January 2016

Perspectives Of Male American Indian Students In A Predominantly White Higher Education Institution

Patricia Ann Queen Jordheim

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PERSPECTIVES OF MALE AMERICAN INDIAN STUDENTS IN A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

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
May
2016
This dissertation, submitted by Patricia Queen Jordheim 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 is being submitted by the appointed advisory committee as having met all of the requirements of the School of Graduate Studies at the University of North Dakota and is hereby approved.

Wayne Swisher
Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

Date
PERMISSION

Title                      Perspectives of Male American Indian Students in a Predominantly White Higher Education Institution

Department        Teaching & Learning

Degree               Doctor of Philosophy

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Patricia Queen Jordheim
April 7, 2016
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Lao Tzu said, “The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” My steps have been many, and I have been lifted by so many since the day I first stepped onto campus to finish my higher education degree. I have many to acknowledge with sincere gratitude.

Thank you to Kari Chiasson, my chair, advisor, and friend for her endless patience, her laughter, support, and her moments of clarity that encouraged me to move forward. There are not enough words, or the right words, to express my thanks. A very special thank you to Myrna Olson for shining as a teacher, a friend, and a support. You know the challenges I have had and have said the perfect thing each time. Thank you Margaret Zidon, for helping me. I cannot fully tell you how your warmth and encouragement, along with your expectations, helped me to achieve my goal. Thank you to Richard Fiordo for stepping forward to serve on my committee as a posthumous gift to Stephen Rendahl and for the time you spent to help me finish my degree. Finally, a thank you to Stephen Rendahl for always being my mentor.

I wish to thank my participants for their time and their thoughtful replies; I also wish to congratulate them for achieving academic success. Thank you to the American Indian Success Center and their staff, for graciously allowing me to work through them. You are so supportive, and you have become a second home.
Thank you to my professors who have inspired me to teach: Myrna Olson, Mary Haslerud Opp, Stephen Rendahl, Frank White, and Janet Moen. You are in my classrooms with me. Thank you to TRIO Support Services and the McNair Program: Cheryl Kingsbury, Patrice Giese, and Jill Teters. I moved on and succeeded with your support, but I never left. I will never forget my first day. Lisa Burger, you are a friend and mentor, from the first step to the last. Thank You.
DEDICATION

To my family who is first and foremost in my life. I thank the Good Lord every day for you Jill, Jared, and Joy. You are my shining stars, and my pride is a reflection of my love for you. I know this time was a challenge for you, but you supported me none-the-less. Brianna, I want to thank you for your phone calls, support, and love. You are precious to me. Noelle, Nora, Ava, and Ara, you are always a source of light and love. My lesson for you all is “strength in adversity” and “you are never alone.”

I wish to thank my parents for their abiding love, pride, and support from my first day to their last. I know you are still cheering me on.

To my sister Connie, and brother John, my personal cheerleaders and an inspiration to be the best I can be.

To my cousins, Gail, Cheryl, Elveda, and Kelli, for understanding, and supporting me and giving me the gift of laughter.
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions of male American Indian students and their strategies for staying enrolled in school and to determine what issues they were facing while attending a predominantly-White institution (PWI) of higher education in the Northern Plains. Participants consisted of seven male American Indian students attending school during the 2014-2015 academic school year. Resistance theory provided a framework for this research on male American Indian students and their perceptions of cultural dominance and their responses concerning assimilation and the campus cultural climate. The Hypothesis of Transculturation is a bridge to how male American Indian students (MAIS) implemented and preserved their culture while forging through their successful college careers. Interviews and note taking generated data. Participants interviews were recorded through electronic audio recordings and transcribed for analysis of codes, categories, and themes.

Three themes emerged from data analysis. Theme 1: Male American Indian students rely on academic support from professors and the American Indian Student Center, as well as, family and friends to be successful. Participants made purposeful contacts with professors, the American Indian Success Center, and family to create successful support systems. Theme 2: Male American Indian students feel a deep-seated sense of commitment to support family and to return to help their tribal communities. Participants had plans to compensate their families both emotionally and financially, with
further plans to return to their home communities to create a positive difference. Theme 3: Many in the student population have little to no understanding of American Indian culture and tradition resulting in Male American Indians feeling marginalized. Although participants made some nonnative friends, they felt there was a negative campus climate in regard to cultural misperceptions and the former mascot.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) constitute the smallest population of minority enrollment in higher education and have the poorest graduation rate of minority students. Guillory (2009) reported findings from the U. S. Department of Education:

