Hawk tribal members who had attended Little Hawk College and had gone on to a four-year university. A friend and tribal member informed me that I should contact the tribal secretary for permission since he is the administrative oversight on all tribal education programs; therefore I sent the tribal secretary a letter similar to the one I sent to the

chairman asking for permission to do my research. After several conversations, he asked me to accompany him to a tribal council meeting and present my proposal. The council members were very interested in my research and passed it with a unanimous vote, providing I share my research results with them.

The next step was to ask the president of Little Hawk College for approval to interview students who had attended Little Hawk College. I sent, by e-mail, a request along with my dissertation proposal. She gave her approval. Six months after my first request, I had permission to use tribal members so could begin my research.

Participant Selection

I worked with the Little Hawk College registrar to prepare a list of former students that could be potential participants. I selected Native American students who had been enrolled at Little Hawk College full time or part time, for at least two semesters, had earned at least 30 credits, and transferred to one of two four-year institutions. The total student enrollment at Little Hawk College had been between 220 and 290 for several years with most of the students in the applied science area; therefore, in order to find a large enough pool of possible transfer participants, I had to look for students who transferred between fall 2003 and spring 2008 to pursue a baccalaureate degree at one of the two institutions. Participants would be asked to share personal stories that may have potential consequences therefore in my selection I had to determine the appropriateness of specific individuals as research participants (Smythe & Murray, 2000). There were 20 students who fit the criteria. I felt they all had an altruistic desire to help their people be successful in the educational transfer process which would lead to more educated tribal leaders.

in the spring, one year after approval by my research committee, I sent 19 letters to potential participants. The letters explained the purpose and importance of the study, asked them to participate, explained how the results would be used, and informed them of the approximate time length of our visit. I included an initial consent form, which indicated their intent to participate, as well as an explanation indicating that their personal story would be retold, and information about process consent. I explained that it was not a one-time agreement but a mutually negotiated ongoing process throughout the research which would give them, the participants, the option to withdraw from participation at any time (Smythe & Murray, 2000). A self-addressed stamped envelope was included with each letter for the return of the initial consent form indicating their participation approval. An e-mail address was also included to which the potential participant could respond. Two letters were returned indicating an unknown address. Two weeks after the letters were sent I had received two responses. I then made follow-up telephone calls to the potential participants. I was unable to find phone numbers for two potential participants. After visiting with one former tribal college student, it was found she did not meet the criteria. Everyone that was called was willing to participate in the research which made 14 participants. According to Ezzy (2002) and Janesick (2003) ten lengthy interviews could provide substantive data to play a major role in research project. I consider my potential participants to be co-researchers in this qualitative study because with their help, we may be able to make the transition a little smoother for future Native American transfer students.

Institution Profiles

There are three institutions referenced in this study. The names of the institutions were changed to protect them and the participants. Little Hawk College is a two-year tribal college. Anywhere College in Southtown is an off-campus site for Anywhere College, a four-year private institution, in Morton. University of Somewhere is a four-year public institution located in Eastville. Both of the four-year institutions are about 60 miles from Little Hawk College.

Little Hawk College

The Mission Statement of Little Hawk College touches on the following:

- providing higher education, vocational and technical education, and continuing education to its tribal members and the community
- preserving the tribal culture, language, and history
- contributing to economic development

Little Hawk College includes some of the following as its outlook:

- to provide quality programs of formal instruction through traditional, extended-day, distance learning, and other appropriate delivery resulting in Associate of Arts degrees and preparation for a baccalaureate education.
- to provide instruction in vocational/technical education enhancing the student's employability and providing the tribe with a skilled workforce.
- to provide public service and make available various resources, facilities, and capabilities to the tribal community and the greater community through library materials, academic services, and media services.

- to provide student services to enhance the development of values and the fostering of standards in the academic community.
- to meet the diverse and changing needs of the individual, the tribal community, and the society at large.

The mission and outlook of Little Hawk College indicate that it is devoted to the student and the community. It provides a bookstore, library, computers, graphics services, and other services for the education of students. It prepares students to continue on for a baccalaureate degree. There seems to be a commitment to students. It is also concerned with preserving the tribal history and language. It is committed to contributing to the development of the Little Hawk tribe.

In the fall of 2009 the college had just under 250 students enrolled with about 80% being American Indian. The students were enrolled in about 15 different degree programs.

A new student to Little Hawk College would need to fill out the appropriate paper work and request all high school transcripts, GED testing center results, as well as transcripts from colleges previously attended. A student only needs a GED or a high school degree to be admitted to Little Hawk College.

Anywhere College

The mission statement of Anywhere College indicates that it is a private, liberal arts institution that prepares students for the world of work, for service to the human community, and for encouragement of personal growth. The vision of Anywhere College suggests that it wants to be the predominant academic institution in the region, merging a

liberal arts and career-oriented education. The mission statement and vision indicate that Anywhere College is a liberal arts college that strives to be a great academic institution.

Anywhere College maintains a satellite campus in Southtown, which emphasizes the development of the student as a person with creative, professional, and individual skills, as well as blended moral, spiritual, and social values. Anywhere College has been offering associate, bachelor, and master degree programs in Southtown, for over thirty years. Anywhere College enrolls over 350 students on the Southtown campus with a composition of approximately 45% part-time students and 80% female with about one-third of the students commuting within a 60-mile radius. The average age of the students is about 30. The faculty at the Southtown campus combines their professional experience with their academic credentials. They are renowned for their enthusiasm, eagerness to provide students with individual attention, and their excellent education. The average class size is 20 students which allows for a joint learning environment between students and instructor. The instructors are principally adjunct which aids in bringing real world information and expertise into the classroom.

The Southtown campus of Anywhere College consists of classes at various sites and an office at another site which means that it does not have a typical college campus atmosphere.

A library and computer center is shared with another institution which is open Monday through Friday and can be used by Anywhere College students anytime it is open. Computers and printers are also available in a study room at the college office during open office times. The Southtown campus has a bookstore that is open during the

day and evenings during the first two weeks of classes each semester. Learning center services are provided if a student informs the college office that assistance is needed.

The college offers classes that fit the needs of the students. Classes meet once a week in the morning, afternoon and evening during the fall, spring, and summer terms. The flexible course schedule is designed to accommodate students who have families and employment obligations. Anywhere College, Southtown Campus depends on the part-time, non-traditional employed, commuting student for a good portion of their student body; therefore they cater to that population.

Anywhere College has a transfer policy. Credits received by a student from a post-secondary institution with a grade of C- or higher will transfer. A transfer student must submit an application, a non-refundable application fee, an official high school or GED transcript, and an official college transcript from each post-secondary institution attended. Overall, transfer to Anywhere College seems to be a simple process.

Once students are accepted to the college, they are assigned an advisor. The students meet with their advisor at least once a semester to receive assistance in registering for classes. Students work with the advisor until they have completed their degree.

University of Somewhere

University of Somewhere is a branch campus of a multi-campus university. Its Mission states University of Somewhere is a rigorous liberal arts institution which prepares students to be worldwide citizens who value academic growth, community commitment, and an environmentally-safe economy.

University of Somewhere conveys that it is not only an institution, but it also has a focal point of culture and research for the region, nation, and world. The university is devoted to providing outstanding teaching by inventive faculty who provide the students with dynamic learning which leads to imaginative activity and public outreach. The campus setting promotes collaboration, diversity, and a deep sense of community.

University of Somewhere professes that it focuses on the students by providing personalized education, amazing classroom experiences, undergraduate research, study abroad programs, service learning, community commitment, internships, student exchange programs, multicultural community, and the best education possible.

University of Somewhere was founded about 40 years ago. It now has almost 2,000 students of which about 10% are Native American and fewer than 20% are students of color. Faculty at the University is highly educated and many have won teaching awards. The University provides about 90 organizations along with intercollegiate sports and intramural leagues. The school has almost 2,000 students but still has an average class size of 16 and even a smaller student/faculty ratio. The University has received distinctions and recognitions as being a great school for an exceptional value and a leader in education.

University of Somewhere has requirements for transfer students. Applicants must have a 2.5 cumulative GPA from the transfer institution; those who are near or below the 2.5 GPA requirement will be considered individually. The University does not accept transfer coursework from proprietary technical colleges, business colleges, and similar postsecondary schools that are not regionally accredited. However, students can take a test to receive credit in certain subjects. A transfer specialist conducts an audit of the

coursework found on the official transcript(s) to determine which courses meet the general education or degree requirements of Eastville. If less than 30 credits were previously completed an official high school or GED transcript is required along with an official score report from an ACT or SAT Reasoning test. The transfer policy of University of Somewhere has multiple criteria students must meet.

University of Somewhere provides a variety of facilities and services for the students. There is a library and a bookstore on campus that are open Monday thru Friday. An information center provides students services such as: ticket sales, stamps, newspaper subscriptions, fax machine use, online housing list, and full directory of students and faculty. The University provides a center for enrichment to inform students about opportunities such as scholarships, research, studying abroad, and student exchanges as well as assists the students to compete for the opportunities. The University also provides a multi-cultural program to assist the students of color. This service is to provide academic assistance and a supportive environment to improve the opportunities for students of color in order to fully participate in university life. University of Somewhere provides a tuition waiver for American Indians. By providing acceptable documentation of Indian blood, An American Indian can attend the school without having to pay tuition.

Ethical Considerations and Confidentiality

Ethical issues concerning consent, confidentiality, and ownership need to be addressed in research. Ethical and ownership issues are prevalent in this research since participants are telling their lived stories. It is necessary to secure their consent, ensure them confidentiality and privacy, and determine ownership in the process (Shaw, 2003;

Smythe & Murray, 2000). Before the discussion began with the participants the consent form was discussed, questions were answered, and the participants initialed each page and signed the last page. At the beginning of each conversation I explained to the participants the process consent in that if there was something said that they would not like to have show up in writing or to be stricken from the tape, they needed to inform me and I would abide by their wishes.

I was honest and explicit to each participant explaining the purpose of the study and how the information found would be used to help Native Americans in the transition process to four-year institutions. I informed the participants that I would not only share my results of the project with them, but would be soliciting feedback from them about the data and the conclusions to verify their part of the report and verify my purpose of the study.

The protection of all people involved is of utmost importance in order for the participants to feel free in telling their stories. Since the participants were former students of a tribal college and most still live in the close proximity of all the educational institutions, the names of the participants and the educational institutions were changed to protect their identity. According to Heikkinen, Huttunen, and Syrjala (2007) it is necessary to protect the privacy of the participants while still collaborating with them on the study. Not only were the participants' names changed but also those of any third parties who appeared in their stories. I tried one more test with the registrar of Little Hawk Tribal College. The registrar has been in that position for over 15 years and is a member of the local tribe. She handles the registration papers for all the students as well as the transcript requests for students who are transferring to another school. She knows

the students who attend the college and those that transfer; therefore, I asked her to read the stories of the participants that I wrote in Chapter IV and see if she could recognize them. She was unable to recognize any of them. Protection of educational institutions, participants, and any third parties that may appear in the stories is important when the people and institutions can be easily identified.

Research Conversations

The research conversations with the participants was very crucial for this is where I listened to stories and gained information as to what is happening in the transfer process as seen through the eyes of Native American students. I prepared a question guideline to use when transcribing the participants' stories and to use as a guide if needed during the conversations (see Appendix C). It was important that the proper research procedures were followed to protect the participant.

A meeting was conducted with each Native American who volunteered in order to find out "first hand" what transitioning issues would emerge. The selected participants were scheduled for individual times and places most convenient for each of them. Two days before the scheduled interview, I contacted the participants to confirm the date, place, and time of the visit. I verified that I had a signed Informed Consent from each of them before the research interview began. Because participants were actively involved in the story as it unfolded, it was important that a negotiated consent form be discussed and agreed upon to minimize the reporting of different voices and interpretations (Heikkinen, Huttunen, & Syrjala, 2007).

At the meeting, I informed the participants that their names would be kept confidential and reiterated that their assistance would help future students. I asked some

general questions in reference to financial aid, degree at transfer school, number of credits that transferred, number of commute miles, and role models. Before beginning the actual research conversation, I visited with each participant to establish rapport and ask for permission to tape their story in order to preserve and report every word spoken by them. I started by briefly informing the participants of my purpose, empowering them to believe in their own capabilities, and how their stories would be used as a tool of power to “manipulate people’s mental imagery, thinking and actions” (Heikkinen, Huttunen, & Syrijal, 2007, p. 15), and reassuring them that what was said in their story would be treated confidentially (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Smythe & Murray, 2000). I asked them if they would prefer a copy of the transcript by mail or e-mail for their approval; they all opted for e-mail. I informed them that when I sent the transcript I would be asking them to respond within a week if there were or were not changes to be made to the transcript. I took field notes during the storytelling for additional documentation which included things such as interruptions, evasiveness, and non-verbal communication (Bernard, 1988). I began by asking the participants to tell the story of their transition journey to a four-year institution in their own words. During the research conversation I avoided interrupting the stories and refrained from expressing my own opinions, feelings, or research findings (Georgakopoulou, 2006). In some cases I found it necessary to ask some questions since the interviewee said things went well with the transfer and volunteered nothing more. Therefore, I asked questions about different aspects of the transfer process in order to get them thinking about relationships and occurrences that took place. I was also interested in what happened in the classroom so in some cases I needed to inquire about the classroom culture when it did not come out in

their story. I asked them for recommendations to help future transfer students.

Following the research conversation, I thanked the participants for their time, provided words of support for their goals, praised them for helping their fellow Native Americans in their education endeavors, and informed them that I would be sending them the transcript for verification of their story (Smythe & Murray, 2000; Upcraft & Schuh, 1996).

Within two days of each meeting with a participant, I transcribed the recording filling in the Interview Protocol form with information from the storytelling that fit a particular question. Not all questions were answered by the storytelling; the information that did not fit a question was added at the end of the form. I sent a copy of the transcript to the participant for verification. I not only transcribed the interviews within a day, but wrote down thoughts and summaries so that I could retain the information accurately. I e-mailed the transcripts to the participants, and only two people needed to be re-contacted concerning the transcript substantiation. A separate file, both on the computer and in paper format, was created for each transcribed transcript.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began during data collection since I wanted to take advantage of every valuable opportunity. When data analysis was conducted during data collection, unanticipated issues may arise that can be pursued further during data collection. This results in a stronger qualitative study built from the perspective of the people telling their stories (Ezzy, 2002). According to Booth, Colomb, and Williams (2003) it is necessary to write to support better understanding of found information, and to get thoughts out of the head and onto paper where they can be seen in print. Therefore, I kept a journal of

my thoughts and observations. Data analysis and documentation are valuable tools for understanding.

The data analysis process is a lengthy process involving several phases. I gathered and transcribed the stories, consulted with the participants for clarity, identified themes or categories, solicited participants' feedback, and went back to look at what I had done. I compared my themes and categories with the transcribed interviews and made changes. I wanted the themes to reflect the participants' shared stories.

Once the stories had been transcribed, they were returned to the storyteller by e-mail. I consulted with the participants to ensure that my transcripts reflected what they actually shared through their stories (Smythe & Murray, 2000). It was important to have the transcripts verified by the storytellers.

The data was then explored and notes were written in the margin to obtain a general sense of the data and to begin thinking about organizing it (Creswell, 2008). The transcribed stories were then analyzed by creating categories with and from the data, and then condensed into themes and patterns (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Creswell, 2008). Following Wolcott (Wolcott, 2001), I began by sorting the data into a few broad categories in order to include all the data. The categories helped me to produce themes and patterns that enabled me to determine what the data were saying and helped me to begin looking for emerging themes (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Ezzy, 2002; Richards & Lyn, 1998). I used keywords in the margin as well as different colored highlighters to mark the text. I finished coding when I was satisfied that a point of saturation had been achieved, and the emerging themes had been adequately supported (Ezzy, 2002). After a few days I reviewed the coding and decided to reread the transcripts to get a deeper

understanding of the information provided by the participants. Looking at the previous results and thinking about it I decided to abandon my original coding and go back to the transcribed interviews thinking creatively with the data and generating new codes. I did the open coding three times looking for concepts that held together and adequately reflected the data. I tweaked the open coding until the students' concepts were clear. I looked for relationships and found themes that emerged from the coding and from the analysis of the participants' data that explained the phenomenon. I finally reached the point where I felt my themes were fully developed, and new evidence would not alter them (Creswell, 2008). I then used an Excel spreadsheet to synthesize the data and reduce 61 codes into five categories. Three categories were assigned to the theme Factors of Adjustment; the academic adjustment, social adjustment, and personal adjustment. These categories reflected the significant feelings, facts, events, and people that the students had reported. The second theme, Transition Forces, consisted of two categories, forces that deterred and forces that assisted. The forces that supported were further divided into college and personal. The coding in Figure 2 is the result of the first level of analysis.

Once the themes and categories were defined through open coding, I sought to understand the relationship between the phenomenon of transition and the adjustment factors and transition forces. I then looked for relationships. This led to the second level of analysis, the concept map. I started with the phenomenon and added the conditions that influenced the phenomenon which were the causal conditions. I had difficulty creating a clear picture and could see that there were some similarities regardless of institution but began to suspect that the context made a difference with the intervening

Codes, Categories, and Themes

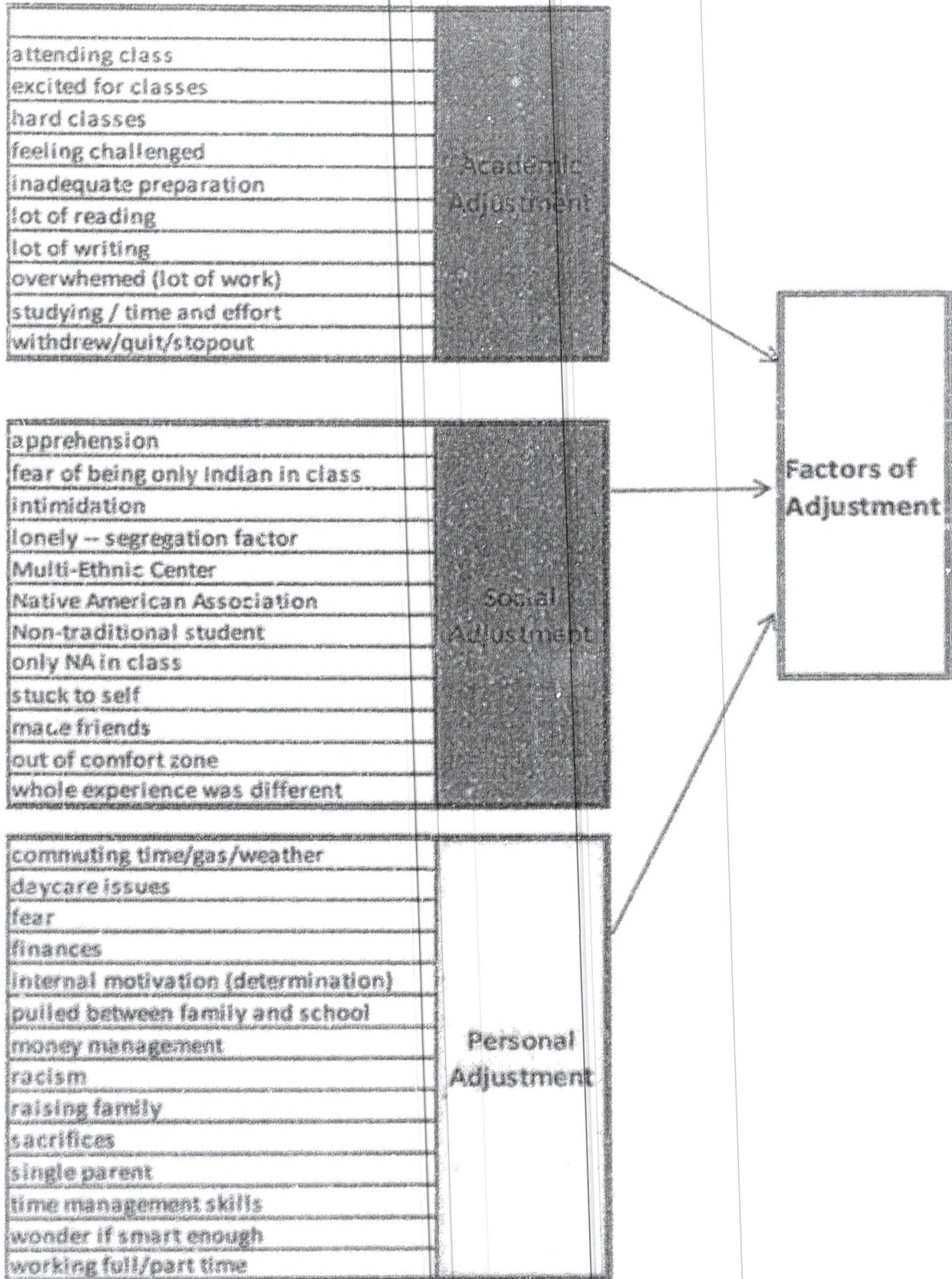
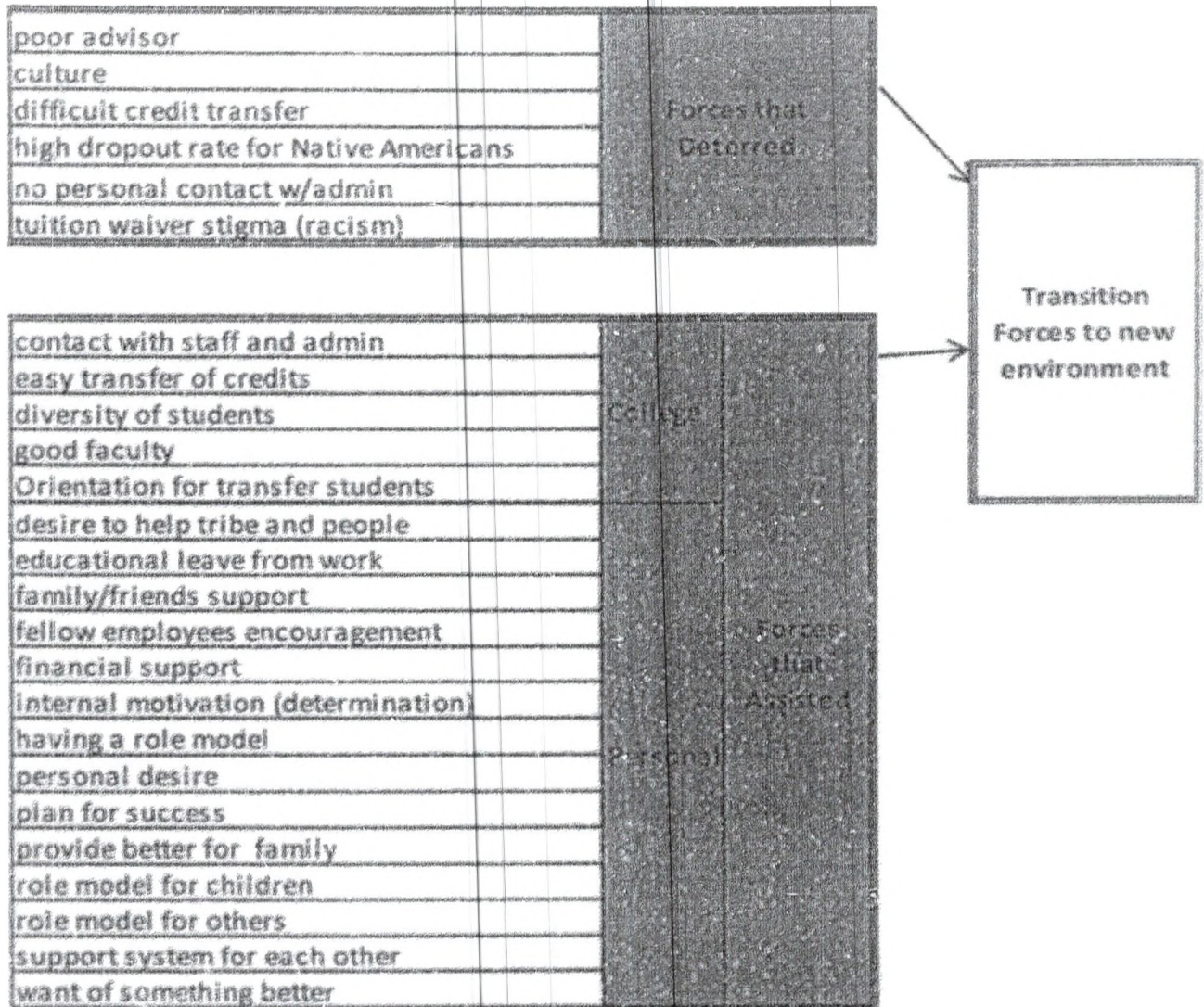


Figure 2. Codes, Categories, and Themes.

Figure 2 cont.

Codes, Categories, and Themes (cont.)



conditions and therefore could not get a clear picture of the middle part of the concept map. Some of the intervening conditions were different depending upon which school the participants attended. While the basic themes and categories were the same some of the codes were different also depending on the institution attended. I looked at the consequences and discovered they were the same for all students. The concept map I had at this point can be seen in Figure 3. I began to suspect that the context itself was making the difference. That context consisted of the two different four-year institutions the

Transfer Student Experience Concept Map

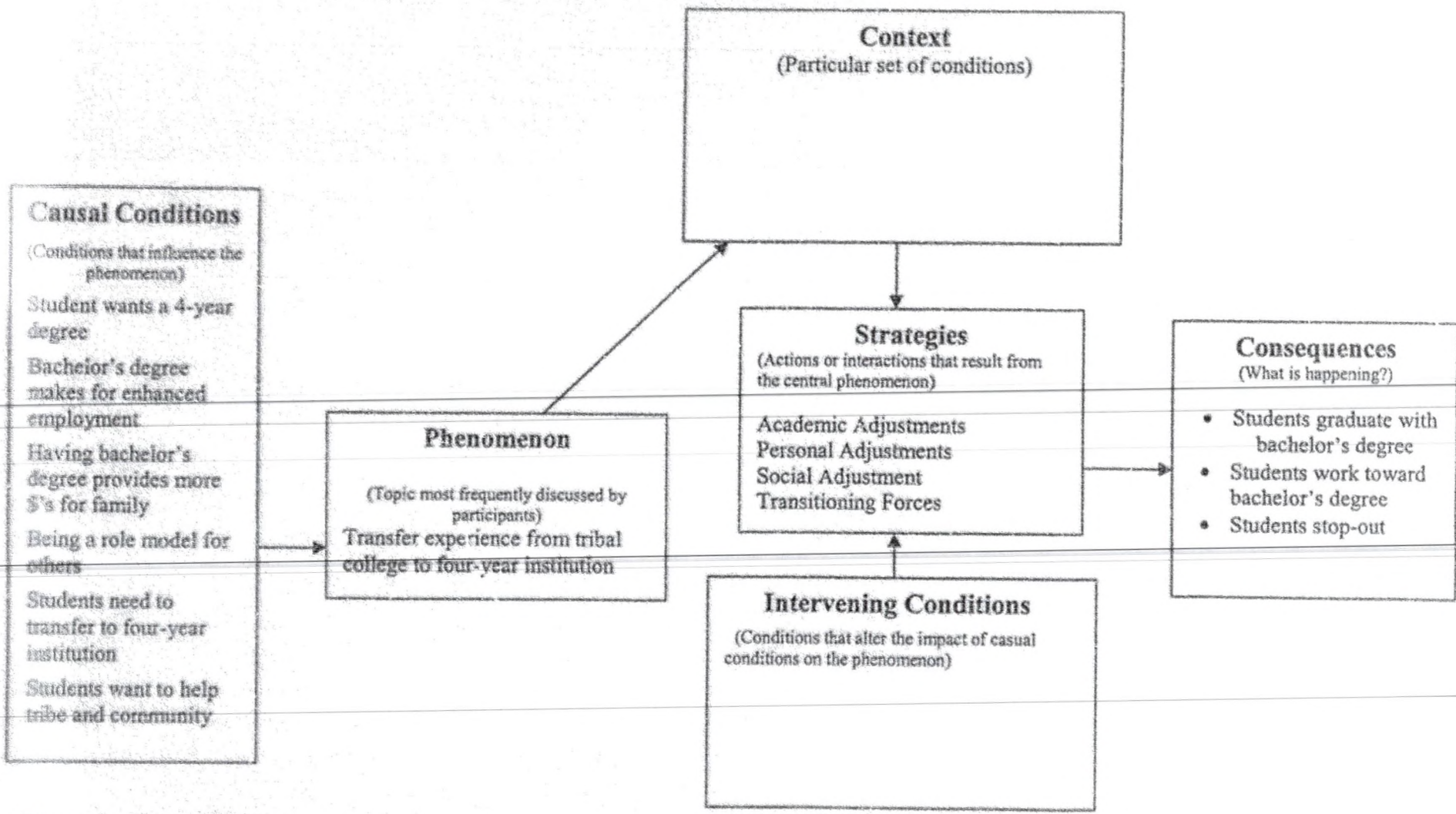


Figure 3. Concept Map.

participants attended. Cresswell (2008) calls this "multiple perspectives" which he defines as "several viewpoints from different individuals and sources of data as evidence for a theme" (p. 257). The causal conditions and consequences were the same for all students interviewed; the difference was in the context which meant students needed different strategies and had different intervening conditions depending on institution attended. I realized I would have to break out the coding by receiving institution to more clearly see what was happening. I resorted back to level one to redo the coding by institution attended. Once the new coding was done I again tried to develop a concept map. I developed two maps, one with Anywhere College as the context and one with University of Somewhere as the context. This time I was able to complete the middle part of the concept map. The full picture of the coding and new concept maps are presented in Chapter IV.

According to Janesick (2003), my analysis should include looking for practical assertions that the data supports. She suggested using exact quotations from the participants to support my assertions (Janesick, 2003). The direct quotes illustrate that it was the participants themselves telling their stories (Wolcott, 1994). In Chapter IV I have written the stories of participants and included exact quotes from them since it is their stories and should be told in their words.

The data analysis process was both tedious and exhilarating. The first exhilarating task was getting permission to use tribal individuals. The second big task was gathering the stories, transcribing them, and soliciting feedback from the participants. I compared and contrasted the data, discovered patterns and meaningful themes, returned to the data and re-did my themes, sorted out redundancies, arranged the

parts, and prepared a final document. While I probably did not uncover the ultimate answer to the Native American students' successful transition, but I did find many things that can be done on several levels to assist with the transfer. The data related to my topic were not found "neatly bundled together at exactly the same spot in each narrative research" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). I had to assess the coding of the stories, review the themes, and critique the literature in order to locate data that paralleled. The most thrilling outcome will be if the research will improve the transfer journey for Native Americans.

Reporting the Findings

The manuscript was prepared from actual stories of transfer students under the expectation that it would be read by appropriate people at tribal colleges, four-year institutions, and the tribe in order to smooth the transition journey for Native American students. This was a journey that was tedious and interesting, but hopefully a journey that will be of value to tribal colleges and four-year institutions.

The findings and ideas which were nurtured and developed during the research process were given concrete form (Ezzy, 2002). Writing about the personal stories stimulated me to think about the data and forced me to consider the meanings, understandings, voices, and experiences presented by the data. I needed to "go beyond" the data to develop ideas (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). I presented my evidence so the reader understands its relevance to my question by adding a reason that supports the claim and explains the evidence so my data can be quickly interpreted (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 2003). I have been persuasive in demonstrating the position of the Native American transfer students and provide indisputable evidence of actions that can lead to

positive assimilation (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Examining the data to reflect the actual experiences of the participants was a tedious process.

Researcher's Role

The researcher's role in this project was very important. As the researcher, I needed to obtain the trust of the participants before listening to their stories. This was followed by analyzing the stories, writing the report, and protecting the participants.

I have worked as an instructor at the Little Hawk College, a tribal college, for over 20 years. During that time I have listened to students tell how they want to continue their education, provide for their family, and help their tribe. I have observed students and their behavior as they leave the college and transfer to a four-year institution. Some obtain their baccalaureate degree while others return home. A number of those who return home come back to the tribal college while others give up on their educational dreams. I wanted to understand what happens when the students transfer; therefore, I needed to examine their personal experiences and their interactions with other people during and after the transitioning journey. This research project involved conducting research conversations with students, analyzing transcripts of their experiences, and analyzing their experiences to determine future actions (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). My goal is to improve the transitioning journey of students.

A qualitative researcher is expected to establish personal contact with the participants in order to establish trust, which will yield honest and insightful responses and develop a caring situation so researcher and participants are comfortable (Moen, 2006; Upcraft & Schuh, 1996). Since our college student population is under 300, and I

have been teaching there over 20 years, the transfer students knew who I was and understood and appreciated my concern for Native American students.

I was an active and receptive listener. I listened to the participants' tell stories using their own manner and style, gave space to the repetition of the same event told in a different account, and enjoyed the personally unique and specific way each told about things and expressed themselves (Heikkinen, Huttunen, & Syrjala, 2007). I organized the participants' experiences into a meaningful transcript, including the participants' point of view as well as mine, that went beyond the initial situation and may be relevant in other contexts (Moen, 2006).

I followed Valerie Janesick's (2003) qualitative skills of seeing, hearing, writing, conceptualizing, synthesizing, thinking critically, putting it together, and communicating to do my research. As I listened to the stories of the participants, I took field notes of their nonverbal cues and behaviors. During the entire research process I kept a reflective journal (Ezzy, 2002; Smythe & Murray, 2000). Following the transcribing of the narrative stories I conceptualized the information and synthesized it to develop categories and themes. Because it was important for me to capture the lived experience of the transfer students, I found it was necessary to develop two concept maps. Even though they all had the same causal conditions, their path of adjustment and transition varied depending on the institution. I tried to think critically about it, and put it all together in such a way that the reader will be able to live vicariously the lives of the storytellers and understand their lived situations and motivation for their actions. My goal was to open a path to the understanding of the transitioning journey. I have communicated the results by recording it in the form of a dissertation. By following Janesick's (2003) Rules of

Thumb and keeping an open mind, I tried to produce a manuscript that will be of value to tribal colleges, tribes, four-year institutions, and the Native American transfer student.

In order to protect the participants, the Informed Consent forms are stored in a locked file drawer. The audiotapes and CD copy of the computer files of the transcribed stories are stored in a different locked drawer. The transcribed stories are stored in yet a different locked file drawer, all of which are in my home. Three years after my paper is completed, I will destroy the Informed Consent forms by running them through a paper shredder. Degaussing will destroy the audiotapes and CD. All traces of the participants' files will be destroyed after three years.

Validity

The validity issues in this research are researcher bias, reactivity, and falsity. These validity threats could have led to invalid conclusions; therefore, I needed to think about what strategies would best deal with them.

Since I have worked at the tribal college over 20 years, I thought I may find myself being swayed into leading participants to tell stories that correspond to my ideas. In order to rule out any problems this may have caused, I relaxed, sat back, and listened to the participants tell their stories. I conducted a sufficient amount of interviews to get an idea of the transfer journey at each institution.

A validation problem could have been that I am a non-Indian, which would have made it easier for me to incorrectly interpret some of the stories or not be able to fully understand some of the transition problems. Since I have worked directly with students at a tribal college for over 25 years, I have learned a great deal about their culture and traditions which helped me understand their stories. I had to pay attention to the different

contexts and traditions they talked about in their stories. I followed Ezzy (2002) who stated that it would be important to me, the researcher, to allow the people's spoken words with their expressions to lead me. I transcribed the stories using the exact words of the participants. I asked the participants for clarification, verification, and feedback from the transcript. It was important to tell the story the research told and not the story I wanted told (Huberman & Miles, 1998).

I, as the interviewer, could have caused a reactivity validity problem by influencing the participants (Maxwell, 2005). Since I am an instructor at the Little Hawk College, and the participants were former college students, they may not have felt free to share with me stories concerning the college, especially if it was negative. Therefore, I emphasized to the participants that my goal was to make for a smoother transition for future students who transferred from the tribal community college to a four-year institution in order to obtain a baccalaureate degree. I encouraged the participants to tell their story in their own words and at their own pace. (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). I emphasized that they could help future transfer students, which they all seemed willing to do. I encouraged a full and revealing story of the transfer journey in order to collect rich data.

My participants, Little Hawk College students who went on to a four-year institution in pursuit of a baccalaureate degree, may result in triangulation by informant. I found 14 informants that fit the criteria. In my selection, I did not consider if they had children, were married, moved away from their home, or any other consideration which could skew my results. This could have been an aggregate analysis form of triangulation because the only social link between the participants is that they are Native American

students who transferred to a four-year institution (Denzin, 1989). I believe that the one link of being a Native American who had attended Little Hawk College was enough to give me accurate transfer information.

I had to call attention to and be aware of the validity threats of researcher bias.

Had it led me to gloss over some ideas or concepts that would of been important to the research (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

CHAPTER IV

PORTRAITS AND STORIES OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an introduction to the participants of the study and their experiences when transitioning to a four-year institution. The information about the participants and the excerpts were drawn from the stories told by them. The stories reveal the uniqueness of each individual along with the struggles and triumphs experienced during the transition. Since the participants are former students of Little Hawk College, and most still live in the close proximity of the college, their names have been changed to protect their identity.

All of the participants in this study are American Indian, attended Little Hawk College full time or part time for at least two semesters, earned at least 30 credits, and transferred to a four-year institution. The two four-year institutions that the students transferred to are University of Somewhere in Eastville, and Anywhere College, Southtown Campus, both of which are about 60 miles from Little Hawk College. Anywhere College and Little Hawk both have non-traditional, commuter, and about the same number of students on a one to three building campus. University of Somewhere is a traditional institution with a full campus which is about four times the size with traditional students.

The interviewee determined where the interview took place. Some were conducted at Little Hawk College campus and some in the offices of the interviewees. All interviews were private.

Participant Stories

Linda

Linda is a 48-year-old female who graduated from Anywhere College at Southtown Campus in 2009, with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration. She received an AA degree from Little Hawk College in Business Administration. After graduating from Little Hawk College she wanted to continue her education. Linda had a family who was rooted in the area so moving was not an option. Financially she needed to work so she had to go to school part-time. She chose to go to Anywhere College in Southtown, because it was the closest to Little Village, her hometown, and it offered night classes.

All of Linda's credits from Little Hawk College transferred to Anywhere College. At first there was a problem with the transcript, but the Little Hawk College registrar straightened it out. Linda said people at Anywhere College were very helpful when they evaluated her transcript, assisted in selecting classes, and helped in any way they could.

Attending classes was sometimes difficult for Linda. For economic reasons she had to continue to work while going to school. Linda said that instructors wanted students in class, but yet there were times she needed to stay at work in order to fulfill the responsibilities of her job. She served on tribal committees and boards, and sometimes those commitments would interfere with class attendance. There were occasions in the winter when the weather either in Little Village or between Little Village and Southtown,

was bad and she was unable to attend class. Some faculty were really strict on attendance; therefore, some of her grades were low as a result.

Linda said her transfer went fine. Her only regret was, "I wish I would have graduated sooner, but circumstances didn't make it possible." She wished that Little Hawk College would have had a bachelor's program, then it would have been close and "there would be less wear and tear on my vehicle."

Linda had support from her family in her education endeavor. "My kids would cook and help out with house chores and stuff." Her brother was her role model because "he has been going to school all his life and encouraged me to go and continue." Linda continued with her education to be a role model for her children. With support from her family, she obtained a bachelor degree so she could turn around and be a role model for her children and support their educational endeavors.

Melissa

Melissa is a 39-year-old female who is attending Anywhere College, Southtown Campus working to obtain a degree in Business Administration. She received an AA degree from Little Hawk College in Hospitality and Casino Management. Shortly after graduating from Little Hawk College, she determined that she wanted to continue her education in the business area. She had a good job and her children attended school in Little Village so she was interested in a college close to home. About that time, Little Hawk College worked with Anywhere College to offer a baccalaureate business management degree on the Little Hawk College campus. The bachelor's degree from Anywhere College would be unique for Little Hawk College students because tribal management courses would be incorporated. The classes were to be offered in the

evening on Little Hawk College campus for a cohort of students. This was the perfect fit for Melissa. It worked for two years until the number of students in the cohort went below six; then it was no longer economically feasible for Anywhere College to offer classes on Little Hawk College campus so students had to travel to Southtown.

Since Melissa had started attending classes with Anywhere College, she continued by driving to Southtown after classes were no longer offered on Little Hawk College campus. The degree would remain the same except the remaining classes would have to be taken at the Southtown campus. Melissa was working full-time and attending school part-time so it worked well for her to drive to Anywhere College Campus in Southtown where classes met once a week in the evenings. There were other students in the cohort that were going to continue the program by driving to Southtown, therefore, some drove together which helped with the car expense.

Melissa said the transfer of her credits went well. When Anywhere College was bringing classes to Little Hawk College campus the Little Hawk business instructor kept in close contact with the Southtown campus director. They worked together to evaluate transcripts and determine which classes were needed by the Little Hawk College cohort. Therefore, Melissa said, if you had a question about the transfer of credits, the next classes being offered on campus, or the classes you needed to take you could ask the Little Hawk College business instructor.

Melissa said that when she first transferred to Anywhere College she was taking classes on Little Hawk College campus with friends, relatives, and people she already knew, so it didn't seem any different than Little Hawk College classes she had taken before except that the instructors, in some cases, were different. When she started classes

at the campus in Southtown, there were two students from the cohort that had attended at Little Hawk College so you saw familiar faces right away. Melissa said, "The students at the Anywhere College Southtown campus are the same as me, non-traditional, except the only Natives I see are the transfers from Little Hawk College."

Since Melissa has started taking courses at the Southtown campus, she has had an excellent experience with both staff and faculty there. She says, "The faculty and staff want you to succeed and will help in any way possible. One particular instructor is always willing to work with her students and that helps a person like me: a mom, a grandmother, a full-time employee, and the age that I am."

Anywhere College has registration for classes on-line. That caused a problem for Melissa at first, but, once she got that figured out, it went well.

Melissa said there were some things that helped her to continue with her education. She had two daughters in high school and it was fun for them to all sit at the kitchen table doing their homework together. But the girls graduated and will be leaving for college so she fears that homework may become a bit more challenging for her. She said she is getting about the same grades as she did at Little Hawk so she is pleased with that and hope it continues. Melissa's boss has provided words of encouragement as well as allowed her some time off to study and attend class which has been a big help. Having relatives and friends from the cohort in her classes make the classes more enjoyable. Melissa feels that by continuing with her education she can "encourage others to look into or enroll in a bachelor's program as I did." Another driving force that Melissa shared is, "My parents were proud when I got my associate's degree. They didn't have

them, but were very supportive of both my brother and me. It was my mom's last wish that I get a bachelor's degree, so I want to do it for her."

Pierce

Pierce is a 38-year-old male, married, has a family, and is attending Anywhere College Southtown Campus, working to obtain a degree in Business Administration. He obtained an associate's degree in Business Administration by attending another tribal college and then Little Hawk College. Pierce was encouraged by his employer, because of his job, to continue his education and obtain a bachelor degree. Because his employer wanted him to continue to work while continuing his education he needed to look for a school close to Little Village. He heard about the program that Anywhere College was bringing to the Little Hawk College campus. The classes were to be offered in the evening on the Little Hawk College campus for a cohort of students. This was a great fit for Pierce; he could work during the day, attend classes in the evening, and be home with the family at night.