It is well documented that college success is a constant struggle for AI/AN. For example, AI/AN students have the lowest college enrollment (i.e., less than one percent) and graduation rates of any student cohort at mainstream U.S. colleges and universities. AI/AN earn 0.6% of all associate’s, bachelor’s, and advanced degrees conferred in the U.S. (p. 12)

DeVoe and Darling-Churchill (2008) stated:

American Indians/Alaska Natives comprised 1.1 percent of the total college and university enrollment in 2006 (p. 126). American Indian/Alaska Native females enrolled in colleges and universities exceeded the number of American Indian/Alaska Native males enrolled. In 2006, 111,000 American Indian/Alaska Native females (61 percent) and 71,200 males (39 percent) were enrolled in colleges and universities, a difference of 21 percentage points. (pp. 126, 128)

Further, according to Aud et al. (2010) and the National Center for Educational Statistics, “Natives consistently had the lowest graduation rates of the five racial/ethnic groups” (p.
The aforementioned statistics called attention to low graduation rates for male American Indian students (MAIS).

Because of low enrollment rates and lower graduation rates of male American Indian students (MAIS), it is important to understand higher education experiences from the perspectives of these students. Harrington and Harrington (2012) noted: “The enrollment, retention, and graduation rates for American Indians are lower than any other ethnic group” (para. 2). Male American Indian students are a smaller population of an already limited segment of minority enrollments and face challenges related to cultural differences as they leave their homes and navigate between two dissimilar worlds. Examples of issues, according to Harrington and Harrington (2012), facing male American Indian students include the following:

- Poverty on reservations
- Lack of quality education and financial aid
- Walking in two worlds
- Adaptation to the demands of campus and life
- Loss of cultural identification
- Cultural differences

**Poverty**

Poverty rates for American Indians vary, yet the statistics reflect high levels. According to the U. S. Department of Commerce (2013):

The poverty rate for American Indians and Alaska Natives in Rapid City, S.D. (50.9%) was around three times the rate in Anchorage, Alaska (16.6%) and about 30% or greater in five other cities most populated by this group (Gallup, N.M.;
Minneapolis; Rapid City, S.D.; Shiprock, N.M.; Tucson, Ariz.; and Zuni Pueblo, N.M.), according to American Community Survey data collected from 2007 to 2011 by the U.S. Census Bureau. (para. 1)

Wright and Tierney (1991) asserted, “The composite population of Native Americans is economically poorer, experiences more unemployment, and is less formally educated than the rest of the nation” (para. 28). Data from the Department of Commerce also reflected there are nine states with American Indian poverty rates of approximately 30% and greater (Wright & Tierney, 1991). Poverty is chronic, and inadequate financial resources limit access to quality medical care, putting health, growth, and development at risk.

**Lack of Quality Education and Financial Aid**

Lack of quality education and financial aid are further barriers to attaining a degree in higher education. Griggs (2012) stated, “Native males are not getting the education they need to be prepared for what comes after high school” (para. 5). Griggs continued, “In order for them to be prepared for college, they must have the same resources as the rest of the country” (para. 8). Educational resources are limited due to inadequate financial aid. Many reservations lack resources for quality education and financial aid that would enable American Indian students to aspire to and achieve higher education goals. Griggs (2012) suggested: “It is almost a given that unless your tribe has valuable land or a casino on the property, it is struggling to survive, both from an economic standpoint and a traditional standpoint” (para. 5). American Indian reservations are most often poor and without quality schools (Griggs, 2012). Quoted in
Griggs is a student who believed that male American Indian students (MAIS) do not pursue higher education goals because of this country’s economic downturn:

I think that most men are now choosing to skip school and stay on the reservations so they can get a job and help put food on the table. They don’t have time to think about their future because they are too focused on their present.

(Griggs, 2012, para. 9)

Within Tribal Colleges only, the percentage of male American Indians is less than one-third of the total enrollment. Furthermore, Saggio and Rendón (2004) asserted: “Research on American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students indicates that only about 45% persist to complete their freshman year, meaning one out of two students drops out before their sophomore year” (p. 223). This lack of educational success of male American Indian students is a nationwide concern. In addition to primary and secondary education issues, cultural barriers exist according to Styres, Zinga, Bennett and Bomberry (2012).