Pierce said "Little Hawk College has a relationship with Anywhere College so the transfer was easy. My advisor at Little Hawk College did some of the work for me." He says he is told what classes to take and he takes them. His only questions is, "How many credits do I have left to receive my BS degree?" which is his goal.

Pierce's active life makes education difficult for him. Pierce is a full-time employee, husband, father, and basketball referee. He said, "Taking the time to get my homework done and staying focused on studying is difficult." Since Anywhere College no longer offers classes on Little Hawk College campus, Pierce has had to add traveling to Southtown to his already busy schedule.

Pierce says his experiences at Anywhere College campus have been positive. He is enjoying his classes because the instructors make them fun and interesting. The staff has been helpful. His relationship with the other students has been positive. He has been able to keep his grades up to where they were at the tribal college. He feels that Anywhere College is a good school.

Pierce says his main source of strength is his sister. She helps him manage the load. When things get tough she is there to encourage him and keep him going. Pierce's sister is a powerful source of strength for him.

Taylor

Taylor is a 44-year-old single mother with a family who was attending Anywhere College Southtown Campus to obtain a liberal arts degree in business and psychology. She graduated from Little Hawk College with an associate's degree in General Studies. Shortly after graduating from Little Hawk College she decided she wanted to continue her education, but did not want to move her family away from family and friends in Little Village. Taylor made application to University of Someplace because it had free tuition for American Indians, but she was not accepted. She feels she was not accepted because of her grade point average. She then decided to go to school at Anywhere College Southtown Campus because it was within driving distance, and it offered night classes.

Taylor's transfer went real smoothly. Anywhere College just needed her transcript; most of the classes were accepted. She applied on-line for grants and loans and received some financial assistance.

Taylor took a year off from work to go to school, but she said, "Taking a year off to go to school was hard because you have to wait for that loan and Pell grant.

Sometimes you don't get it right away. It is a little bit harder when you aren't working and have kids." After one year she is in debt for school to the federal government and owes an additional \$1400 to the college, which she needs to pay off before she can go back to school. Therefore, she has stopped out in order to pay the school. She has one year left of college and would like to get it done.

Taylor felt some classes were hard, but, as she expressed, it was her third and fourth year so it should be harder. There was one instructor that was hard to understand. She said, "He is just kind of so smart that you can't understand him." Most of the faculty at Anywhere College was pretty helpful when you needed extra help.

Taylor's sister is her role model. "She was a single parent and went to school. She went on and got her master's degree. She gets paid real well now. She spent a lot of time going to school and supporting her kids so she deserves it." Taylor is hoping to get back to school soon and finish her bachelor's degree. She would like to continue on and get her master's like her sister did.

Jason

Jason is a 37-year-old male single male with children, attended Anywhere College Southtown Campus to obtain a degree in Business Administration. He was almost done with his AA degree, so he started taking the Anywhere College classes when they came to the Little Hawk College campus because access was easy and classes were at night. Jason wanted to get going on his four-year degree, and this seemed like a perfect opportunity to him. Jason graduated with his bachelor's degree in Spring 2010, from Anywhere College.

The transfer went smoothly for Jason. He got his official transcript sent to Anywhere College, it was evaluated, and all his credits transferred. He could always go to the office at Anywhere College Southtown Campus; they were very helpful. The office was open until 9 p.m. so that was quite convenient when attending night classes. He even contacted the main office in Morton, to set up a payment plan for tuition. He said, "I called down to Anywhere College in Morton, and set up a payment plan over three months and they were very helpful. I could set it up any way I wanted. It was interest free so was very helpful." Jason's advisor at Anywhere College was always available to help him; she gave him her e-mail, work phone, and home phone number.

Jason was a little concerned for financial reasons when Anywhere College quit offering classes on the Little Hawk College campus. His place of employment was helping to pay for some of the classes, but now he would also have to pay for gas to get to Southtown, too. At his place of employment, he found other people that were driving to Southtown, to attend Anywhere College classes in the evenings. Since they were in different programs, he felt lucky that most of his classes corresponded with theirs so they could car pool. Even though Jason worked full-time, he took as many classes as he could when he was driving to Southtown, so that he could complete his degree. Looking back, Jason was glad he had gone to Southtown campus for some of his classes because the classes were bigger, and he got to meet other people and instructors that otherwise he never would have met. He said his grades stayed the same, but he thought that was from hard work. When talking about experiences with other students Jason said:

Everyone in the class seemed to be a little older, kind of like me, just trying to finish their degree. In one class we had partners assigned by the instructor each

week. Every week you had a different partner. There were three of us from Little Village and none of us ever worked together. Everyone got along real well.

Jason had different motivational factors that contributed to his success. He is self-motivated and always wants something better for his kids and himself. Jason was raised by his grandparents, neither of whom graduated from high school, but they always encouraged him to get an education. Jason said, "My grandmother always said education is what you need and no one can take it from you so she always pushed me in that direction. I just kept thinking about that and knowing I needed to move forward." Jason was so motivated to complete his bachelor's degree that he was the first person from the original Little Hawk College cohort to receive a degree from Anywhere College.

Carrie

Carrie is a 49-year-old mother who received an AA in Business Administration from Little Hawk College and was attending Anywhere College Southtown Campus. She is not presently attending because of a change in her family membership; she took a foster baby into her home. She does plan to continue and complete her degree in the near future. Carrie chose Anywhere College because she was working at Little Hawk College at the time and needed to attend night classes and driving to Southtown, seemed the best fit. Working all day and driving the 100 miles back and forth to Southtown for classes worked for a while, but with a new baby, her life changed and she had to "stop out" for a while. She hopes to get back to school, but says it is scary. On the other hand she said, "Once you get started and going again it is easier. I want to go just to finish."

Anywhere College was helpful in most areas when Carrie transferred from Little Hawk College. Almost all of her credits transferred. The office people at Anywhere

College would help her if she had questions. She did not qualify for financial aid; therefore, she felt she could have used some help finding scholarships. She thought that maybe because she was a non-traditional student she was not helped as much. Generally Anywhere College was pretty supportive. Carrie feels there are a lot of things that Little Hawk College could have done to help her, not only with the transfer, but after she started attending classes.

Carrie was out of school for a few years so when she first went to Anywhere College it was "kind of a shock". It was hard to get back into the study mode and the classroom. At first her grades suffered a bit which she attributes to not being as prepared as she could have been. Even though she loves learning she feels it does not come easy for her. She said, "Getting back into concentrating, reading, and doing homework were all difficult. The financial barrier was a big one because the classes are very expensive." She recalled her first visit to the Anywhere College bookstore:

When I first went to the bookstore at Anywhere College they gave me a bill for \$200 and some and I didn't even realize I had to pay for books. But of course, I had to pay. I hadn't even thought about it. I guess at the tribal college we just got books and paid for them whenever. I guess my mind was on that. So I had to get money. I just got out of line and said I would be back later because I had to find some money to pay for the books. That was a shock.

Since Carrie was a graduate of Little Hawk College, she felt, "Little Hawk College could have shown more of an interest in me transferring and assisted me that way." She felt there were different things the tribal college could have done to assist her such as showing her how to search for and apply for grants, have someone take her to the

school and interview some of the people she would have contact with, keep in touch after she started, and be there to help when needed. She feel Little Hawk College needs to be there for the transfer students.

There were some things that made school hard for Carrie. The weather was a big factor in getting to classes. Winter creates a major weather problem when trying to drive to Southtown. Carrie shared, "Having to attend family functions such as school related activities for my children. Sometimes just being overwhelmed with everything I had to do made school tough." Finances made it difficult to pay for tuition. There were a few times she felt very uncomfortable in class. Once, when Native American history was discussed, the instructor and some of the students looked to her for verification of the information. "I felt like I was being singled out because I was Native and like I should know everything that was being discussed about the history, and etc." Carrie experienced some difficult times at Southtown.

Carrie found some things to help manage the load of attending classes. She tried exercising more and used different relaxation methods. She found that having a mentor or other students who were in her same situation helped her to "hang in there". She got along with most of the other students, "especially Native American students", and "some of the others in my age group who were working and learning at the same time". When Carrie is learning she is in the mode of "do it for the family". She wants to show her kids that if she can get a college degree they can, too.

Carrie attributes her drive to continue school to her kids and her dad, who was a teacher. She shared, "I feel like I owe it to my dad to complete my degree." Because

Carrie is a single mom, she wants her kids to see her in the role of a college graduate so, "they can see how important it is to go to school".

Jane

Jane is a 31-year-old single mom who received a Business Administration degree from Little Hawk College one spring and the following fall enrolled full-time at University of Somewhere in Eastville. She just received a degree in Management from University of Somewhere with emphasis in Finance. Jane chose University of Somewhere because it provided a tuition waiver for Indians, and it was close to her family in Little Village.

Jane had a little problem with the transfer of credits from Little Hawk College. At first only 39 credits transferred and later 10 more. University of Somewhere did not accept any of the business courses because the University's business courses are all 300 and 400 level courses, and at Little Hawk College they are 100 and 200 level. Another student had told Jane that she could try talking with the instructor and provide a syllabus with the book listed on the syllabus and she might be able to get the credits transferred.

Jane related:

I met with their accounting teacher, during my third semester there, and told her what book I used and gave her my syllabus. In fact she had the book on her shelf. She pulled the book and asked if I went through this or that and I said yes. She finally said, "Ok", and then "I don't see why it won't transfer." She accepted the six accounting credits, but theirs is eight so I needed to make up the other two credits in a third and fourth year management course. The other course was business law. I showed them the book and told them what we covered and what

we did so they accepted it. I think the reason they don't want to take the credits is that they don't have any 200 level courses in business; they are all 300 and 400 level.

Jane has told other transfer students to show up with their syllabus and textbook and "talk them into transferring the credits." She felt it would have been helpful if Little Hawk College would have checked on the transferability of Little Hawk College credits to Eastville.

The overall transfer experience for Jane was both negative and positive. Her grade point average went down a little from Little Hawk even though she did really well in some classes. Jane felt unprepared for all the writing that was required of her. While she liked most of the classes, the intimidation factor was a big issue for her. Jane had an advisor that she met with a few times to get help with registration. He also helped her once with a faculty member that caused her a great deal of stress. The financial aid office was pretty helpful, especially after she kept going to the same lady and built a relationship with her. She wishes that Eastville would have had someone to assist with grants, such as where to go on-line and how to apply for them. Jane figures she probably missed out on lots of grants because having a son, working part-time, and going to school full-time she could not find time to research to find grants or to apply for them. She mentioned, "I wasn't prepared for that." She said it would have been nice if someone at Little Hawk College would have shown her how to research for grants as well as the process of what is expected and needed to apply for them.

Jane perceived that instructors and students at Eastville stereotyped Native American students:

They automatically think you are going to fail and not hang in there because they have seen it so many times. It was like the instructors were saying, 'You go here for free and you will drop out. I don't have time for you; I have to focus on the students that are going to be staying here and finish.' The teachers weren't very friendly and neither were a lot of the students. Once they noticed that you were still there each semester, they changed their attitude. I don't think racism is the issue, but rather the tuition waiver.

Jane observed that American Indian students were withdrawn, uncomfortable, and always sat in the back of the classroom. She did that, too, until she became more comfortable, and then she was in the front row and no longer intimidated. Overall, she liked the classes.

Jane's relationship with other students was almost nonexistent. In the three years that Jane attended Eastville, she made very few friends. She was there to learn and get an education. She would talk to students at the multi-ethnic center, but never got their phone numbers or met with them outside of school. She expressed, "I didn't go out of my box either." The younger students' motivation was inspiring to Jane. She explained:

Seeing their motivation made me want to be more dedicated. They were going to class and getting their work done and I wanted to do that, too. They seemed like my peers even though I was older. I wanted to be like them, always go to class and hand in my homework because that is what they were doing. The dedication the other students had was outstanding. You knew the bell curve; if everyone gets A's then I will have to work much harder. Their dedication made me want to work harder.

Eastville, has a multi-ethnic center, which serves as a comfort zone for students of color. If you are a minority student you can go to the center where there is a lounge, computers, and printers. "I was 26 and had a son so I felt a little out of place with other students and didn't participate in any activities. I just stuck to myself." The cultural center was Jane's comfort space on campus.

Jane had several factors that kept her going to complete her degree at Eastville. Once she got started she had confidence in herself and knew she could finish. Besides, she needed the money from Pell Grants and loans to support her son and herself so she had to keep going or find a full-time job. She wanted to work for the tribe, and since so many people had AA degrees and experience, she felt the only way to get a step ahead of them was to get a bachelor's degree, so she needed to keep her sights on the final goal. Jane's son is very important to her, and she wants to be a good role model for him so she felt the need to complete her degree. Jane feels the overall experience at Eastville, was good for her.

Katie

Katie is a 33-year-old wife and mother who attended Little Hawk College to take general education courses, and then went to the University of Somewhere full-time to obtain a bachelor's degree in psychology and anthropology. Katie chose University of Somewhere because of the Indian tuition waiver and the close proximity, which meant that she could stay near her family in the Little Village area, and drive to school.

The transfer itself went quite well for Katie. All of her credits from Little Hawk College transferred. Eastville, had an orientation for transfer students, but she did not go. Katie had a very helpful advisor. The first semester the advisor wanted Katie to start out

slow by not taking a heavy load. Katie felt comfortable going to her advisor for all her concerns, even for crying sessions. Her advisor was trying to help Native American students to be more successful. The coordinator of cultural programs made Katie and her family feel welcome. He assisted Katie by getting help for her with some issues she was having.

Katie says she always knew she had to go to a four-year university because her mom said she needed to do it. Her problem was that she had no idea how to do it. When she first attended Little Hawk College everyone encouraged her and helped to build her self-confidence by telling her she was doing a great job. She said, "I wasn't ready for the challenges." When she had a family she decided she was ready and needed to get a degree. She went back to Little Hawk College to take her generals and then went on to Eastville.

There were many barriers in Katie's way of her education. When she went to school at Little Hawk College the finances were taken care of so there was no financial worry. At Eastville, she worked with the financial aid office a lot, they were good, but they had no money. "Eastville had information on the computer you could navigate, but their site was hard to navigate. They didn't have the time to sit down and help us with things. They had too many students." The first time Katie went to school at Eastville she had four children. The cost for car, gas, and food was a big problem. Part of the problem was not knowing how to budget money. The stress of "babysitting, studying, being in a new place, and just everything was a challenge." She said, "It was difficult to get into the swing of things." Faculty and students were a challenge for Katie so she went to school and went home. She went to school for a year and then quit. She stated:

There weren't very many dark people. I felt that I wasn't prepared for the concentration on color. I didn't know color in California, nor at Little Hawk College. I kept thinking that my ideas were not as good as theirs. I thought that their ideas must be really great and that mine were not. They seemed to be so much more knowledgeable than I was. Now I realize that there is a difference in the way people think.

Getting motivated to do a good job made school hard for Katie which caused her grades to drop. She quit school for a semester, but later realized that it was her last time so she decided to get it done and went back to school.

Katie perceived that the success of American Indian students was determined by the culture. "If the American Indian students identified with their own beliefs, they had a hard time. Those that carried more of the Caucasian ideas seemed to be more successful."

Katie felt that Little Hawk College could do some things to help transfer students. Little Hawk College could have a class for students who are transferring. The class could prepare students to "go to a little white town." It could also discuss different situations and how a person should react. She also suggested, "A person from Little Hawk College to stay in touch with us so there would be some connection to see how we are doing, someone for us to report to."

Katie shared experiences with classes, professors and students. She said that there were some really great classes and instructors at Eastville. In some classes she felt comfortable to speak up, but in others she just kept quiet. Some instructors were even her

role model. Katie says she is pretty outgoing so she was confused by some of the Caucasian students; she thought something was wrong with her. She shared:

We would be ok in class, but outside of class we didn't even say "hi" to each other. It was like we were friends in class, but not outside of class. I think the only reason I hung out with other Indian students was because I knew them all. We were comfortable with each other.

Katie felt that there were weird feelings from students and some professors because American Indians received the tuition waiver. She thinks the prejudice was more in the ignorance of "why" there is a tuition waiver. As she said, "Students and faculty simply just don't know."

Katie credits her college success to her family and prayer. Her immediate family means a lot to her, and they have always been a driving force. She went on to say, "I think it was the way that you have so many people praying for you and you don't even know who they all are. I think I got my determination from that." With the help of her family and friends, Katie completed her bachelor degree.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth is a 36-year-old single mother who majored in Dakota Studies at Little Hawk College, and then decided to continue at Little Hawk to earn another degree. She started to take a few classes, and while she was trying to decide what her second major should be she became interested in a position that required a degree higher than associate's, so she began searching for a college. She decided on University of Somewhere in Eastville, because it was within driving distance and it had the Indian tuition waiver. Elizabeth went to University of Somewhere full time because she wanted

to obtain a bachelor's degree faster than going part-time. So, within a couple of years, she obtained a bachelor's degree in American Indian Studies.

The initial change for Elizabeth was difficult. All of Elizabeth's credits she received from Little Hawk College transferred to Eastville. Needless to say, Elizabeth was very pleased about that. After her transcript was reviewed she had to look at the catalog to see what classes she still needed and registered on-line. She would have liked some advisor assistance. At Little Hawk College she was used to seeing her advisor and getting assistance in determining which classes to take each semester. There were no advisor visits at Eastville until after you had enrolled in classes. Right after she registered at Eastville, she received an e-mail in which she was put in contact with a Native American group on campus. Elizabeth felt that she was fortunate to have a good advisor who gave her his contact information in case she needed any assistance with anything. She said, "If you were struggling in a class and you didn't know what to do, he would help you, and he did. I thought he was really good."

Elizabeth had a few struggles throughout her Eastville, experience. She was commuting 60 miles one way and had a young family. When she had an early class she would have to leave at 6:15 a.m., and had to arrange for daycare at that early hour. Elizabeth was going to school full-time but financially she still needed to work part-time so juggling work and school was a challenge. Elizabeth felt very age conscious. She felt like she was out of her element. She was even older than some of her instructors, and felt like they expected her to know more than she did. She was able to prevail over her struggles.

Elizabeth enjoyed the class work. She expected that it would be harder at University of Somewhere so she gave more effort to studying and reading. She was always prepared when she went to class and never missed a class. That is probably why she found school to be easy. Elizabeth said it was because she was working in her major and was interested in the various topics covered in class. She felt like she learned so much. She said she knew some of the things, but there were a lot of things she learned from instructors and fellow students.

Elizabeth received support from her children and family. She said her children were especially helpful:

I appointed certain days as my study days. Those were the days my kids were kind of on their own. I would pick them up and then pick up quick food or microwave stuff for us to have at night and then I would study. My kids were really good. My oldest son really helped me out. On the days I had to study I would go upstairs and study when we got home, and my son would make supper. The kids would entertain themselves downstairs, and I would be upstairs getting all my studying done so I didn't have to worry about them. I didn't really have a social life.

Elizabeth had a close relative that gave her almost daily support which she explained as:

One of my aunties gave me encouragement every day. She would call me every night and ask me how class went and how things were going. She would ask what projects I was working on. She was really encouraging. Even though she didn't have any college experience herself, she was really encouraging. She

would say that I was a role model for my cousins who were older than me because I could go to school even though I had kids and still keep it all together. She would say, "Don't let little obstacles get in your way and keep pushing forward."

Elizabeth attributes her college success to several factors. Her step-dad believed in her and instilled in her a desire to learn. She said, "He knew education was hard work and always said, 'if you wanted something you will have to work for it.'" Her aunties encouraged her as well along with her mother. Elizabeth felt she needed a bachelor's degree to get a job that would sustain her family because she did not want to struggle. Elizabeth was also driven by wanting to sustain cultural and language programs in her community. Elizabeth had outside encouragement, as well as encouragement from within, to be successful at college.

Michael

Michael is a 35-year-old male who received an associate's degree in chemical dependency from Little Hawk College. He was pursuing a second degree in business administration when he decided to go on to University of Somewhere and major in Sociology and American Indian Studies. Education has become so important to Michael that he is now pursuing a master's degree from a different university. Michael chose Eastville, because it was the closest university to his home, and because of the Indian tuition waiver. Michael went to University of Somewhere full time because he wanted to obtain a bachelor degree faster than going part-time.

Michael had originally planned to major in management with a minor in sociology, but business credits did not transfer, and general studies and chemical dependency classes did. He was told that the business class syllabi were too specific and

not broad enough for a liberal college. The transfer committee sent Michael a letter strongly encouraging him to not go into management. The transfer specialist told him the same thing. Therefore, he decided to major in sociology.

Michael had a few things besides the transfer of business credits that made his education at Eastville, difficult. Because of the driving distance, he often had to ask his parents for money for gas. Michael missed the personal contact with people and the face-to-face contact which was created by the "one-stop" services on the computer. Michael felt underprepared for all the writing that was necessary, and wished Little Hawk College would have prepared him better for all the writing that was expected of him. Being a "home body" person, Michael would have liked to have stayed at home and done all on-line classes, but instead he had to get out and go to classes. Michael had some barriers to overcome.

Michael enjoyed his time at Eastville. He found it to be challenging, enjoyable, and a comfortable place to be. Eastville, had an ethnic center and an American Indian advisor there who "showed me the ropes, the in-and-outs and that was really helpful." "My advisor was very understanding and supportive. When I would get frustrated in class, he would talk me through it. One time I called my professor and that seemed to make it easier for me." Michael said, "Registering was easy; go on-line to register (no lines), and apply for Pell grants on-line too." There was a Native American association at Eastville, that Michael joined; he found it to be a very helpful organization. Michael is happy he made the decision to go to Eastville.