**Walking in Two Worlds**

I have often heard male American Indian student (MAIS) friends discuss “walking in two worlds.” Their explanation was of acting one way on campus and in classes, but acting true to their culture when with other American Indian students and when returning to their homes and reservations. Styres, Zinga, Bennett, and Bomberry (2010) explained:

In sharing this story we focus on the tensions of walking between two worlds: addressing the intransigence of university protocols, developing a MOU [memorandum of understanding], negotiating the tensions between insider and
outsider perspectives, negotiating and navigating ethical space, as well as exploring the internal challenges that were triggered by these experiences. (p. 621)

It is understandable that walking in two worlds puts the American Indian student’s cultural identification at risk.

**Adaptation to the Demands of Campus Life**

Adapting to the demands of campus and life in general is difficult, as the male American Indian student (MAIS) juggles family and work demands along with cultural needs and responsibilities. Maintaining their cultural routine, rituals, and family time is imperative to many male American Indians. These responsibilities create an environment that can negatively impact their success in higher education. The demands of campus life may lead to a loss of cultural identification, a loss that impacts their ability to cope.

Cultural and institutional strategies were of special interest in this research as was their effectiveness. I concur with Larimore and McClellan (2005), who stated:

Native American students who are able to draw strength from their cultural identity while adapting to the demands of campus life are more likely to succeed in their academic pursuits than are either culturally assimilated students or those unable to establish a level of comfort within their campus environment. (p. 21)

Discovery of these coping skills may better aid male American Indian students to persist in higher education to reach their degree goals and ultimately increase diversity in higher education.
Loss of Cultural Identification

American Indians have been denied their culture through forced attendance in boarding schools, where it was compulsory to abandon their language, cultures, and religion. In a 2007 report on racial equity referring to education, Toney (2007) asserted:

For too long, cultural communities have been denied access to their heritage culture, rendered statistically insignificant and absent in policy designs. These are expressions of structural and institutional racism, placing all students, particularly these communities [Native] at a further disadvantage in opportunities and outcomes. (p. 8)

The American Indian college students’ views of higher education are unique to their cultures. According to Brayboy, Fann, Castagno, and Solyom (2012):

The notions of competition and individual success are often at odds with the reasons many Indigenous students pursue postsecondary education in the first place—to serve their families and communities better. . . . As long as success along the pipeline continues to be defined as completing a degree within four to six years of consistent, full-time enrollment at a single institution, Indigenous students will continue to be framed as failures in higher education. (p. 2)

American Indians have had their culture assaulted by boarding school regimens and are resistant to further losses. Culture is a determining factor in the low enrollment of male American Indian students (MAIS) in higher education.

Cultural Differences

Cultural differences are amplified as male American Indian students (MAIS) enter universities filled with White populations that have little knowledge about American
Indians and preconceived notions of American Indian culture (Reyhner & Dodd, 1995, para 8). A further disparity is the individually focused university environment versus the community and family centered male American Indian. Pember (2011) noted, “There is a growing body of research showing that success and persistence for American Indian men in higher education is directly tied to knowledge of and connection to traditional tribal language and culture” (para. 23). Additionally, American history is filled with the conqueror position that omits the American Indian viewpoint.

The perspective of the national college system and their predominantly White students is far different from the perspective that is the reality for many American Indian students.

Statement of Problem

There is little research on male American Indian students (MAIS) in higher education. MAIS have the lowest graduation rates from higher education. Further, low graduation rates are an issue for the entire American Indian population. With the poverty rate so high on some reservations it is imperative to bring infrastructure to their schools and their communities. This applies to families, homes, business and schools. Less education, means less opportunities to advancement themselves, their families and their tribal communities. Educational advancement brings the prospect of improving their lives with better incomes, and this, in turn, promotes better lives for their families and communities. Problems concerning retention of male American Indian students (MAIS) start in high school and continue throughout higher education. Brayboy stated:

Of 100 Alaskan or Native Americans who start ninth grade, 48 will graduate from high school. . .. Twenty will go on to post-secondary education, and only one will finish a bachelor’s degree within six years of starting. One in 2,500 Natives earns
a master’s degree, and one in 7,000 earns a Ph.D. (as cited in White, 2015, paras 7-8)

Of the 52,760 earned doctorates in 2013, only 126 of them were awarded to American Indians – .2% of the recipients (White, 2015).

Male American Indian students (MAIS) face multiple challenges: cultural, academic preparedness, and social and institutional issues related to administration, faculty, and staff. In order to increase retention of this population, research is vital to give voice to the experiences of successful MAIS. These experiences have the potential to provide knowledge of well implemented methods that have helped MAIS navigate through the university system successfully, and this information might then be shared throughout the university system. With successful retention and a higher graduation rate, other male American Indians may be encouraged to enroll in higher education and attain their academic goals.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of male American Indian students (MAIS) who attended a predominantly White institution of higher education and to determine what factors influenced their experiences. With retention and graduation rates low for MAIS this study explores what they do in order to stay the course of their education and graduate. Insight gained during this study has the potential to help other MAIS in higher education and aid staff, faculty, and administrators in understanding, supporting, and retaining this student population.
Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Resistance Theory and the Transculturation Hypothesis. Chizhik and Chizhik (2009) indicated:

Resistance theories, in particular, provide a unique description of the classroom culture by examining how students or teachers perceive and respond to cultural dominance. Generally, resistance involves actions that passively or actively oppose the dominant culture. These actions serve to preserve students' or teachers' (as the case may be) sense of autonomy and identity. (p. 2).

The threat to a male American Indian student’s (MAIS) psyche manifested in a loss of culture and/or by becoming absorbed into a dominant culture is real; attending a predominantly White university threatens MAIS belief systems and ultimately their well-being. Kingston (1986) stated, “Marxist analyses . . . interpret students’ unruliness, disengagement from academic life and absorption in peer culture as resistance to repressive experiences in school” (p. 718). Male American Indian students may show resistance to institutional culture by disengaging and/or dropping out of higher education; they may view experiences in the dominant culture as repressive experiences, whether in the classroom or because of issues with an institution with regard to culture.

Resistance may manifest in several forms as MAIS remain silent while inaccurate information is stated in the classroom or speaking up and taking the chance that they might be refuted by a professor or fellow student and finally, by not going to class. Reyhner and Dodd stated, “Multicultural education confronts not only issues of differences but also issues of power and privilege in society” (p. 811). Power and
privilege have roles in MAIS resistance to campus culture and in the classroom which lacks in education that is not taught through a multicultural lens.

The multicultural lens meaning attending to diverse ethnicities in the classroom making sure all perspectives were addressed.

Transculturation, or the idea of adding new concepts may be difficult for the male American Indian student. Preconceived ideas of culture are threatened in a predominantly White university. According to Huffman (2001), “The concept of transculturation incorporates the idea that American Indian college students need not necessarily relinquish their Native ways in order to be successful” (p. 29). Huffman (2001) asserted:

American Indian students fall into four categories: marginal with some assimilation; estranged with strong cultural identification yet marginal assimilation; estranged with strong American Indian identification who reject assimilation; and transculturated who have American Indian identification and do not desire to assimilate. (p. 9)

When confronted with alien elements of the dominant culture students do not need to feel a misfit. A period of discovery is needed in order to adjust to higher education. Huffman contended, “Without the opportunity for exploration and subsequent discovery and learning, it is very likely that many culturally traditional American Indian students will find it difficult to be successful in a predominantly non-Indian higher education institution” (p. 203). An adjustment period, student personal growth and resolve will have help MAIS through the initial stages of higher education. Reyhner and Dodd, (1992) described:
They cited maturity, determination, ability to cope with racial and cultural differences, family encouragement, ability to adjust to new situations, parents and their educational background, and support systems as possible reasons why some American Indian students are more successful than others. (para 22)

As MAIS adjust to new ideas a new concept of culture may be taken.

**Bicultural**

Male American Indian students (MAIS) who take part in two or more cultures simultaneously are bicultural. As MAIS explore their ethnic identities as a part of growing up, they decide how they perceive themselves rather than accepting what others expect them to be (Phinney, 2007). Self-perceptions may change depending on who they are with, or where they are. An example would be their parents saying they are half White and half American Indian, and on their college campus they are regarded as American Indian. The decision lies with the MAIS.