Michael had some support outside of Eastville. He said both his parents were a great source of strength for him. They both supported him even though neither of them

had gone beyond a vocational education. Michael said it was helpful when, as a Little Hawk College student, he went with a group to Eastville, to visit the school and see the layout. Michael was glad for this support.

Hazel

Hazel is a 28-year-old single mother who attended Little Hawk College, majored in General Studies, and then went to University of Somewhere full-time to obtain a bachelor's degree in American Indian Studies and Human Services. She decided on Eastville, because it was within driving distance, it had Indian tuition waiver, it was the school her sister graduated from, and it was a good school. Hazel has now graduated from University of Somewhere.

Hazel was happy with the transfer of credits from Little Hawk College to Eastville. Almost everything transferred for her. She took a few business classes at Little Hawk College, and they did not transfer; but that was not a problem because she was not majoring in business. Hazel explained, "The few that Eastville had a question about I went to Little Hawk College's library, made copies of the syllabus and took them over to Eastville, and they transferred." She had no problem with transferring credits.

Hazel felt it took a long time to adjust to Eastville. They had an orientation for new and transfer students which she attended. They were divided into groups; Hazel felt lucky that her group was all transfer students. She met a person in that group that became her good friend. They met after classes, when they could, but had no classes together. The hard classes, the driving from Little Village to Eastville, the loss of scholarship money, and the loneliness got to be too much for Hazel the first semester so she withdrew. She was questioning if she was smart enough to attend Eastville. After she

withdrew, another Native American student from Eastville, called Hazel to share her trials, tribulations, and experiences, which were similar to Hazel's. Hazel decided if she ever wanted to get a bachelor's degree she better go back right away or she would never do it. So Hazel went back the next semester having made up her mind to make it work, not be intimidated, and determined to meet people. The entire adjustment for Hazel was long and stressful.

Hazel found there were a lot of circumstances that made getting an education difficult. The price of gas was very high so driving 120 miles a day was expensive. The campus was large and intimidating. Finding daycare for her child was difficult since she sometimes had early classes. Supporting herself and her child was difficult with Pell grants and scholarships. Hazel expressed, "The lack of knowledge as to why there is free tuition for Indians caused a problem with some instructors and some fellow students." Hazel felt she had not been prepared for all the writing of papers she had to do, nor was she prepared for all the reading that was required. After a lot of hard work and creative maneuvering, Hazel was able to overcome the barriers that were in the way of completing her education.

Hazel received support from many people. The counselor at Little Hawk College kept checking on her to ask how things were going and offered to fix any problems she was having. The transfer coordinator at Eastville, was helpful in getting Hazel's credits transferred from Little Hawk College. The academic advisor at Eastville, was helpful in helping with the withdrawal the first semester and encouraged her to go back the second semester. The professors at Eastville, helped her with her writing skills because she was "definitely not prepared for writing." She said, "Once I started a huge paper the

professors would keep saying for me to send them my draft and they would look it over and give me comments. That really helped." Hazel met other Native American students, "we are our own support system." She had hours and hours of discussions with one of her friends, which was very beneficial to her staying at Eastville. There were many people in Hazel's life that supported her in her goal of a bachelor's degree.

Hazel attributes her success to several factors. She not only had people that supported her but she joined the Native American association and AISIS, became very active in both of them, and met a lot of people. She prepared a Native American scholarship list, applied for whichever ones she qualified for, and received many of them. Hazel liked learning, being challenged, and being among her peers with the same academic level. Hazel said:

At Eastville, the level is at the top and the professors expect it of you. You either do it or you don't. You have to work hard to reach their expectation. They expect it of you, and it is a nice feeling when you do it. When you reach it, you get a lot of respect.

Hazel is excited about her education and wants to share with others her experiences and challenges, and how she overcame them.

Amber

Amber is a 31-year-old wife and mother who attended Little Hawk College and received a General Studies and Natural Science degree. After a short break from school, she went to University of Somewhere full-time and obtained a bachelor's degree in sociology. Amber chose Eastville, because of the Indian tuition waiver and the convenience. She actually attended another tribal college before Little Hawk College,

but circumstances took her to Little Hawk College. Amber is continuing on with her education at another institution working on her master's degree.

Amber said her transfer went quite well. She believed all of her credits transferred from Little Hawk College. Eastville, had an orientation which Amber attended hoping to receive assistance selecting the courses she needed to take, but received no help, so she was disappointed. She said, "I picked classes I thought might work and just happened to luck out."

Amber had a few hurdles to climb in obtaining her degree, and many things that helped to make it easy. She said one thing that made it easier was:

I usually tried to connect with someone who was older and healthier, not drinking and on-track; I sought them out or drew them to me. I used that person as a go-to-person. At Eastville, I found such a person. We had a lot of the same classes, and she drove, too, but she was from a different area.

In Amber's second semester at Eastville, she met another student from Little Hawk College who encouraged her to join the Native American association. Amber joined and she felt that it really helped her socially because it connected her to other people who had kids, and overall it introduced her to more people academically. Amber's biggest hurdle was determining which classes were necessary for her to receive a degree. She chose a degree that she could complete the fastest and just be done.

Actually, Amber enjoyed taking classes in her chosen degree. Her grades even went up from those at Little Hawk College. She considered herself to be a good student with good study habits, but felt that she studied more because as a junior and senior she

was studying in her major. She was really interested in the topics so studying was easier and the grades went up.

Amber feels she has been very fortunate with her education. Things were never tough for her academically, for which she feels very fortunate. It was her own internal motivation because getting a bachelor's degree was something she always wanted to do. Her immediate family was very supportive and helpful in assisting her at home for which she was very thankful. She also attributes her success to her parents. Amber is grateful that things have worked out so well for her.

Bridget

Bridget is a 52-year-old woman who was working on a counseling degree at Little Hawk College, and then transferred to University of Somewhere full-time to obtain a bachelor's degree in Liberal Arts and Human Services. Bridget chose Eastville because of the Indian tuition waiver, and because it was fairly close to her home. She has now graduated from Eastville.

Bridget feels very fortunate about the transfer of her credits. Her first advisor questioned three of Little Hawk College classes, and was not sure if they would transfer. Bridget said, "My second advisor, who had other native students, said 'Oh, these transferred before,' and she got it done." Bridget said the minorities education office helped her to get information from other native students as to whom would be a good advisor. She felt that was a big help when it came to the transfer of her credits.

Bridget had a few barriers to overcome and a few things she had to learn to help her obtain her education. She felt one of the barriers was that she was a non-traditional student, older than most of them. She said,

It took me most of the first semester to calm down and realize I could do it. You heard stories about how much harder it was at Eastville, than Little Hawk College. I was really scared if I could even do the work there. When I went there I realized I could do it. I think the fear held me back for a while. It was harder than Little Hawk College, but you have to know that they pride themselves on being a high academic school. To get an "A" at Eastville, you really have to work. They consider "A's" really exceptional and "B's" really good.

Another barrier for Bridget was the driving. Gas was expensive and she had to use good money management and budgeting skills because the financial aid came at the beginning of the semester, and she had to have money for gas, food, and bills all semester. She felt the money management and time management skills she had to learn will be helpful to her for the rest of her life. Bridget felt there was a barrier between Native American and non-native students. She explained:

You don't realize it at first because there are other natives in your classes. When I got to one class I was not only the only native, but also the only minority.

Because I am older, I need to sit up front in class to see. The first day students sat all around me. The next day there were no student in my row and none behind me, everybody moved away. I don't know if there was peer pressure between the non-natives to not be friends with us or what, but it is a tough thing to overcome.

I found a division in my classes between native and non-native students. I believe it was because of the free tuition. The non-native kids talk among themselves about natives getting free tuition, and, therefore, it creates a problem between

students. One of the teachers did research on why there is free tuition, but that does not get out to all the students.

Bridget had a good relationship with the native students, but not with the non-native, except for the ones who hung out in the multi-ethnic center. Since she was taking 300 and 400 level classes at Eastville, versus 100 and 200 at Little Hawk College, she knew the classes should be harder so she was not surprised that she had to study harder to keep her grades up. Bridget started out being scared, but knowing it was "doable" is what kept her going.

Debra

Debra is a 52-year-old wife and mother who obtained an Associate's General Studies degree from Little Hawk College, and went on to University of Somewhere to obtain a Bachelor's degree in Cultural Anthropology and Native American Studies. She chose Eastville, because of its convenience to her home, its Indian tuition waiver, and its accepting all of her credits from Little Hawk College and her previous tribal college. She was very excited that Eastville, accepted all of her credits from both tribal schools, and used her Dakota classes towards her major in Native American Studies. Debra has graduated from Eastville.

Debra said that her going back to school to get her bachelor's degree was not only hard on her, but also her family. Once she decided to go back to school, she just wanted to get it over with so she quit her job and went to Eastville, full-time. Her family supported her going back to school, but it was still very hard when the kids wanted her to do something with them and she had to tell them "I can't go because I have to study." Debra said there was a huge amount of reading and a lot of papers that needed to be

written; the overall workload was a lot heavier than that for which Little Hawk College had prepared her. It was a definite wake-up call for her. At first she wondered if she had made the right choice, quitting her job and going to school full time. She said she kept telling herself, "I know I can do this. It is workable." She went on to say, "It was a big step for me because we get comfortable in a situation. I was just ready for a change and a challenge. I wanted more."

There were a variety of things that helped Debra obtain her education. She said, "My main source of strength was that I left my job and wouldn't have anything to live on." Because Debra lived in Minnesota, she was able to apply for grants for Minnesota residents, some of which were Native American scholarships only. She was fortunate to receive several scholarships which helped out financially. She went to the orientation that Eastville, provided, and felt that it was very helpful. Debra met a history instructor who was very helpful, open, and always tried to help her out. Debra spent a lot of time at the multi-ethnic center where she had visited with people and utilized the computers and printers that were there. She credits as an asset the fact that she was a non-traditional student. When she was employed she worked by a time clock. She felt that having worked by a time clock taught her to always be on time to class and never skip a class. Debra had no experience with racism at Eastville. All of these things were helpful to Debra in obtaining her education.

The Native American association was an asset to Debra. She got involved with the group right away and became an active member. She felt that not only was she supporting other members in the group, but they were supporting her, too. Debra gained some life long friendships from the organization at Eastville, which she will never forget.

Table 3. Summary of Transfer Student Participants.

	LHC Major	Transfer Major	Student Status	Marital Status	Children
Anywhere College Transferees – Part-time					
Linda	Business Admin	Business Admin	Graduated	Married	Yes
Melissa	Hospitality/Casino Mgmt	Business Admin	Continuing	Divorced	Yes
Pierce	Business Admin	Business Admin	Continuing	Married	Yes
Taylor	General Studies	Liberal Arts; Business & Psych	Stop out	Divorced	Yes
Jason	Business Admin	Business Admin	Graduated	Divorced	Yes; not in home
Carrie	Business Admin	Business Admin	Stop out	Divorced	Yes
University of Somewhere Transferees – Full-time					
Jane	Business Admin	Mgmt with Financial Emphasis	Graduated	Single	Yes
Katie	General Studies	Psychology & Anthropology	Graduated	Married	Yes
Elizabeth	Dakota Studies	Native American Studies	Graduated	Single	Yes
Michael	Business Admin	Sociology & Am Indian Studies	Graduated	Single	No
Hazel	General Studies	Am Ind Studies; Human Services	Graduated	Single	Yes
Amber	General Studies	Human Services	Graduated	Married	Yes
Bridget	Counseling	Human Services	Continuing	Single	No
Debra	General Studies	Cultural Anthropology/NA Studies	Graduated	Married	Yes

Phenomenon

The purpose of this study was to study the transfer experience of Native American students from a tribal college to a four-year institution. From the previous stories of the participants, as told to the interviewer, the casual conditions were all similar. All the participants wanted a four-year degree to enhance their employment, provide more income for their family, and to be a role model for their family and others. In order to

obtain a bachelor's degree it was necessary to transfer to a four-year institution since Little Hawk College's highest degree was associates. From the participants' stories it is revealed that none of the participants wanted to go very far from their family, so they all looked for a college that was close to their home. This is where the stories stopped being exactly the same. Six of the participants chose to go to Anywhere College in Southtown, and eight chose University of Somewhere in Eastville; both are four-year institutions.

The transition experiences of the participants differed depending on the institution they attended. The two institutions chosen by the participants were Anywhere College in Southtown, and University of Somewhere in Eastville. The profiles of both institutions are presented in Chapter III. Even though both institutions are four-year granting institutions, their individual characteristics are different; therefore, the experiences of the participants were also different. Because this study was to understand the transition experience to a four-year institution, and because the experiences were different for each institution, there will be two separate analyses. The concept map for each school can be found in Figures 5 and 7. The first analysis will discuss the transition experience for the group of six students that attended Anywhere College in Southtown, followed by the experience of the second group that attended the University of Somewhere in Eastville.

Group One: Anywhere College

Set of Conditions

The experiences of the students that attended Anywhere College in Southtown, had to do with the mission and vision of Anywhere College as well as personal forces that assisted the transition. To clearly visualize the phenomenon of the participants that attended Anywhere College, codes, categories, and themes were developed as well as a

concept map. Figure 4 depicts the factors of adjustment and transition forces for Anywhere College. Figure 5 reflects the intervening conditions and strategies of the participants that attended Anywhere College.

Anywhere College in Southtown, with a little over 300 students, is an off-campus site of a much larger private, non-profit college with a primary emphasis to prepare students for the working world, for participation in community service, and for personal growth. Almost half of the students are part-time, a large majority of them are female, and the average age is about 30. The college tailors the academic offerings to fit the needs of the students by having a flexible class schedule with weekly classes being offered in the morning, afternoon, and evening. Anywhere College has a liberal transfer policy accepting college, university, or technical school credits with a grade of C- or above. Students that transfer to Anywhere College, such as those from Little Hawk College, are not required to take ACT or SAT tests. The faculty at Southtown, is typically adjunct faculty, bringing real world knowledge to the classroom.

For a couple of years Anywhere College had a special collaboration with Little Hawk Tribal College in which students could receive a bachelor's degree from Anywhere College in one of their baccalaureate programs by attending classes on Little Hawk's campus. There needed to be a cohort of a minimum number of students in the group. An articulation agreement was set up. The program lasted about two years, and then the number of students fell below the minimum and Anywhere College could no longer afford to provide instructors on the tribal college campus. The remaining students that were still interested in continuing with a bachelor's degree in that program needed to attend classes on the Anywhere College campus in Southtown.

Codes, Categories, and Themes: Anywhere College

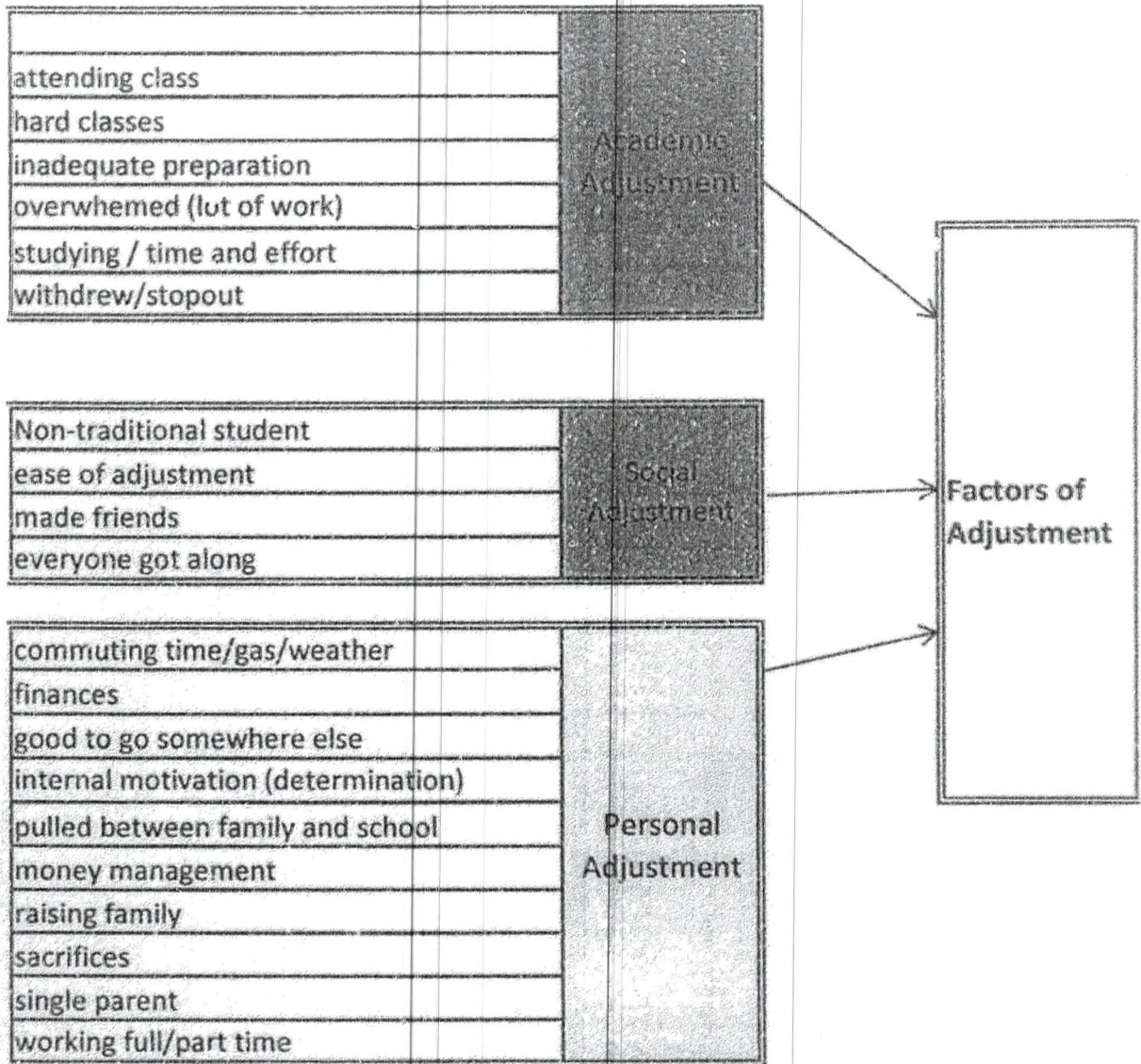
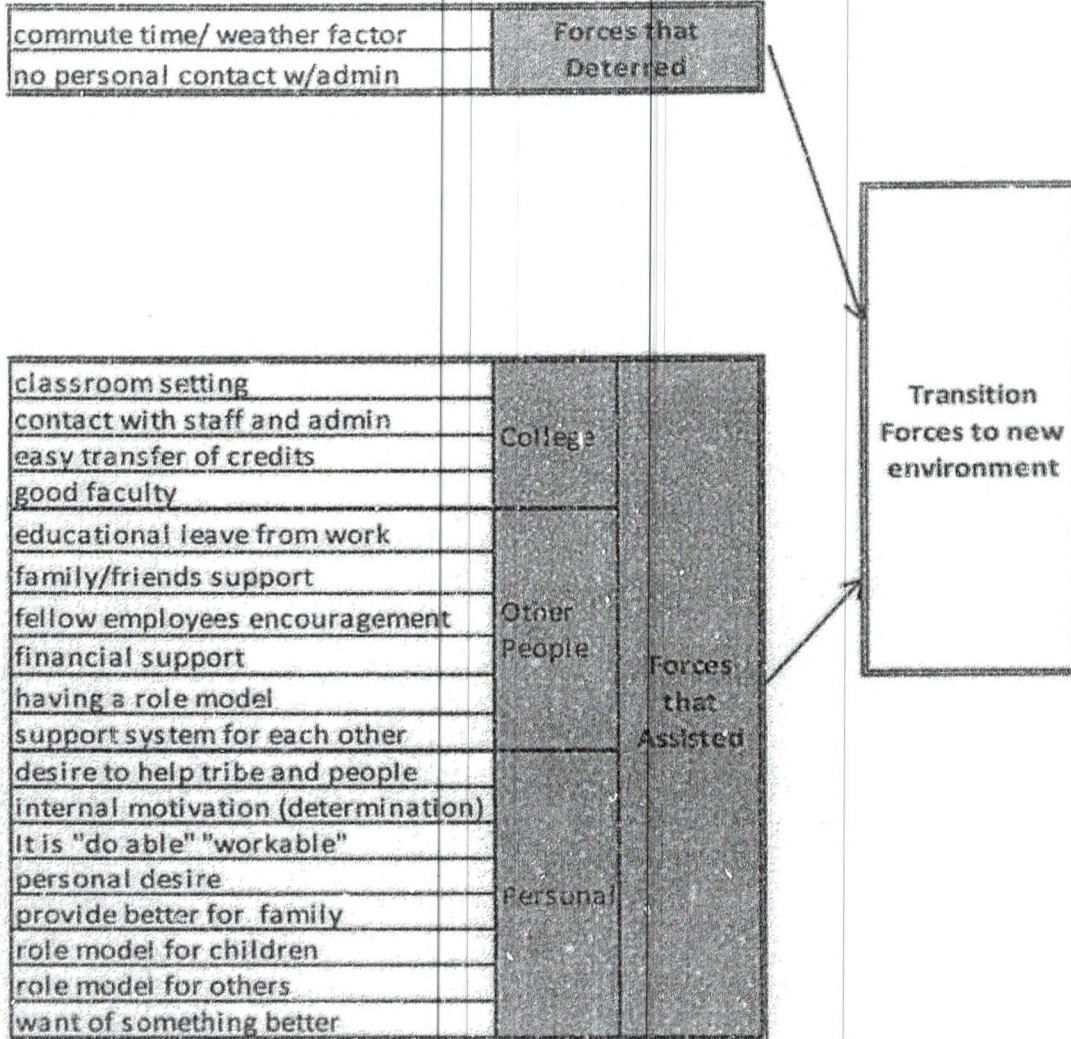


Figure 4. Codes, Categories, and Themes: Anywhere College.