A bicultural individual decides for themselves who they are. Grosjean (2013) stated, “They adapt their attitudes, behaviors, and values to these cultures and they combine and blend aspects of the cultures involved” (para. 1). This does not mean that the MAIS become assimilated. Flintoff and Rivers (2012), referencing Indigenous people from Australia, stated:

It is our teaching hope and intention that students who are predominantly positioned within western ways of thinking, in considering (bi)cultural practice, will come to know their own cultural biases, prejudices and taken-for-granted ways of going about their lives, and therefore be better placed to respond to people who are positioned in (cultural) ways that differ from their own. We
therefore use the term ‘(bi)cultural’ as we seek a weaving of cultural ideas, theories and professional practice from both Maori and western worldviews. (p. 236)

Identifying with an ethnicity creates a feeling of community within a culture according to Phinney (2007). Identifying with a group is one aspect. Others aspects are self-concept, self-worth, and self-esteem, which are fluid and are able to change through life and as needed, traits are added to or may be discarded (Phinney, 2007). The male American Indian student (MAIS) adjusts to two different cultures and is able to retain their own.

Research Questions

The following research questions directed this research study:

1. How do male American Indian students perceive their experiences at a predominantly White institution (PWI) of higher education?

2. What factors influence their perceptions of those experiences?

Need for the Study

There is very little research on male American Indian college students. The enrollment and retention rates for male American Indian students (MAIS) reflect a high dropout rate from higher education. There are issues with financial aid, poverty, inadequate infrastructure of schools, lack of college preparation and culture. The retention rates are low, creating a financial burden as students struggle to repay their student loans, poverty rates continue to be high and living conditions remain poor. An investment in education and resultant careers are future assets to their communities and
Research was needed to find what factors work in order for MAIS to complete their higher education degree.

My research interest in male American Indian students started when I was an undergraduate in the McNair Program and continued as I conducted research in my Master’s program. I collected interview data on nontraditional male American Indian students. According to National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.) a nontraditional student is most often 24 years of age and older, have a family and job responsibilities. Even though I did not analyze the interview data, I was alarmed by what they told me. One of the participants mentioned “walking in two worlds” and the difficulty of transitioning between his home environment and the university campus. Another participant was discouraged by “the look(s)” he received on campus each time the mascot issue arose. Additionally, he was verbally assaulted and emotionally injured by a professor who called him and his grandmother “liars” when he related her personal account of an event that disagreed with what had been written in American history books. He was further insulted by faculty who disparaged his writing. He felt he had no recourse and eventually dropped out of the university. These stories had a profound impact on me; as a doctoral student, I began focusing my research on male American Indian students and found there was minimal research on the topic.

When male American Indian students make a commitment to higher education, this commitment has to operate across many roles in order to work. American Indian students have to balance family, home, financial aid, bureaucracy, and homework, as do other students, to be successful in their college career. Culture identification and retention, and “walking in two worlds” is an additional deterring factor. These elements
do not consistently stay balanced; reaching education goals for the American Indian population is a difficult undertaking as education has to take priority and many other aspects of their lives are placed aside.

**Definition of Terms**

The following definitions of terms will increase understanding for the reader concerning the objectives of this study:

**American Indian/Native American/Indigenous/Native:** These terms are used interchangeably throughout this research to refer to mainland American Indian and Alaskan Natives (AI/ANs). Although each nation or tribe of Indians is unique in terms of status, this research does not investigate the differences. Rather, it regards all participants interviewed and investigated as representative of the whole grouping of American Indian/Alaska Natives on the American continent (Brayboy et al., 2012).

**Drop out:** This term refers to a student who will “drop out” of school – who never returns to finish their education and graduate.

**Indigenous:** This term is indicative of “a group of people who have been tied to a particular place before any outside peoples were introduced to the lands” (Brayboy et al., 2012, p. 4).

**MAIS:** This term refers to a male American Indian student.

**NPU:** This term refers to the Northern Plains University (alias for the university selected for this study).

**PWI:** This term refers to a predominantly White institution of higher education.

**Retention:** This term refers to students who stay in higher education to complete the goal of obtaining a degree (students who do not “drop out”).
**Stop out:** This term refers to a student who will “stop out” – who will return to school to complete their degree (after leaving school for a time).

**Success:** For the American Indian student, this term refers to acquiring a degree as a way to return home and help one’s community.

**Delimitations**

Identified in this study were the following delimitations.