Figure 4 cont.

**Codes, Categories, and Themes: Anywhere College
(cont.)**



Concept Map – Anywhere College

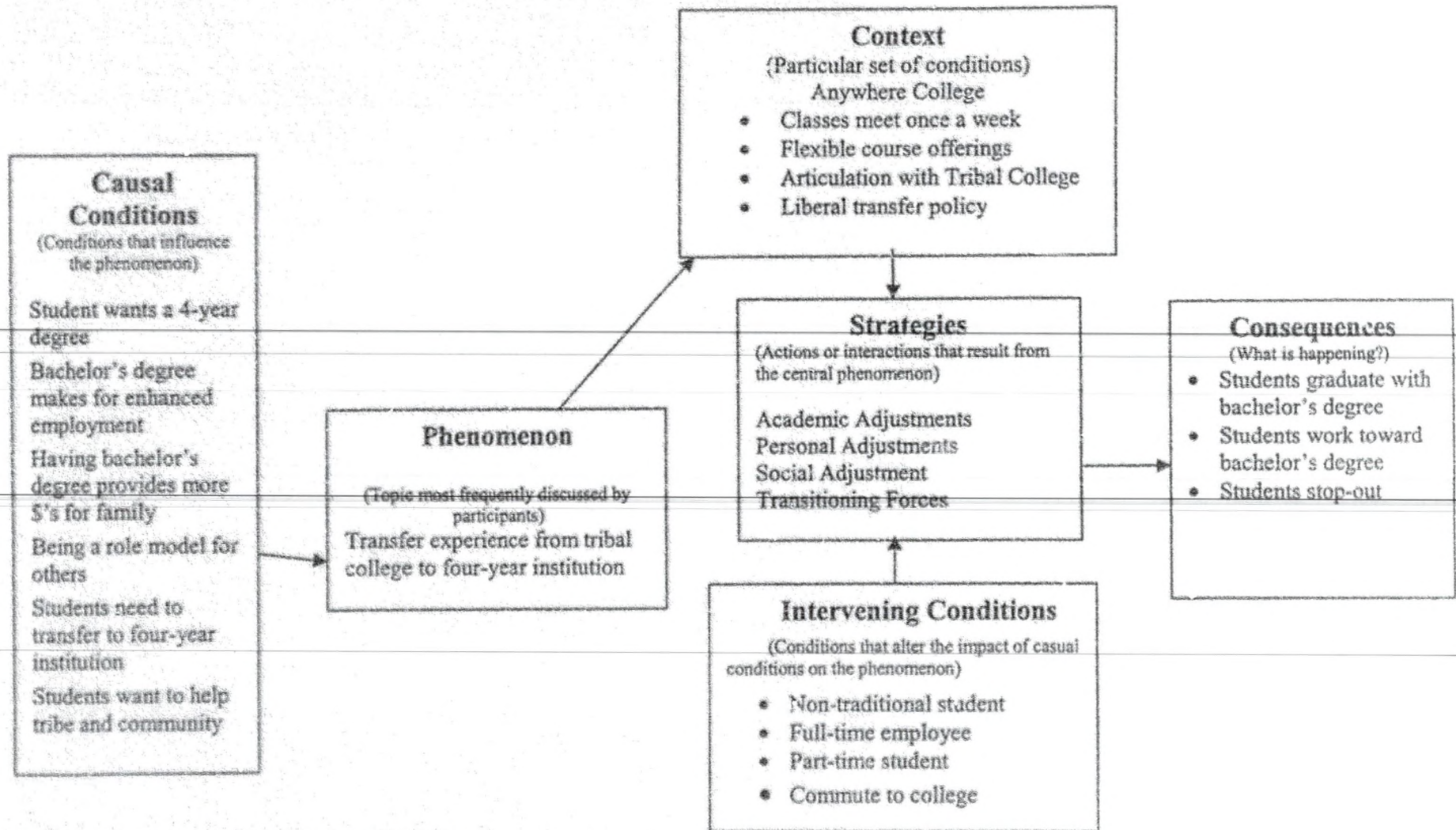


Figure 5. Concept Map: Anywhere College.

Factors of Adjustment

As the participants told their stories and as the stories were transcribed, there were several factors of adjustment that emerged from the students at Anywhere College. The labels for the adjustments were developed from the comments provided by the participants as well as their attitudes that became evident during their story telling. The following section will describe the factors of adjustment which include:

- Academic Adjustment
- Social Adjustment
- Personal Adjustment

Academic Adjustment

Academic adjustment characterized the feelings that were expressed by the participants dealing with their educational preparation, faculty, work load, and attitude about education. All six reported some academic adjustments that needed to be made in order for them to attend and pass the classes.

Academically, most of the interviewees found their classes to be overwhelming because of the amount of work that needed to be done and the time and effort required to do the work. They were all employed full-time and had families. Attending classes weekly, traveling 60 miles one way, having a family, and working full-time took a lot of their week. Then they had to find time to study, do assignments, and prepare for the next class. Pierce said, "It is hard to find time to do the studying and complete the assignments." According to Taylor, "Some of the classes were harder, but, of course, you are in the third and fourth year so it is going to be harder." One participant, Melissa, had a different comment, "My daughters were in high school, and so it was fun for us to be at

the kitchen table doing our homework together." It becomes a challenge to juggle work, travel, studying, and family.

They all commented about the faculty and/or staff. There were comments about instructors being approachable, helpful, and professional. There were even comments regarding challenges that the instructors provided along with an exhilarating feeling the students felt from being challenged.

Five of the participants indicated that class attendance at Anywhere College depended on the instructor. Linda expressed, "Some of the instructors were really strict on attendance. Having to work, go to school, raise a family, and travel made attendance hard." Carrie implied, "You can't miss classes because if you do you fall behind and catching up is not easy to do."

Carrie summarized the academic adjustment by comparing Anywhere College to Little Hawk College, "Classes are harder; instructors are stricter. They expect more from the students and they are more demanding. Instructors at Little Hawk College are more lenient with the students and let them get away with missing classes, turning in assignments late, etc."

Social Adjustment

Social adjustment characterized the feelings that were expressed by the participants dealing with their socialization in a different educational environment. All of the students classified themselves as "non-traditional" students. They all work full-time, have families, and go to school part-time. Five of the students indicated that it was a very easy adjustment. The average age of a student at Anywhere College is about 30, and almost half are part-time students so the participants said it was an easy adjustment. As

Jason stated, "Everyone in the classes seems to be a little older, kind of like me, just trying to finish their degree."

Three of the students interviewed had started out in the Anywhere College's off campus program attending classes on the campus of Little Hawk College. None of the three participants minded the change in having to go to the Southtown, campus except that it took more time to travel to and from class. Jason enjoyed going to the Southtown campus, "We had bigger classes, met people we would never have met, and had an opportunity to have other teachers." Pierce commented, "We got to make new friends."

Half of the participants commented on how everyone in the class got along so well. In fact Jason commented, "In one class we worked in class on projects. The instructor assigned different partners each week. Every week you had a different partner. None of us from Little Village ever worked together. Everyone got along real well."

Carrie summarized her experience by saying:

I like to be in a learning environment. Being in the classroom is a positive thing and it opens your mind up to a lot of things beyond being a mother and working. There is a lot more out there than just the life on the reservation. There is a lot more to do and to see. It helped me to gain a lot of confidence in myself. It helped me to achieve a goal, a goal that I would not of been able to otherwise and to take care of my family.

Personal Adjustment

Personal adjustment characterized the feelings that were expressed by the participants dealing with the factors that affected and changed their personal lives.

Everyone commented about the time it took to commute the 120 miles each time, the money for gas, and the weather factor in the winter time. In the winter, the weather can be quite different 60 miles away and can change in a three hour period of time. According to Linda, "Being a non-traditional student I had to find time to go to class, study, work, spend time with family, and serve on boards. I also had to fight the questionable roads in the winter time."

Finances were a factor that affected all of the participants' lives. Three of the participants talked about car pooling, which helped with the gas expense. A couple of students were getting some financial assistance from their place of employment. Carrie stated, "Because I worked full-time I did not qualify for financial aid; therefore, I had to find other financial resources to pay for classes and textbooks." Taylor went to Anywhere College full-time but had to stop out because of finances. She stated, "I am working full-time now, and don't know if I will get grants or loans when I go back. If you are a single parent you still have those bills so I don't know how you're supposed to pay for college. Besides my school loans for one semester, I owe the school about \$1500, which I need to pay off before I can go back to school. I have to do that so that I can get back in. I need to do that." Linda stated, "Working full-time to support the family and pay for my education was a barrier to overcome." Money management became a necessity for all the participants.

The participants talked about some sacrifices they and their family members had to make. Pierce stated, "It was hard being a non-traditional student with a full-time job, family, and classes to attend." In some cases it was spouses who had to take over some of the family responsibilities. In several cases there were single parents that had to deal

with children who had to be understanding when the parent was not able to give them attention. Linda explained, "My kids would cook and help out with house chores and stuff." Jason shared, "I sacrificed personal time to take classes and get it done." The participants and their families all had to make sacrifices.

In most cases it was the internal motivation and determination that kept participants going. In a few cases students found it difficult to get motivated to do a good job. Carrie revealed, "I had to learn how to motivate myself." Melissa shared, "My life is just so busy but I am glad that I started school. In fact, my study habits have gotten better. The overall experience has been good for me." Jason credits his success to self-motivation and the fact that his grandparents always told him, "Education is what you need and no one can take it from you." Jason said, "I just kept thinking about that and knowing I needed to move forward."

Transition Forces

As the participants told their stories and as the stories were transcribed, there were several transition forces that emerged. There were two types that emerged from the comments provided by the participants as well as their attitudes that became evident during their story telling. The following section describes the transition forces:

- Forces that deterred
- Forces that assisted

Forces That Deterred

All storytellers mentioned the commuting time, which was approximately 60 minutes one way, that was required to drive back and forth and how it dipped into their study time as well as their family time. The reason the participants attended Anywhere

College was because it was within driving distance so it was a deterrent force that could not be overcome.

One of the participants mentioned that there was no personal contact from administration to help her with finding scholarships and knowing for what she qualified. She thought that maybe since she was a transfer student they thought she should already know about financial aid.

No other deterring forces were mentioned by these participants.

Forces That Assisted

The storytellers revealed a variety of forces that assisted them in their transition to their new educational environment. Some of the forces came from Anywhere College and its staff, and others came from outside the education arena and within the participants themselves.

The institutions provided some forces that assisted the students. The easy transfer of credits was a very positive force for all of these students. People within the institutions provided assistance. Students commented that staff people were helpful by assisting with class registration, financial aid, and tutoring. Faculty facilitated student learning by being available to the students and answering questions. Linda shared, "The staff at Southtown was friendly and helped in any way they could." Jason remarked, "The office was open at night so if you had a question you could just stop in." Jason went on to explain, "My academic advisor is an instructor. If I had any questions I could just contact her. She gave me her e-mail, work phone number, and her home number." Melissa mentioned, "If you were not ready to take a test you could take it when you were as long as it was before the next class and without penalty." Carrie said, "The staff and

instructors were very helpful and very professional. They provided a challenge to learn new things and they made it interesting.” The participants remarked that the classroom atmosphere was very similar to that of Little Hawk College. Anywhere College provided ease of transfer and positive staff and faculty for the transfer students.

People outside the institution proved to be a positive force. Employers provided educational leave and fellow employees provided encouragement. Some employers provided financial support. Pierce said, “My place of employment is supportive of my education by helping financially and giving me education leave.” Taylor expressed, “My job let me leave early to attend classes.” The community people provided words of encouragement. Family and friends supported the educational venture. Carrie shared, “My main source of strength was the cooperation and assistance from my family. I could not have attended without their help and understanding. Working for good people was also a powerful force.” Students became each other’s support system by encouraging and helping each other any way possible. Melissa said, “Words of encouragement from classmates, my boss, and my mom kept me going.” Role models provide a strong influence. Taylor shared, “My sister was my role model. She was a single parent and went to school. If she can do it, I can do it.” People can be a strong force in assisting students.

The students themselves were a strong force that assisted with their transfer. Their desire to help their tribe and people, their personal desire, their internal motivation and determination, and their want of something better for their family and themselves were all discussed. They all talked about their desire to be a positive role model for their children and others. Carrie expressed, “If you go off the reservation and get your

education, you have to come back to the reservation and help the rest of the community by being a role model for others. We need good role models. We need people who are working and sober to be role models.” These students showed that they can be their own undeniable force.

All of the students talked about obtaining a bachelor’s degree as “doable” and “workable”. They talked about obstacles they had to contend with like driving, studying, family, and homework, but all these things can be overcome. Where are the students now? Two students proved that the obstacles could be overcome by graduating with a bachelor’s degree. Two students are still attending. Two have stopped out but have plans of going back within the next year. One that graduated and the two that are still going were a part of the articulation program set up between Anywhere College and Little Hawk College. Students made similar comments as Carrie, “I just want to finish. It is doable.”

For these students the transfer experience revolved around three factors of adjustment and two transition forces. During the academic adjustment students dealt with, strengthened, and accepted factors that affected their education. The second adjustment that affected participants’ education was social. This was probably the easiest one for the Anywhere College students. They were non-traditional students transferring to a college with a majority of non-traditional students who were all trying to complete a bachelor’s degree. Therefore they felt comfortable among people like themselves. The third adjustment that affected their education was personal. The major adjustment here was commuting time, gas money, and the weather. Being a full-time employee and having a family created a need for some additional adjustments. The two forces that

affected the education of the students were those that deterred and those that assisted. The only real force that deterred was the commute time and the weather. The forces that assisted helped the students to attend college and continue their education. These forces included assistance from Anywhere College, other people, and themselves. The factors of adjustment and the transition forces were affiliated with the transitioning of the participants from Little Hawk College to Anywhere College in Southtown.

Group Two: University of Somewhere

Set of Conditions

The experiences of the students that attended University of Somewhere in Eastville had to do with the mission and vision of University of Somewhere as well as personal forces that assisted the transition. To clearly visualize the phenomenon of the participants that attended University of Somewhere, codes, categories, and themes were developed as well as a concept map. Figure 6, depicts the factors of adjustment and transition forces for University of Somewhere. Figure 7 reflects the intervening conditions and strategies of the participants that attended University of Somewhere.

University of Somewhere is a rigorous liberal arts institution and a center for education, culture, and research. It attests to personalize education for each student, to enrich classroom experience through research, to honor and support the multicultural inclusiveness of the campus, and to recruit and retain outstanding students and faculty. There are almost 2000 students. About 20% of the students are color and a little less than half of them are American Indian. Transfer students need a 2.5 GPA. Credits are not accepted from postsecondary schools which are not accredited, such as technical and business colleges.

University of Somewhere provides a variety of facilities and services for the students. There is an orientation program, about 90 school organizations, one of which is an American Indian organization, an ethnic center, and tuition waiver for Indians.

Factors of Adjustment

As the eight participants from University of Somewhere told their story and as the stories were transcribed, there were several factors of adjustment that emerged from the students at University of Somewhere. The labels for the adjustments were developed from the comments provided by the participants as well as their attitudes that became evident during their story telling. The following section will describe the factors of adjustment which include:

- Academic Adjustment
- Social Adjustment
- Personal Adjustment

Academic Adjustment

Academic adjustment characterized the feelings that were expressed by the participants dealing with their educational preparation, faculty, work load, and attitude about education. All eight reported some major academic adjustments that needed to be made in order for them to attend and pass the classes at University of Somewhere.

Academically, most of the interviewees found their classes to be overwhelming. A majority of them had spoken to friends and relatives that had informed them that attending a four-year institution was harder than attending Little Hawk College. Bridget shared, "I think the scariest part was that you hear all these stories about how it is so much harder than at the tribal college. That was really scary. That fear held me back for

Codes, Categories, and Themes: University of Somewhere

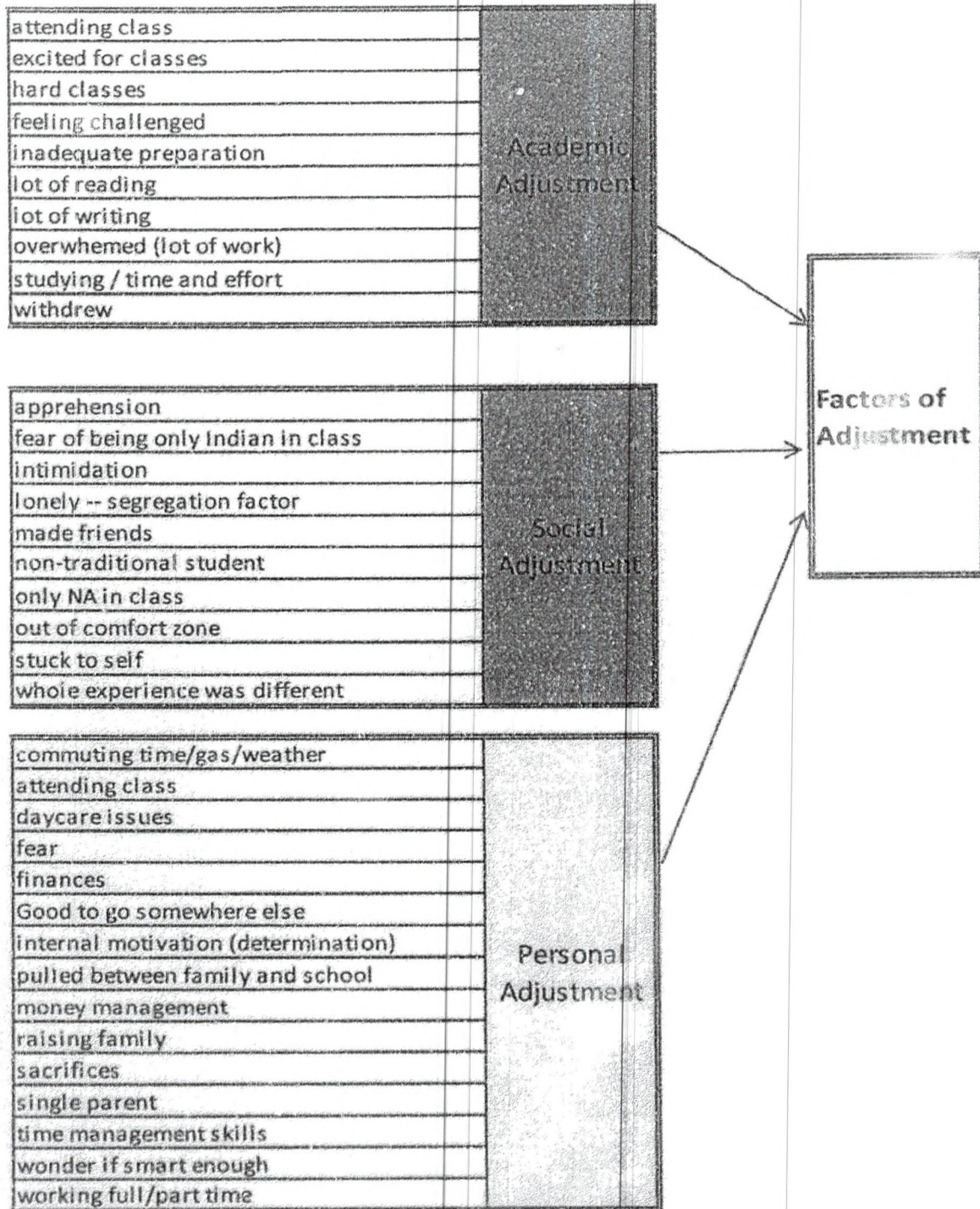
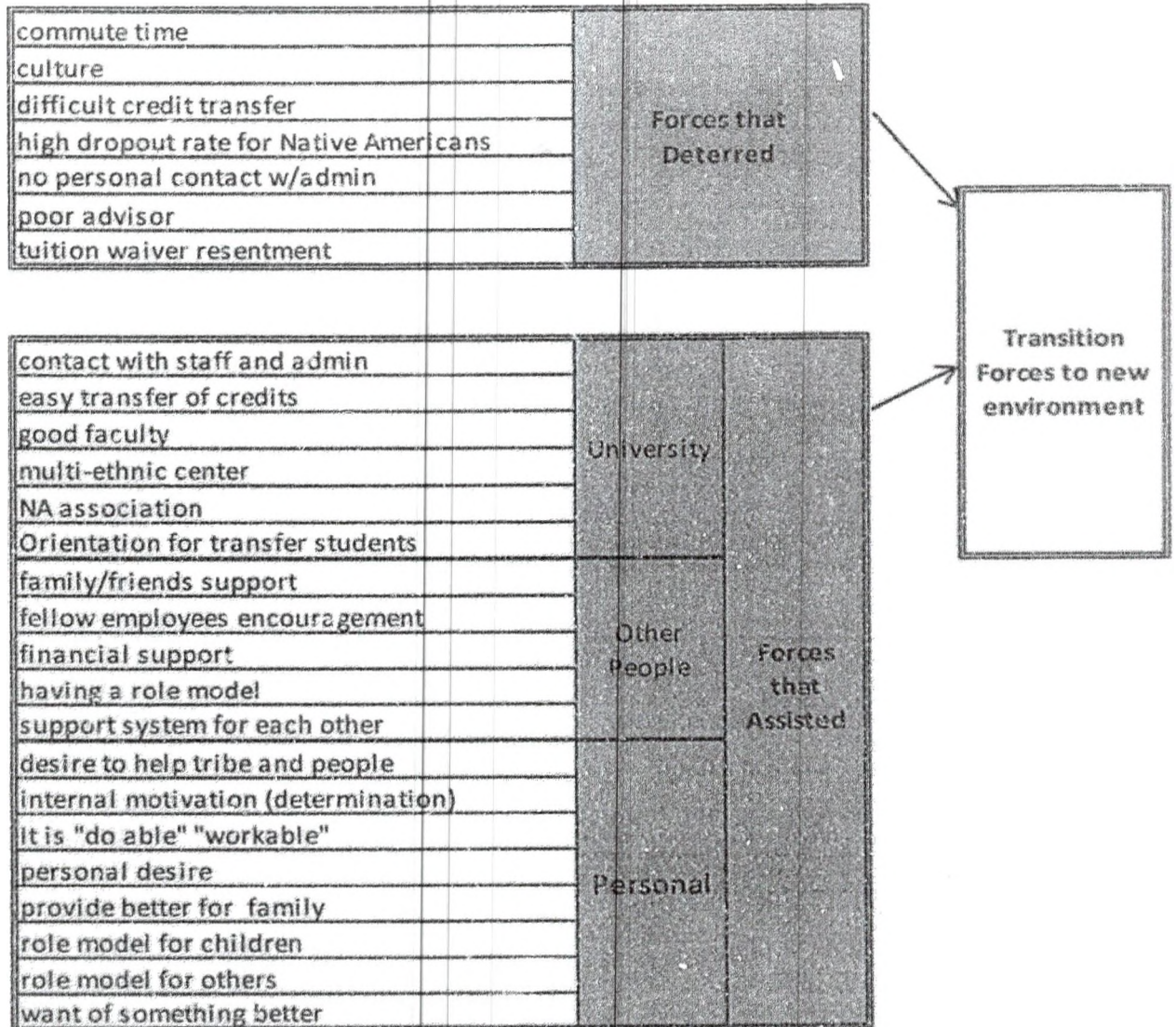


Figure 6. Codes, Categories, and Themes: University of Somewhere.

Figure 6 cont.

Codes, Categories, and Themes: University of Somewhere (cont.)



Concept Map: University of Somewhere

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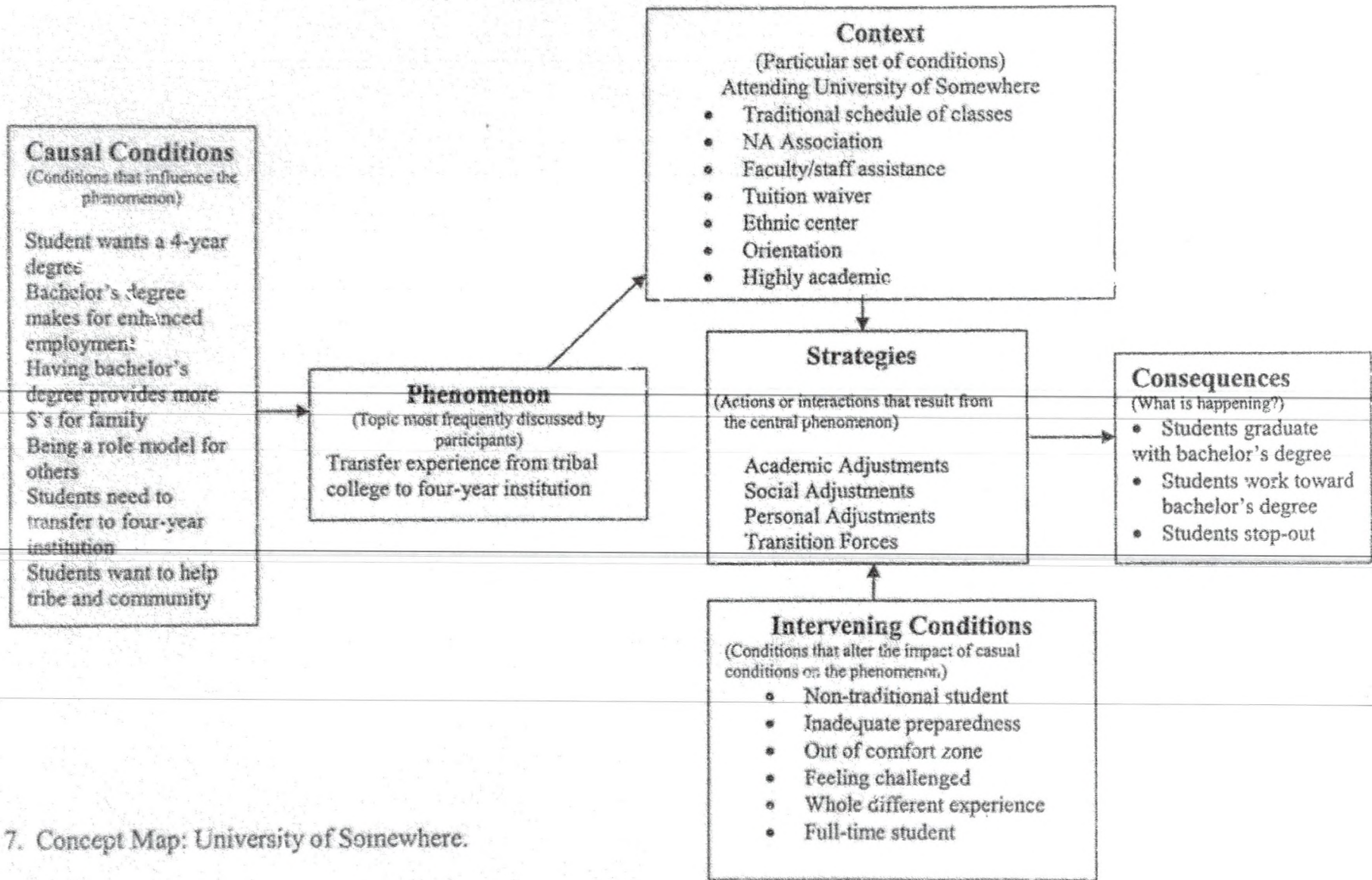


Figure 7. Concept Map: University of Somewhere.

a while." Seven of the students indicated that there was an overwhelming amount of reading and writing that caused them to feel submerged in homework. They found that they needed to spend a lot more time studying than they had anticipated. All comments were like Michael's, "I wasn't prepared for all the reading and writing." Hazel reported, "I didn't know how to write a paper. My professors at Eastville helped me. You also read non-stop there." Bridget shared that at University of Somewhere, "They are upper level classes and, therefore, they should be harder." Decra shared, "There were days I wondered if I could do it. There was a huge amount of reading and writing, not in just one class but in all of them. It was like I was run down ragged. Every day I would walk down the hall and wonder if I would make it." Hazel was so overwhelmed her first semester she withdrew but went back the second semester and is still going.

Feeling academically unprepared was intimidating for seven of the students. There was a large amount of writing that needed to be done, not just at the end of the semester, but for many projects throughout the semester. Interviewees felt that they struggled to write on a college level because they were lacking in upper level writing skills. Students felt they were not equipped to do all the reading that was required. The level of expectation was higher than most students were used to at Little Hawk College. Some students felt they were not prepared for the rigor of a four-year institution. Katie said, "I went to school one year and then quit. I wasn't ready for the challenge. Then I realized that it was my last time and decided I needed to get it done."

One of the major concerns for students was the amount of time and effort that was required to do the studying, assignments, and attending classes. It not only takes a lot of time to study and do assignments, but also to travel back and forth to the four-year

institutions. All of the students went to school full-time. Three of the students continued to work part-time while the others just concentrated on school. Two of the students moved to Eastville, for a short period of time, and then returned to Little

Village for Family Support

Six of the students felt they were unprepared for the caliber of work that was required of them. Debra shared, "It would have been a less slap in the face if I had been a little more prepared for the expectations. You just aren't ready to write these papers that they want you to write." They all agreed that classes were hard, which made them a challenge.

There was a certain amount of excitement about attending classes. A couple of students mentioned they were glad when one semester was over, but shortly thereafter were excited about the next semester and the new classes and anticipation of what they would learn next.

Social Adjustment

Social adjustment characterized the feelings that were expressed by the participants dealing with their socialization in a different educational environment. All eight of the students grappled with a sense of being out of their comfort zone in the four-year institution and some with a sense of apprehension. Being a non-traditional and older student seemed to be a major social adjustment for all those attending Eastville. Elizabeth remarked, "I felt age conscious. There was such an age difference. The others were just out of high school. I also felt like I was out of my element and over my head." Being the only Native American in the class was an intimidating factor for five of the students. Bridget revealed, "If there is another Native in the classroom it makes all the

difference in the world for me. Someone to hang out with.” Jane shared, “Intimidation factor is a barrier. You may be the only Native American in the class. I felt a little out of place with other students and didn’t participate in any activities.” Five of the students felt lonely and segregated which lead to depression. Meeting people was difficult. The multi-ethnic center and the Native American association provided support for most of the students. Seven of the students felt that the whole social experience was different at University of Somewhere. All of the students remarked that they felt “out of their comfort zone”.

Making friends was a challenge. Three of the students remarked that they stuck pretty much to themselves, going to classes and then going home. Michael shared, “I knew people, but I went to school to learn and study and that was my goal, not to make friends.” Katie said, “Some of my fellow students would talk to me in class but not speak to me or recognize me outside of class. I pretty much stuck with the Indian students.” Five participants talked about making friends. Amber shared that after she started visiting with other students she, “found out about classes and advisors and which ones were helpful so I personally contacted one, and she was good.” Several students shared that they joined the Native American organization to have a friend and support group. Hazel shared, “There are a lot of foreign students there, but it is way different for the Indians. People welcome every group but us. Instructors would do group things all the time and nobody wants you in their group. I am used to it now. Once you prove yourself then they treat you differently. Every semester in every class you have to prove yourself all over again.”

Personal Adjustment

Personal adjustment characterized the feelings that were expressed by the participants dealing with the factors that affected and changed their personal lives. All participants expressed a desire to help their tribe and people but were unaware of the sacrifices they would have to make.

Finances were a factor that affected all of the participants' lives. It became a challenge to determine how to pay for education, buy gas, and in some cases, pay for daycare and provide for families all at the same time. Jane shared, "I had a difficult time finding sitters and being able to pay for it." Getting finances set up was a hurdle to climb. Most of the students talked about having to learn money management skills in order to survive. Jane shared, "I had to budget my loans to make it through the semester." Many of the participants talked about the large amount of school loans they have as a result of their education. According to Jane, "It said free tuition, but, of course, you had to pay for your books and technical and building fees and everything else. Of course there were living expenses too even though I worked part-time."

Studying took a lot more of their time than participants anticipated. Seven students reported that this was a strain for them as well as their families. There were cases where children, spouses, and family members felt neglected. Participants talked about being pulled between family and school. Having to tell family that everyone had to stay home because the parent had to study was hard on the family and on the student. Not able to attend some family activities was a sacrifice participants said was difficult. Debra shared, "My kids wanted to do things but I would say I can't because I have to study. We even missed some pow wows, it was a big sacrifice. If I had a paper due we

couldn't go." Seven students reported being overwhelmed with everything that needed to be done besides class work. In a few cases like Katie's, "My love of my family and obligations would sometimes keep me from attending some of my classes." Five students talked about learning time management skills. Elizabeth shared, "I became more accountable for my time. I set up goals for myself and followed through with them."

All eight found that commuting created a problem. There was not only the time to travel back and forth but also the gas money and the weather conditions in the winter. Most of the students were on-campus so classes were always held and there was no leniency if you were a commuter. Therefore, you tried to get to classes even when the weather was bad. Attendance is important at University of Somewhere. According to Hazel, "You have to be in class because when you miss you miss so much. You can't afford to miss any."

Fear and intimidation were factors some of the participants experienced. They wondered if they were smart enough, that was a fear that held some back until they were able to overcome it. Hazel reported, "I didn't know if I could make it so I ended up withdrawing. There is a one-time withdrawal so that is what I did. I really lucked out. I went back because of my family."

Since all the participants were non-traditional students, that created some issues. Six of the students were raising children, four were single parents, and all had close family ties and responsibilities. Three of the single parents had to work part-time to keep up with the expenses. The single parents had to deal with school, daycare, and raising a family by themselves. Hazel shared, "I am a single mom so that makes it hard with daycare." The married parents had to deal with school, daycare, and raising a family with

the help of the spouse. Both groups found it challenging to be a non-traditional student with a family. Debra shared, "Eastville, is not the school for a non-traditional student. Most of the students are right out of high school." Elizabeth shared, "I was still working part-time and I was a single parent. I didn't have a social life." The non-traditional student faces many challenges when going to University of Somewhere.

In most cases it was the internal motivation and determination that kept participants going. In a few cases students found it difficult to get motivated to do a good job. Once participants determined that it was 'doable' they trudged forward.

Sacrifices were a part of their personal adjustment story. According to Katie students must realize, "School will be your life. You have to sacrifice everything in your life and trudge through."

Four students expressed that they felt it was a good experience to go to a different institution rather than continue at the tribal college they had previously attended. Hazel said, "Eastville is such a good school I don't know why more people don't go there." Elizabeth shared, "Going to school somewhere else other than Little Hawk College was good for me. You see other viewpoints and you learn to survive. You also get other experiences and other perspectives. It gives you a whole different outlook. It also takes you out of your comfort zone."

Transition Forces

As the participants told their story and as the stories were transcribed, there were several transition forces that emerged. There were two levels that developed from the comments provided by the participants as well as their attitudes that became evident during their story telling. The following section will describe the transition forces:

- Forces that deterred
- Forces that assisted

Forces That Deterred

The storytellers mentioned a variety of forces that deterred them in their transition to their new educational environment. Some of them were overcome and others will always remain deterrents.

The commuting time for all the interviewees was approximately the same, 60 minutes one way, which dipped into their study time as well as their family time. The alternative was to move to the community in which the school was located. A couple of students did that, but moved back to the Little Village area within a year. One of the reasons the participants attended University of Somewhere was because it was within driving distance so this was a deterrent force that could not be overcome.

Three students mentioned the high dropout rate for Native Americans. Jane felt that because of that faculty was not willing to work with the native student figuring they would not be back the next semester. "Once they would notice that you were still there, their attitude changed."

Five of the students shared experiences about the lack of personal contact with the administration. Elizabeth expressed, "It isn't personal. You send your transcripts and then go on-line and see what classes you need. You don't visit an advisor until you have enrolled." Half of the participants discussed the poor advising they felt they had received. April shared, "I wish I would have had better advising. I didn't have anybody helping me decide what classes I should take to finish. I just chose a degree that I could complete the fastest and just be done." Debra said, "I just needed an advisor that was

there to answer my questions and help me.” Katie mentioned that the faculty and students were a challenge for her.” Jane said, “It would have been nice to have had someone show you the process of what is expected and needed for applying for grants.” She feels she may have missed out on some financial opportunities, but having a child and working part-time she didn’t have time to do the research on her own.

University of Someplace has a tuition waiver for Indians. It was felt by some students that it is this waiver that generated some issues that seemed to them to be racism. Some participants felt that if the students and instructors understood the reason for the waiver there would be less negative attitudes toward the Native Americans. Hazel feels, “There is just a lack of knowledge as to why there is free tuition. Those that take an Indian class learn the reason for the waiver, and then they really get it. Unfortunately, not everyone takes an Indian class.” Katie agreed by saying, “Prejudice was in the ignorance of “why” there is a tuition waiver.” One student stated that because a lot of Native Americans drop out of college, instructors assume that helping them is a waste of time; therefore, you have to prove yourself by doing well in the classes and return the next semester.

There were other factors that deterred the transition. A couple of interviewees had trouble with the transfer of credits. Michael told his story, “The business credits did not transfer. My first choice for a major was management. The transfer committee and the transfer specialist strongly encouraged me to not go into management so I changed my major.” Five students felt there was very little personal contact with the administration/staff which deterred them because of not getting personal assistance with financial aid, registration, scholarship information, nor knowing what classes to take.

Forces That Assisted

The storytellers revealed a variety of forces that assisted them in their transition to their new educational environment. Some of the forces came from University of Somewhere and its staff and faculty, while others came from people outside the education arena and from within the participants themselves.

They all commented about the faculty and/or staff. There were comments about instructors being approachable, helpful, and professional. There were even comments regarding challenges that the instructors provided along with an exhilarating feeling the students felt from being challenged. The participants talked about visiting with other native students to find out who were good advisors. Michael said, "My advisor was very understanding and supportive." Jane said, "My advisor didn't help with the transfer, but did help when a teacher was giving me a bad time." Hazel expressed thoughts, "The transfer coordinator at Eastville, was very helpful." She also talked about her advisor, "I had been told what advisor to go to and she was good. She helped me withdraw the first semester and encouraged me to come back the second semester." Katie talked about the financial aid office, "They were good, but they didn't have any money for me. They didn't have the time to sit down and help us navigate their site. They had too many students." Debra talked about a special relationship she had with a few faculty, "I would just go to them and say I needed help and they would clear their desk and help me."

University of Somewhere provided some forces that assisted students. Five students talked about the easy transfer of credits, while two reported that it took a little work to get some credits transferred. Faculty facilitated student learning by being

available to the students and answering questions as was reported by six participants.

The university provided student orientation; however, only four of the eight students attended it. Of those that attended three felt it was very beneficial. All participants

mentioned the ethnic center, but only three talked about using the facility. Michael

commented about the center, "It was kind of noisy so I would go to the library to study."

Jane used the ethnic center, "They had computers and printers that you could use if you were a minority. It was a comfort zone for misplaced students."

There was a Native American association which all participants knew about and belonged to. Because most of the activities took place at night, very few were active but yet they were all members and participated as much as they could. Amber said another person from Little Village said she should join the club so she did, and "It helped me socially because it connected me to other people who had kids and overall academically and their friends." Hazel said, "I joined the Native American club the second semester to meet other Indians and have some kind of support group."

People outside University of Somewhere proved to be a positive force. One participant received financial support. They all received moral support from family and friends. Amber shared personal thoughts of, "I count myself very fortunate to have a supportive family and extended family to help with my educational aspirations." In some cases it was a positive word, in others it was help with housework. One of the participants, who was working part-time, received encouragement from fellow employees. Five of the participants had a role model that kept them going. Two reported being a support system for each other. Katie shared, "I just kept thinking about how my education would help my family."

Students themselves were a strong force that assisted with their transfer to University of Somewhere. Five had a strong desire to help their tribe and people. This gave them the internal motivation and determination to complete their degree and help their people. Debra explained her desire to help her tribe this way, "I could see that within the tribe we need to be functioning at a level where we can compete with the way that we live in our society. Yet we need to maintain our identity as to who we are. We need to have educated people in order to survive so that we are on a level playing field with the dominant society. I think that is the only way we can live." Half of the participants shared wanting something better for their family and themselves. They all talked about their desire to be a positive role model for their children and others. Debra said, "You have to get that educational discipline. You have to want it and make the commitment."

All of the students talked about obtaining a bachelor's degree as "doable" and "workable". Six students proved that the obstacles could be overcome by graduating with a bachelor's degree. Two of those students are working on their master's degree at a different institution. Two students are still working on their bachelor's degree. They are all pleased with themselves that they made the plunge to get their education.

For University of Somewhere students, the transfer experience revolved around three factors of adjustment and two transition forces. During the academic adjustment students dealt with, strengthened, and accepted factors that affected their education. Some of the factors included their weak academic preparedness, their finding and acceptance of instructor/staff assistance, and their study load. The second adjustment that affected participant's education was social. This was probably the hardest one for

University of Somewhere students. The big factors included apprehension, intimidation, being a non-traditional student with a majority of traditional students, the different experience, and being out of their comfort zone. The third adjustment that affected their education was personal. Some of the adjustments were internal such as motivation, fear, feeling of not being smart enough, and sacrifices that needed to be made. Other adjustments included money management, time management, and the pull between family and school. The two forces that affected the education of the students were those that deterred and those that assisted. The forces that deterred were things that made it difficult for students to attend college like the reputation of Native Americans and the lack of personal contact with administration. The tuition waiver and its impact was a big factor for some students to adjust to and accept. The forces that assisted from the university, other people, and personal helped the students to attend college and continue their education. The factors of adjustment and the transition forces were affiliated with the transitioning of the participants from Little Hawk College to University of Somewhere.

Comparison of Institutions

The two four-year institutions the participants attended are similar but yet different. Both schools are accredited liberal arts institutions, provide bachelor and graduate degrees, prepare students for service to the community, and encourage personal growth. Anywhere College is a private institution accommodating non-traditional students that are employed, have families, attend school part-time, and commute. Thirty is the average age of the students. University of Somewhere is a public school accommodating the traditional students that are just out of high school a short time and

attend school full-time. Anywhere College offers classes once a week having many night classes. University of Somewhere has the traditional day schedule with classes being offered several times a week. The majority of faculty at Anywhere College are adjunct with professional experience, while those at University of Somewhere are highly educated full-time faculty who have won many teaching awards. Anywhere College has a more lenient transfer policy than University of Somewhere. University of Somewhere is a larger school and can provide a sports team and a large number of student organizations while Anywhere College has neither. University of Somewhere has a campus with a library, student center, culture center, several buildings for classrooms, and student housing. Anywhere College has a building with offices and a few classrooms. University of Somewhere has free tuition for American Indians. The two schools both provide an education to students, but do it with dissimilar resources and in a dissimilar way.

Five of the participants wanted to continue to work at their present job while working part-time on a bachelor's degree. Since their jobs were daytime positions going to school in the late afternoons or evenings was ideal for them. Anywhere College was able to provide these students with a degree they were interested in as well as a flexible schedule. Since the College catered to non-traditional students, the students felt comfortable in the classroom because the majority of the other students were like them: had families, were employed, and were older than the traditional student. The college personnel had office hours at night to help students since many of the classes were night classes. This made it possible for the participants to stop into the offices before or between classes and get questions answered. The students from Little Hawk College that

went to Anywhere College did so because it fit them well. They had no desire to join organizations or be involved in school activities. They simply wanted to attend classes, go home, and get a bachelor's degree; therefore, Anywhere College was the place they could go to accomplish their goal.

One of the participants that attended Anywhere College had originally wanted to attend University of Somewhere. Her main reason was because of the Indian tuition waiver. Anywhere College was a private school and she had accumulated a large financial debt and therefore had to stop-out to earn money to pay the debt before she could go back. Since University of Somewhere would have provided her with a tuition waiver she thought she would have had the finances to complete her degree without having to stop-out. She determined that she was not accepted at University of Somewhere because her grades were low and they have high academic entrance requirements. She attended Anywhere College but wanted to be attending University of Somewhere.

Eight of the participants wanted to continue their education after Little Hawk College by going to school full-time to get their bachelor's degree faster. For most of the students it was the degrees that the University of Somewhere offered that were appealing. One student graduated with a degree that was not his first choice but a third choice because the transfer school did not offer a bachelor's degree in his first choice. He had some difficulties with the transfer of credits because the tribal college courses were taught as upper level courses at University of Somewhere. The American Indian tuition waiver made it very enticing for all students. University of Somewhere had a traditional class schedule so the students could attend day classes, and drive back home to be with

their families in the evening. There was a multi-ethnic center where students could use computers and printers. There was a Native American organization that many joined and used as a support group. The whole experience was different because the participants were non-traditional students among traditional and attending a traditional school. They were out of their comfort zone. Some of the experiences were good and some were not-so-good. Some struggled, but yet they overcame and make progress to obtain their degrees. The participants that attended University of Somewhere felt the experience was good for them; they received a quality education and were glad they chose to attend school there. For most of the students the choice of school was a good fit.

One of the participants that attended Anywhere College had originally wanted to attend University of Somewhere because of the Indian tuition waiver. Anywhere College was a private school and with tuition and fees she had accumulated a large financial debt, and, therefore, had to stop-out to earn money to pay the debt before she could go back. Since she could of received a tuition waiver at University of Somewhere, she felt she would have had the finances to complete her degree without having to stop-out. She felt that she was not accepted at University of Somewhere because her grades were low and they have high academic entrance requirements. She attended Anywhere College but wanted to e attending University of Somewhere.

In most cases students found the institution that fit them best. They were all looking for a school within driving distance. Some were looking for an education they could obtain while they were working full-time, and some wanted to go to school full-time and complete it faster. Some participants were looking for a particular bachelor's degree. Some wanted an education that worked with their schedule while others were

looking for a quality education which happened to come with a tuition waiver. The participants attended the school that fit their particular needs.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND REFLECTIONS

Summary of the Study

The existing literature addresses the retention issue of Native Americans at tribal colleges and the general student population at non-tribal colleges, but does not adequately examine Native Americans transferring from a community tribal college to a baccalaureate granting institution. There was a need for a deeper understanding of Native American students' transition in order to ascertain what leads to the few who successfully complete their higher educational goals. Why do some complete their degrees and some do not? It was necessary to search for the cause and then develop a solution. This qualitative study examined issues that Native American students have when transferring from a tribal college to a four-year institution. Fourteen Native American students were asked to tell their transfer story. They had all attended Little Hawk College, a tribal institution. Eight transferred to University of Somewhere and six to Anywhere College. The interview transcripts were coded and analyzed. After a careful examination of the data and several re-examinations, it was revealed that the data from the students needed to be examined by the four-year institution attended.

Transferring from a tribal college to a four-year institution was a life changing event for these participants which impacted their lives in different ways. Schlossberg's (1995) 4 S's transition theory provided a set of determinants to determine how well they

coped with the transfer. It also helped in evaluating why different participants reacted differently to the same type of transition. The impact of the participants' lives greatly varied depending on the institution they transferred to, therefore it was necessary to separate the analysis by institution. The situations faced at each school were different for the two sets of participants. In some situations, participants attending the same school reacted differently. Even though the participants were all non-traditional and Native American, there was a mixture of male and female and a variety of ages. They all had some kind of family support; children, spouse, parent, aunt, or other family member. Some had support from friends and coworkers. The strategies used to cope with the transfer varied with the participants. The strategies they used to take charge of a situation, to manage stress, and to control problems varied from person to person. Some of the strategies used by the participants depended on where they were with their culture. It was interesting to listen to the participants tell about their challenges and how they overcame them and became a stronger person. I believe Schlossberg's transition theory was very useful in researching the Native American transfer students. Issues included family, friends, and relationships. Other issues included maintaining academic levels since many felt they were underprepared, making sense of the institutional culture and traditions, and straddling two cultures.

The interviews provided a rich collection of "factors of adjustment" and "transition forces" that affected the students. The factors of adjustment were academic, social, and personal. These factors differed in many areas depending on the institution attended. Transition forces were separated by those that deterred and those that assisted.

The forces that assisted were separated by institution attended, other people, and personal forces.

As early as 1991 Tierney said that higher education institutions need to adapt, build bridges, and work together with tribal colleges for the Native American student (Bensimon & Tierney, 1993; Tierney, 1991, 1992a, 1992b, 1995). Wagner (2010) and Dembicki (2010) are saying the same thing in 2010. The participants in this study may have benefited if the tribal college and the four-year institution had worked closer especially those going to University of Somewhere, a traditional four-year institution.

Findings

As a result of this study, there are some important findings: (a) reasons for selection of four-year institution, (b) forces that hindered the transfer to a four-year institution, (c) forces that facilitated the transfer to a four-year institution, and (d) why. All the participants are glad that they decided to continue their education by attending a four-year university.

Reasons for Choice

All the participants shared that the main reason for choosing their particular four-year institution was that it was fairly close to home, and they would be able to commute. All those that chose University of Somewhere did so mainly because of the Indian tuition waiver. They also chose it because they were going to be full-time students and it was a traditional school with a typical day-time class schedule. One person indicated that she tried to get into University of Somewhere but was not accepted; she felt it was because her grade point was not good enough, but yet it seemed to be good enough for Anywhere College.

Those that chose Anywhere College worked full-time and the classes were held once a week with many of them being in the evening so it was more convenient. Three people indicated that they originally started classes with Anywhere College when there was an agreement with Little Hawk College and the classes were offered on the tribal college campus. Because it was so convenient, they had decided that they would be foolish to not take advantage of it. Once the classes were no longer offered on Little Hawk Campus, they felt they were too far into the program to quit so they continued the program by commuting to Southtown, to attend Anywhere College.

Forces That Hindered

There were a number of forces that affected the participants' transfer regardless of which four-year institution they attended. One of the major handicaps expressed by all participants was being a non-traditional student. Getting into a study mode of concentrating, reading, writing, and doing homework was a challenge felt by all. Finances were an issue for the majority of participants. Most of the students had children so having to deal with family issues while trying to study and complete homework assignments was a challenge. Family time and family activities were sacrificed by both the participants and their families. Another major issue of concern for all the participants was the commute time. In all cases, except one, the commute time was about 60 minutes one way. The commuting caused a strain for gas money as well as having to drive in some dreadful mid-west weather in the winter months.

The participants that attend University of Somewhere had a number of extra forces that affected them as a transfer student. They all felt that they were out of their comfort zone. The majority of the student body was different than them. Most of them

talked about feeling alone at one time or another while on campus, especially if they thought they were the only Native American in a classroom. Some talked about having to prove to the instructors and the other students that they were not going to quit school but continue until graduation. There was a feeling that there was a barrier between the native and non-native students but most felt it was caused by the tuition waiver. As a non-traditional student, they were older than most of the students in their classes which created an intimidation factor. Could being a non-traditional student have caused the feeling of intimidation and the barrier they felt between themselves and the other students? They had little in common with most of the students because they were older than most of the other students, commuted to school from home each day, and six of the eight had children at home. These things made them different from the majority of students at University of Somewhere. They said there was a lack of academic advising as well as very little personal contact with the administration. Nearly everyone felt that they were inadequately prepared for junior level work with all the reading and writing that was required of them. They felt the amount of work was overwhelming. All the participants said the whole experience at University of Somewhere was different.

The majority of participants indicated that they felt unprepared for the four-year institution. Their writing and reading skills were inadequate. They had a large amount of reading to do for which they were not prepared. They did not know how to research for scholarships nor make application for them. They faced difficulties with time management and financial management. Why did they have these issues? These are issues the tribal college could have helped them to deal with before they transferred.

Forces That Facilitated

The forces that facilitated the transfer were quite similar for participants at both institutions. One of the main forces stated as a force that assisted the transfer was having a role model; in turn they want to be a role model for their children and others. Their role models were not just someone they looked up to or who was successful, but someone who had to go through similar struggles and challenges they were going through. The second main force was the support of family and friends. The majority said it was an internal motivation force that kept them going. The realization that education was a “doable” goal was a facilitating force. Most of the participants said the credits from the tribal college easily transferred. Half of them had a desire to transfer to get a baccalaureate degree because they wanted something better for their family. Half wanted to help their tribe and people (McKinley & Brayboy, 2004). The majority of the participants felt the faculty were good and in some cases assisted their transfer. Many participants found it necessary to learn time and financial management skills.

E. Lawrence (personal communication, October 27, 2010) called it a “fire in the belly”; that desire to want to make a difference for family, friends, and the tribe.

Those that went to Anywhere College said the staff, administration, and advisors were very helpful and readily available. Since Anywhere College is a private school, it is usually quite customer responsive. Most of the participants commented that the adjustment to Anywhere College was very easy, the classroom setting was comfortable, and everyone got along in and out of the classroom. The student body at Anywhere College was made up of people just like the participants, non-traditional.

Those that went to University of Somewhere said there was a Native American organization which helped to get connected socially with other Native Americans. They also talked about a culture center where minority culture students could go to use computers, study, or relax.

Little Hawk College and Anywhere College had worked together for a few years to bring bachelor level courses to the Little Hawk Campus. Would a relationship between Little Hawk College and University of Somewhere have helped the students who transferred there?

All the participants expressed a desire for an education and had educational goals. They expressed the importance of getting an education to improve the financial status of their family, to help others, and to help their tribe. No one mentioned getting an education for themselves; it was always for someone or something else. It was apparent to me that their bond with family was very strong. Many had a strong desire to get an education in order to get a better job within the tribe to better sustain their family. Family does not mean just their immediate family but also their extended family, all their relatives. Some saw a need in the tribe and returned to school for an education to help fulfill that role for their tribe. As they talked about their education, or the delaying of their education, immediate family, extended family, and the tribe were always a part of the story. Listening to them tell their education stories made their experience real for others. The strong bond of love they felt for family, both immediate and extended permeated from their stories.

All the participants experienced some hardships. The difference between those who stopped out and those who continued or graduated had to do with the drive E.

Lawrence called "fire in the belly". Maybe some lights did not burn as bright or as high as others. Those that had a brighter light found ways to deal with hardships and continue on with their education. Not only was the "fire in the belly" bright for some, but the desire to help family, friends, and the tribe was so strong that they found ways to overcome all obstacles. It was what they had inside them. It was their personal attitude toward family, tribe, culture, and education. The thought of being able to help their family nudged them to persevere when things got rocky. One person had to continue with classes because her grants and scholarships were her only means of supporting her family. For another person quitting college was not an option because she had quit her job and she had nothing to go back to support her family so she had to move forward. The participants traveled many miles, sometimes in bad weather. They had to find money for daycare, food, and gas. In many cases they had to give up some family activities, find time to study, and devote their energy to getting to class and getting their homework done. I think the paths they all traveled were full of rocks and stones but they were able to move those rocks and continue on their paths.

Those that stopped out had reasons for doing so. They were not selfish reasons but family reasons. They still had the desire to continue school to earn a bachelor's degree but it had to be delayed. One person adopted a baby, not a planned adoption, but nevertheless providing a home for a baby that had none. It was apparent to me that she still had a strong desire to continue her education and she planned to, but her desire to help was greater and so she provided a home for a small baby. The other person stopped out because of finances. She felt she was not adequately providing financial support for her family. She also wants to continue her education as soon as she financially can

because she wants to lead by example for her children. I believe both of these people will continue their education for a bachelor's degree and am sure that one of them will continue on for a master's.

The participants' pursuit of an education impacted their family. Those that have children commented about encouraging them to go to college right after high school and before a serious relationship. One participant encouraged his children to pursue a degree to get a good job. Three of the participants already have children in college. One participant has a child going to the same college as she is going to. Three have young children and are already talking to them about the importance of a college education. All of the participants that have children are taking an active role in their education, even at the elementary level; to be sure they study hard, get good grades, and take the right classes that will help them in college. The participants have become promoters of education and role models not only for family, friends, and extended family. They all are glad that they persevered and decided to pursue a bachelor's degree.

Recommendations

Based on the research and the findings of this study I have made some recommendations including those shared by the participants. Recommendations are provided for tribal colleges, receiving institutions, tribes, families, and friends as to what they can do to improve the transfer experience for present students as well as future students. The participants provided valuable insights as to what worked for them, and made suggestions as to what could be done to smooth the way for future transfer students.

For Tribal Colleges

The participants in this study discussed things the tribal college did or could have done to make for a smooth transfer. Based on what I learned from the participants, the research, and my personal experience, I recommend the following:

- Establish a position for a transfer officer that would obtain articulation agreements with colleges, advise transfer students, build rapport with students, develop a curriculum for transfer, assist in the transfer application process, assist in locating sources for scholarships and funds, and provide support (Dougherty, 1992; Herman & Lewis, 2004). After transfer remain in contact with students on a weekly basis at first and then monthly by either phone or in person just to keep the student on track and to show interest and support. That person should provide encouraging words and be available to listen if hardships should arise. Remind the student of their education vision/focus.
- Little Hawk faculty hold students more accountable in their classes. Hold students to the rigor and standards of students in any other college so Little Hawk transfer students do not have to pay the price for not getting the full content of courses (Lee & Frank, 1990; Talahongva, 2010; Townsend, 1995, 2001).
- Develop a curriculum for students that would include writing across the curriculum, time management, research topic skills, deadlines, holding students to a higher standard, and a strict attendance policy (Townsend, 1995).
- Establish in students confidence in their reading and writing abilities before they leave the campus.

- Develop a course in the curriculum with topics such as time management, dealing with people, building confidence, asking for assistance, coping skills, isolation and alienation skills, dealing with deadlines, managing finances, researching scholarships, locating sources of funds to help financially after transfer, and organizational skills (Braithwaite, 1997; Brown & Kurpius, 1997; Worley, 2010).

In a tribal college students have a lot of support from instructors, administration, and student services, but is it the wrong kind of support? Is this help enabling them? Students need to learn to be responsible, to attend class, and complete their school work on time.

Research showed that tribal colleges should collaborate with officials at four-year institutions to which their students transfer (Capriccioso, 2006; Rivas, Perez, Alvarez, & Solórzano, 2007). By working together on articulation agreements and transfer issues, the transfer can be smoother for students.

For Receiving Institutions

My recommendations for the receiving institutions have been collected from participants, research, and personal experience. Some of these are already being done by some institutions but not by others. My recommendations for the receiving institutions are as follows:

- Provide an academic advisor from the beginning to assist the student to know what classes need to be taken and which ones are left. By expanding the advising to be more pro-active, students will appreciate knowing the path ahead of them. Establishing rapport and a trusting relationship with someone on campus provides

an important personal connection for the Native American (Brown & Kurpius, 1997; Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004).

- Providing an orientation program for transfer students.
- Providing race specific organizations (Brown & Kurpius, 1997; Harris, 2007; Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003).
- Provide a cultural center (Ness, 2001; Tierney, 1991).
- Offer an upper level course on the tribal college campus.
- Provide an education coordinator who would be a liaison between a tribal college and a transfer institution. The coordinator could help out the receiving institution by assisting the students with program requirements, financial aid, obtaining help from different departments, and encouragement. Research showed that institutions should build an alliance with tribal colleges from where they receive transfer students (Capriccioso, 2006; Rivas, Perezs, Alvarez, & Solorzano, 2007).
- Provide information to the tribal colleges so there can be an understanding as to the transfer of credits so the transfer takes place in an efficient and timely manner. If the majority of credits transfer, the students feel they have already accomplished a lot and can withstand the hard work ahead to complete the bachelor's degree (Carlan, 2000; Chen, 2009; Dougherty, 1992; Rivas et al., 2007; Rivera, 2010; Townsend & Wilson, 2006).
- Since financial assistance is a huge factor in retention of Native American students, the four-year institution financial aid staff should collaborate with the tribal colleges to address issues such as scholarship policies, deadlines, and other

financial assistance. If institutions provide educational assistance it should be administered as a “hand up” rather than a “hand out” (Lawrence, 2007).

By collaborating with tribal college officials, having articulation agreements, and working together on other transfer issues, the transfer will be smooth for students and provide them with a better chance of success in the transfer institution (Capriccioso, 2006; Dembicki, 2010; Rivas et al. 2007).

For Families and Friends

The participants in this study verified with the research that it is crucial for students to receive support and encouragement from their families (Falk & Aitken, 1984; Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003; Strand & Peacock, 2002). That includes helping with childcare, meals, housework, and listening when times are tough. It also includes understanding when a family event cannot be attended because of having to do homework or attend class. It can be that continued call from a friend or family member asking how school is going and inquiring about the subjects studied. Programming could be provided by high schools and tribal colleges that could educate and encourage friends and families to support their students.

Having a role model is important. This person could be a friend, someone who had previously attended the institution, someone who attended a different institution, or someone presently at the institution. Sometimes it might be an extended family member or acquaintance that has a college degree and just knowing that if they could do it then it was doable. Having someone to look up to and learn things from is important.

Mentors can be helpful. This could be another student at the college, a person who has recently graduated from that college, or a concerned person. The mentor would

need to stay in contact with the student on a regular basis, ask about school, and provide support.

For Future Transfer Students

For students thinking about transferring from a tribal college to a four-year institution, the following are recommended:

- Find a class or someone to teach you the skills of time management, financial management, research, and scholarship and grant searches.
- Take as many writing classes as possible at the tribal college along with the general education classes required at the transfer school.
- Get involved in the organizations and activities at the tribal college to build leadership skills.
- After transferring, talk to an advisor right away, get involved in organizations and activities, keep your focus on your goal, stay committed, attend class every day.

For Tribes

It seems clear from this research and other research that Native American students transfer to colleges without the needed tools. Students need to be prepared to do college level work. Preparing the students begins in the elementary grades and continues through the tribal college. This not only includes the academics, but also the idea that obtaining a bachelor's degree is a goal for which they should all strive for. The tribe wants their people to be high-quality, responsible, and educated employees and people.

Finances are a big issue for students continuing their education whether they have to move away from family or drive 120 miles to attend school. Many of the participants

in this study will graduate with a bachelor's degree and large student loans. The local tribe encourages students to continue their education beyond the tribal college to receive a higher degree and is very proud of the students that complete those degrees. Tribes have higher education money but the amount and distribution method varies from tribe to tribe. Some distribute the money during the semester for the student's expenses; others give them a check at the end of the semester for completed classes. It would be helpful if some of the tribes could find a better way to support the students financially or provide someone who could assist them in researching and writing for scholarships and grants (Falk & Aitken, 1984; Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003). Native American students have enough to deal with adapting to college off the reservation without having to worry about their finances or having to quit school because of a lack of funds.

Education Coordinator

After listening to the students in this study and doing the research, people outside of the institution, tribe, and family can help transfer students. Attending classes off the reservation can be scary for students. Some of them have not been off the reservation other than to go shopping or travel to another reservation. It is important that the students have a person they can contact if they have a question about anything. This person should not be directly connected to the receiving institution so the students could feel comfortable contacting him/her about college issues. This person should be in direct contact with the students before, during, and after the transfer takes place. Students need someone to help with the new-student forms, registration forms, scholarship and grant forms, transfer of credits, and provide academic advice along with providing answers to general questions. Students need to be taught how to research and apply for scholarships

and grants to help with their school finances. They need someone to give them a weekly call and/or a visit to see if there are questions or concerns and inquire as to how things are going along and letting the student know, "I care about you and want to help you succeed." Students need to know there is someone who genuinely cares about their educational success and is willing to help them with that vision/goal. Students' need someone they can talk with that is impartial and a non-family member. They need someone who understands the higher education system. This person would help them with the transfer, not coddle them but show them the way to handle situations on their own. This person could be called an education coordinator. Staying in touch with the student and being there to lead them along the education path is very important.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this research was to gain an understanding of the transition of Native Americans transferring from a tribal college to a four-year institution. Although a better understanding has been achieved, it is far from complete. Therefore, I recommend the following additional studies:

- A deeper study as to "why" the Native American student has difficulties in the educational system. It is necessary to get to the cause so a solution can be developed.
- One of my recommendations as a result of my research is an education coordinator. I recommend that a study be conducted for transfer students from a tribal college to a four-year institution where the transfer students had an education coordinator to assist and support them in their journey.

- This study looked at students who transferred to two different institutions that were within 60 miles of the tribal college. It is recommended that this study be conducted for students transferring from a tribal college to an institution where, because of distance, it is necessary for the student to physically move to the community in which the institution is located.

Reflections

I reflected on all the participant stories to determine how I felt about what I learned. To start with, choosing to transfer to a public or private institution is not a simple one for Native Americans. Once the decision is made to attend, factors such as distance from home, class schedule, credit transfer, degrees offered, and finances need to be considered. The actual transfer experience varies depending on the institution a student chooses to attend and where a student is in their culture. With the transfer comes adjustments and forces that both encourage and deter the students.

The individuals that participated in this study were highly motivated students who found ways to attend a four-year institution. They all had difficulties to deal with, some had more than others. The particular institution chosen created different situations with which the participants had to deal. Individuals had different views of the same situation depending upon their self, support and strategies. It also depended on the depth of their personal vision/goal and their desire or "fire in the belly". Most of the participants had family support which proved to be very beneficial. The one who had no family support had a strong determination to make it work, and it did. They all had a strong desire to continue their education and when some hit a bump in the road, they fell for a bit, evaluated why it happened, and got up and persevered through the difficult time. They

analyzed their weaknesses, strengthened them, and continued on. Personal determination was a key to persistence for these students.

Many participants agreed that transferring was good for them because it took them out of their comfort zone and provided them with experiences and perspectives they would not have been exposed to had they stayed in a tribal college. Unfortunately, not all students that transfer have the same determination and persistence as these participants. Many of these participants indicated that it was/or would have been, helpful to have someone to call outside of the transfer school for questions, advice, and/or support. Someone who would stay in touch with them, to let them know someone cares and understands, to help them find financial support, and prepare them for the educational experience.

Native American students have dreams, hopes, goals, and ambitions. The students in this study struggled academically, socially, and personally. They had forces that deterred them in their journey, 12 of the 14 students overcame and conquered. Two of the students have stopped out but plan to continue in the near future. The 12 students that either graduated or are still continuing are outstanding role models for any students from a tribal college interested in transferring. Their determination and "fire in the belly" is an inspiration to all.

What are the participants doing now? All of them are working on the reservation for a tribal entity. Two are still attending classes part-time for their bachelor's degree two are stopped out but are planning to continue, and the other ten have graduated with a bachelor's degree. The wealth of knowledge that the participants possess is a great economic benefit to the tribe. Even those that have not yet finished their bachelor's

degree, bring something extra to the tribal workplace because of their experiences and education off the reservation. The participants not only bring a wealth of knowledge to their job and the tribe but they also inspire others to get their bachelor's degree. The tribe considers education to be an important mission, therefore, the participants are being leaders and role models in the education endeavor, in fact several have been encouraging others to continue their college education. Three participants became so enthralled with education and excited about gaining knowledge that they are pursuing a master's degree at a different institution than where they obtained their bachelor's. They have all made a difference in their family and tribe.

APPENDICES

Appendix A
Participation Letter

Dear Student's Name:

As you may know, I am a business instructor at the tribal college and have been for over 20 years. Students and their continued educational success is very important to me as I know it is to the tribe. Therefore, as part of my dissertation for my Ph.D degree, I want to research Native American transfer students to see what helps them to be successful to graduation.

I want to find out how to make the transfer journey of transition and transfer from the tribal college to a four-year institution as unproblematic as possible. There may be things the college can do to better prepare students and there may be things the four-year institutions could be doing to welcome students, make them feel comfortable, and make for a productive educational experience.

You attended the tribal college and then transferred to a four-year institution. Therefore, I would be honored if you would share with me your transfer experience. I am asking for your transfer story including transition. This is your opportunity to tell your story in the hopes of making the journey a smoother one for future Native American transfer students.

Enclosed is a Consent Form that I would ask you to read. It explains the research project in detail. It also explains your part, as the participant, and my part, as the researcher. Please sign the Consent Form and return it to me in the enclosed stamped envelope saying you will be a participant in my study.

Your participation in the study will be greatly appreciated by me and future transfer students. I look forward to hearing your transfer story.

Anpetu Waste,

Jeanette Gravdahl

Appendix B
Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT

TITLE: Transition: The Journey from Tribal College to a Four-Year
Institution
PROJECT DIRECTOR: Jeanette Gravdahl
PHONE # Day: 123-456-7891; Evening: 234-567-8912
DEPARTMENT: Higher Education Leadership

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH

A person who is to participate in the research must give his or her informed consent to such participation. This consent must be based on an understanding of the nature and risks of the research. This document provides information that is important for this understanding. Research projects include only subjects who choose to take part. Please take your time in making your decision as to whether to participate. If you have questions at any time, please ask.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

You are invited to be in a research study about transferring to a four-year institution.

The purpose of this research study is to reveal what tribal colleges and four-year institutions can do to make the transfer and transition process, a smoother one for Native American students.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL PARTICIPATE?

Ten to fifteen Native Americans who have been enrolled at the tribal college full or part time for at least two semesters earning at least 36 credits, and transferred to a four-year public institution in a nearby state will be asked to participate.

The actual interviews will be at a place agreed upon by both the participant and the project director.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THIS STUDY?

Your participation in the study will last approximately one year. You will meet with Jeanette Gravdahl, the project director at least one time and possibly two times. The first visit will last approximately two hours, if there is a need for a follow-up visit, it will take about one hour or less.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY?

At your first visit you will be asked to sign this form and a copy will be returned to you for your records.

You will be informed that your name will be kept confidential in the final report. You will also be informed about Process Consent which is an on-going consent that allows you to withdraw from participation at any time.

You will be asked to share your transfer story that you experienced when you transferred to a four-year institution. You will be asked to talk about the ease of transferring credits, assimilation into the university including classes, organizations, and fellow students.

After your story is transcribed, I will provide you with a copy of the transcript by either e-mail or postal service whichever method you indicate at the time of the interview. You will be asked to review the transcript and get back to me within two weeks if you have any concerns.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THE STUDY?

There may be some risk from being in this study. You may reveal an event that created emotional feelings which you will relive in telling the story. However, these risks are not viewed as being in excess of "minimal risk"

If, however, you become upset by experiences you recall, you may stop at any time or choose not to continue with that event. If you would like to talk to someone about your feelings about this study, you are encouraged to contact Dr. Help, a clinical psychologist, for the tribe and the college.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?

You will not benefit personally from being in this study. However, we hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study because we want to be able to do everything we can for Native American students to have a smooth transition into a 4-year institution.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY

Participation is voluntary, and your decision whether or not to participate will not change your future relations with the tribal college or the university transferred to. If you decide

to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent by contacting me by e-mail or phone.

WILL IT COST ME ANYTHING TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

Your only cost to be in this study will be to meet at a place agreed upon by both you and the project director.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING?

You will not be paid for being in this research study

WHO IS FUNDING THE STUDY?

The University of North Dakota, tribal college, the four-year university, and the research team are receiving no payments from other agencies, organizations, or companies to conduct this research study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The records of this study will be kept private to the extent permitted by law. In any report about this study that might be published, you will not be identified. Your study record may be reviewed by Government agencies, the UND Research Development and Compliance office, and the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board.

Any information that is obtained in this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of keeping the audiotapes, CD copy of computer transcribed stories, transcribed stories, and consent forms in locked files in my home.

If information from the study is released to the Little Hawk College or the four-year institution, it would be for the express purpose of improving the institutions in order to make the transition journey a smoother one for Native American transfer students.

If we write a report or article about this study, we will describe the study results in a summarized manner so that you cannot be identified.

IS THIS STUDY VOLUNTARY?

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or you may discontinue your participation at any time by contacting Jeanette Gravidahl by phone or e-mail without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of North Dakota, tribal college, or the four-year institution to which you transferred.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS?

The researcher conducting this study is Jeanette Gravdahl. You may ask any questions you have now. If you later have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research please contact **Jeanette** at **123-456-7891** during the day and at **234-567-8912** after 5 pm.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, or if you have any concerns or complaints about the research, you may contact the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board at (701) 777-4279. Please call this number if you cannot reach research staff, or you wish to talk with someone else.

Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Subjects Name: _____

Signature of Subject

Date

(Optional)

I have discussed the above points with the subject or, where appropriate, with the subject's legally authorized representative.

Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent

Date

Appendix C
Interview Protocol

Question guideline for the transfer students who transferred from LHC and went on to a 4-year college:

1. Transfer College:
2. Why did you choose that school:
3. Major at the transfer school: Major at LHC:
4. Number of commute miles to LHC? To 4-year institution? Relocate?
5. How long between leaving LHC and entering the transfer school?
6. How many credits transferred?
7. Did you complete an associate's degree before transferring, if so what? If not, what factors influenced your decision to change colleges before completing your degree?
8. When did you begin to plan for your transfer?
9. Did you receive any assistance at LHC when you decided to transfer to the four-year institution? Did you ask for any? *
10. What has made school hard/easy for you throughout your educational experience?
11. How does(did) your schooling fit with your home and community life?
12. Did the four-year institution provide any assistance when you decided to transfer in? Did you ask for any? *
13. Is there anything the university could have done to assist with your transfer?
14. Did the four-year institution have an orientation for transfer students to the institution? If so, did you attend? If so, was it helpful?*
15. Did you have an academic advisor at the university to help with the transfer?
16. What did the LHC experience provide that was most helpful to you at the transfer college?

17. Do you feel LHC prepared you academically to do well at the four-year institution? If not, what might LHC have done differently?
18. What were some of the barriers that you had to overcome (or could not overcome)?
19. What was difficult for you at the transfer university? Housing? Financial aid? Loneliness? Academics? Other? Explain?
20. What activities, classes, programs, organizations, or anything else were most helpful at your transfer school?
21. Describe your experience, both positive and negative; at the university you attend(ed).
22. What do you wish you had done differently before transferring to the transfer university?
23. When you think about the school environment you experience(d) at the university, who or what comes to mind?
24. What or who do you feel was your main source of strength to keep you going with your education?
25. Was/is the college supportive of your needs, if so, explain how?
26. What do you remember most about your experience at the university?
27. What are (were) some things that keep (kept or did not keep) you in school when things are (were) tough?
28. What kinds of things help(ed) you manage the load? (Or impeded you for managing?)
29. What are (were) some of the barriers that you had to overcome in order to go to a 4-year institution?
30. What are some things that make (made) you enjoy some of your classes; or regret being in some?
31. What school activities do (did) you participate in?
32. Is there anything the university could do (have done) to assist with your persistence in obtaining your baccalaureate degree?

33. Is there anything the tribal college could do (have done) to assist with your persistence in obtaining your baccalaureate degree?
34. Did you have any experiences in other colleges that you felt helped or hindered your educational achievement?
35. To what do you attribute your pursuit of a baccalaureate degree (your reason for "stopping out")?
36. Statistics show that after transfer, the transfer university grades drop the first year. Did your's drop? What factors do you contribute to that fact?
37. What advice would you give in-coming freshman to LHC that are interested in pursuing a baccalaureate degree that might be helpful to them when they transfer?
38. Did you change in order to attend the four-year institution? If so, how?
39. Is the four-year institution different from LHC as far as academics are concerned? If so, how it is different? *
40. Do(did) you have more written assignments at the university than you did at LHC? (book reports, research papers, etc.)*
41. Are the classroom setting and atmosphere different at the four-year institution compared to LHC? If so, how?*
42. What advice would you give a student who is thinking of transferring?
43. What forces external to the college contributed to your success? (Or impeded you from continuing?)
44. If you were to design a college, what would you do differently to help students like yourself?
45. As a parent, what will you say to your children about their education?
46. What are you doing now?

Other thoughts:

* Townsend, Barbara: Community College Transfer Students: A Case for Survival

Appendix D
Synopsis of Dissertation for Distribution

TRANSITION: THE JOURNEY FROM TRIBAL COLLEGES
TO FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

by

Jeanette R. Gravidahl
Bachelor of Science, University of South Dakota, 1969
Master of Science, Minnesota State University Moorhead, 1991

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Grand Forks, North Dakota

December

2010

THE TRANSFER JOURNEY

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the transfer journey and transition faced by Native American students transferring from a tribal college to a four-year institution. This qualitative study sought to find out what could be done by tribal colleges, receiving four-year institutions, family, and tribes to make the path a little smoother.

In the fall of 2008 the Little Hawk tribal council gave me permission to ask Little Hawk tribal members to be a part of my research. I selected 14 Native American students who had been enrolled at Little Hawk College full time or part time, for at least two semesters, had earned at least 30 credits, and transferred to one of two four-year institutions. The participants were all non-traditional students but their experiences differed depending on the institution they attended. Twelve of the 14 had children and five were married or had significant others in their life, which meant that many of them were single parents. Six went to Anywhere College as full-time students and eight to University of Somewhere as part-time students. The characteristics of the two institutions are quite different which resulted in different experiences.

According to Dr. Elden Lawrence Native Americans are storytellers and teach lessons through the use of stories. Therefore, I asked the participants to recount their journey by having them tell me their transfer story. The stories revealed the uniqueness of each individual along with the struggles and triumphs experienced during the transition.

Six student participants went to Anywhere College, a private college 60 miles from Little Hawk College. It is a branch campus of a much larger college in a different community. Classes meet once a week in the morning, afternoon and evening during the fall, spring, and summer terms. The flexible course schedule is designed to accommodate students who have families and employment obligations.

Eight students went to University of Somewhere, 60 miles from Little Hawk College. It is a liberal arts school with a traditional schedule of classes, traditional college students, and student population about four times that of Anywhere College. The University provides a multi-cultural center for all students of color. It has a Native American organization. The University of Somewhere provides a tuition waiver for American Indians.

Transferring from a tribal college to a four-year institution was a life changing event for these participants which impacted their lives in different ways. They had to make academic, social, and personal adjustments. These adjustments differed depending on the institution attended. There were forces that deterred their education goal and forces that assisted. The forces that assisted were separated by institution attended, other people, and personal forces.

One of the major handicaps expressed by all participants was being a non-traditional student. Getting into a study mode of concentrating, reading, writing, and doing homework was a challenge felt by all. Finances were an issue for the majority of participants. Most of the students had children so having to deal with family issues while trying to study and complete homework assignments was a challenge. Family time and family activities were sacrificed by both the participants and their families. Another

major issue of concern for all the participants was the commute time. In all cases, except one, the commute time was about 60 minutes one way. The commuting caused a strain for gas money as well as having to drive in some dreadful mid-west weather in the winter months.

The majority of participants indicated that they felt unprepared for the four-year institution. Their writing and reading skills were inadequate. They had a large amount of reading to do for which they were not prepared. They did not know how to research for scholarships nor make application for them. They faced difficulties with time management and financial management.

The forces that facilitated the transfer were quite similar for participants at both institutions. One of the main forces stated as a force that assisted the transfer was having a role model; in turn they want to be a role model for their children and others. Their role models were not just someone they looked up to or who was successful, but someone who had to go through similar struggles and challenges they were going through. The majority said it was an internal motivation force that kept them going. The realization that education was a "dream" goal was a facilitating force. E. Lawrence called it a "fire in the belly"; that desire to want to make a difference for family, friends, and the tribe.

Recommendations

Based on the research and the findings of this study I have made some recommendations including those shared by the participants. Recommendations are provided for tribal colleges, receiving institutions, tribes, families, and friends as to what they can do to improve the transfer experience for present students as well as future

students. The participants provided valuable insights as to what worked for them, and made suggestions as to what could be done to smooth the way for future transfer students.

For Tribal Colleges

The participants in this study discussed things the tribal college did or could have done to make for a smooth transfer. Based on what I learned from the participants, the research, and my personally experience, I recommend the following:

- Establish a position for a transfer officer that would obtain articulation agreements with colleges, advise transfer students, build rapport with students, develop a curriculum for transfer, assist in the transfer application process, assist in locating sources for scholarships and funds, and provide support. After transfer remain in contact with students on a weekly basis at first and then monthly by either phone or in person just to keep the student on track and to show interest and support. That person should provide encouraging words and be available to listen if hardships should arise. Remind the student of their education vision/focus.
- Faculty hold students more accountable in their classes. Hold students to the rigor and standards of students in any other college so Little Hawk transfer students do not have to pay the price for not getting the full content of courses.
- Develop a curriculum for students that would include writing across the curriculum, time management, research topic skills, deadlines, holding students to a higher standard, and a strict attendance policy.
- Establish in students confidence in their reading and writing abilities before they leave the campus.

- Develop a course in the curriculum with topics such as time management, dealing with people, building confidence, asking for assistance, coping skills, isolation and alienation skills, dealing with deadlines, managing finances, researching scholarships, locating sources of funds to help financially after transfer, and organizational skills

In a tribal college students have a lot of support from instructors, administration, and student services, but is it the wrong kind of support? Is this help enabling them? Students need to learn to be responsible, to attend class, and complete their school work on time.

Research showed that tribal colleges should collaborate with officials at four-year institutions to which their students transfer . By working together on articulation agreements and transfer issues, the transfer can be smoother for students.

For Receiving Institutions

My recommendations for the receiving institutions have been collected from participants, research, and personal experience. Some of these are already being done by some institutions but not by others. My recommendations for the receiving institutions are as follows:

- Provide an academic advisor from the beginning to assist the student to know what classes need to be taken and which ones are left. By expanding the advising to be more pro-active, students will appreciate knowing the path ahead of them. Establishing rapport and a trusting relationship with someone on campus provides an important personal connection for the Native American.

- Providing an orientation program for transfer students.
- Providing race specific organizations.
- Provide a cultural center.
- Offer an upper level course on the tribal college campus.
- Provide an education coordinator who would be a liaison between a tribal college and a transfer institution. The coordinator could help out the receiving institution by assisting the students with program requirements, financial aid, obtaining help from different departments, and encouragement. Research showed that institutions should build an alliance with tribal colleges from where they receive transfer students.
- Provide information to the tribal colleges so there can be an understanding as to the transfer of credits so the transfer takes place in an efficient and timely manner. If the majority of credits transfer, the students feel they have already accomplished a lot and can withstand the hard work ahead to complete the bachelor's degree
- Since financial assistance is a huge factor in retention of Native American students, the four-year institution financial aid staff should collaborate with the tribal colleges to address issues such as scholarship policies, deadlines, and other financial assistance. If institutions provide educational assistance it should be administered as a "hand up" rather than a "hand out"

By collaborating with tribal college officials, having articulation agreements, and working together on other transfer issues, the transfer will be smooth for students and provide them with a better chance of success in the transfer institution.

For Families and Friends

The participants in this study verified with the research that it is crucial for students to receive support and encouragement from their families. That includes helping with childcare, meals, housework, and listening when times are tough. It also includes understanding when a family event cannot be attended because of having to do homework or attend class. It can be that continued call from a friend or family member asking how school is going and inquiring about the subjects studied. Programming could be provided by high schools and tribal colleges that could educate and encourage friends and families to support their students.

Having a role model is important. This person could be a friend, someone who had previously attended the institution, someone who attended a different institution, or someone presently at the institution. Sometimes it might be an extended family member or acquaintance that has a college degree and just knowing that if they could do it then it was doable. Having someone to look up to and learn things from is important.

Mentors can be helpful. This could be another student at the college, a person who has recently graduated from that college, or a concerned person. The mentor would need to stay in contact with the student on a regular basis, ask about school, and provide support.

For Future Transfer Students

For students thinking about transferring from a tribal college to a four-year institution, the following are recommended:

- Find a class or someone to teach you the skills of time management, financial management, research, and scholarship and grant searches.

- Take as many writing classes as possible at the tribal college along with the general education classes required at the transfer school.
- Get involved in the organizations and activities at the tribal college to build leadership skills.
- After transferring, talk to an advisor right away, get involved in organizations and activities, keep your focus on your goal, stay committed, attend class every day.

For Tribes

It seems clear from this research and other research that Native American students transfer to colleges without the needed tools. Students need to be prepared to do college level work. Preparing the students begins in the elementary grades and continues through the tribal college. This not only includes the academics, but also the idea that obtaining a bachelor's degree is a goal for which they should all strive for. The tribe wants their people to be high-quality, responsible, and educated employees and people.

Finances are a big issue for students continuing their education whether they have to move away from family or drive 120 miles to attend school. Many of the participants in this study will graduate with a bachelor's degree and large student loans. The tribe encourages students to continue their education beyond the tribal college to receive a higher degree and is very proud of the students that complete those degrees. The tribe provides some higher education money but it would be helpful if a better way to support the students financially could be examined or provide someone who could assist the student in researching and writing for scholarships and grants. Native American students

have enough to deal with adapting to college off the reservation without having to worry about their finances or having to quit school because of a lack of funds.

Education Coordinator

After listening to the students in this study and doing the research, people outside of the institution, tribe, and family need to help transfer students. Attending classes off the reservation can be scary for students. Some of them have not been off the reservation other than to go shopping or travel to another reservation. It is important that the students have a person they can contact if they have a question about anything. This person should not be directly connected to the receiving institution so the students could feel comfortable contacting him/her about college issues. This person should be in direct contact with the students before, during, and after the transfer takes place. Students need someone to help with the new-student forms, registration forms, scholarship and grant forms, transfer of credits, and provide academic advice along with providing answers to general questions. Students need to be taught how to research and apply for scholarships and grants to help with their school finances. They need someone to give them a weekly call and/or a visit to see if there are questions or concerns and inquire as to how things are going along and letting the student know, "I care about you and want to help you succeed." Students need to know there is someone who genuinely cares about their educational success and is willing to help them with that vision/goal. Students' need someone they can talk with that is impartial and a non-family member. They need someone who understands the higher education system. This person would help them with the transfer, not coddle them but show them the way to handle situations on their

own. This person could be called an education coordinator. Staying in touch with the student and being there to lead them along the education path is very important.

This research has been very enlightening to me as I hope it will be for the tribe and the community college. There are things to be done to assist our transfer students and to make the transfer experience a smoother one. I want to be a part of aiding the tribal college students to have a good transfer experience. The goal is to have more tribal members receive their bachelor's degree.

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