1. Each participant interviewed needed to identify as a male American Indian.
2. Research was conducted at a predominantly White Northern Plains university.
3. Interviews were conducted with seven participants.

**Assumption**

Discussion of an assumption is an aspect of research for which there is no tangible data that might potentially influence collected data. For the purposes of this research it was assumed that all participants would answer truthfully.

**Summary**

This chapter provided a brief overview of male American Indian students in higher education and the issues they encounter as they work their way to a college degree. In addition, the problem statement and purpose of the study were addressed. The theoretical research framework, research questions, and need for the study were discussed. A definition of terms explained acronyms used throughout this research. Delimitations described the limitations of this study and the assumption is the supposition of truthful answers by participants. In Chapter II, I provide a historical view of American Indian education from the Colonial period to today’s Tribal Colleges, American Indian k-
12 education today, college preparation, and issues related to earning a degree in higher education.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Whether at an institutional or federal level, the purpose underlying the education of the American Indian, from the time of the colonies up until the 1960s was that of assimilation (AIHEC, the Institute for Higher Education Policy, Sallie Mae Education Institute, 2000; Bear, 2008; Carney, 1999; Fann, 2004; Griggs, 2012; The Institute for Government Research, 1928; Marr, n.d.; Stahl, 1979; Szasz, 1999). In this chapter four aspects of American Indian Education are addressed: (a) history of the various approaches taken to educate American Indians within higher education that occurred from colonial times to Tribal Colleges; (b) American Indian K-12 education at the time of this report; (c) college preparation, and (d) issues related to earning a degree in higher education.

Background

Male American Indian students in higher education constitute a small minority of the total number of students in higher education. The National Center for Education Statistics (Aud et al., 2010) reported an increase of about 33,000 (12,000 in college) American Indian (AI) / Alaska Native (AN) students enrolled in U.S. public K-12 schools from 1989 to 2008; yet, this increase is not easily seen in the overall percentages of all college students. In 2008, American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) students represented 0.9% of all students enrolled in Grades K-12 public schools, 0.6% of all students enrolled
in K-12 private schools, and 1% of college students; and at the college level, males represented just under 40% of that small portion of AI/AN students (Aud et al., 2010).

In his 2006 article, Brayboy stated: “Indigenous men are significantly underrepresented at all levels of postsecondary education; Indigenous men do not attain a representative proportion of higher education degrees, and this is even more true for the highest level degrees (i.e., masters and doctorates)” (p. 15). According to Hunt and Harrington (2008), successful maintenance of their cultural identities is difficult while attending predominantly White institutions of higher education:

It seems rare, given the myriad cultural, world-view, and cognitive obstacles, that any American Indians – especially those who strive to maintain their cultural identity can succeed in a higher education system dominated by powerful and persuasive influences of the white majority culture. (p. 2)

In order to understand the larger picture of male American Indian (AI) success and solutions, it was important to review the historical context of American Indian students in higher education, especially considering students who are American Indian and male.

**American Indian Education – A Historical Perspective**

Table 1 shows selected periods covered in the historical section of Chapter II.

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Colonial Period

In 1723, William and Mary College related the opening of “special facilities” for American Indian students. In 1775, the appropriation of $500 by the Continental Congress for education of American Indians at Dartmouth College occurred. Later, treaties between the federal government and American Indians provided for children’s education (Focus on Tribal Colleges, 2000).

Initiatives in Colonial America to introduce American Indians to higher education were highly unsuccessful. Early efforts were established through donations acquired from religious organizations for creating colleges and to erect buildings for American Indians students. Harvard College was established in 1636 and was the first college opened in North America. Harvard later created an Indian College in the late 1640s with funding received from the English Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among Natives in New England. In the Harvard College Charter of 1650, the Society explained its donation was “necessary provision for the education of the English and Indian youth” (Early Native American Resources,” n.d., para. 2). According to an article from Harvard’s University archives (“Early Native American Resources,” n.d.), seven male American Indian students attended Harvard during the time spanning the 1650s to the 1670s. Because of lack of use, the Indian college building was razed in the 1690s. Only one of the seven enrolled male American Indian students graduated. “He died of tuberculosis one year after graduation” (“Early Native American Resources,” n.d., para. 5).

Thelen (2004) related that a majority of early American Indian higher education students succumbed to measles, consumption, or alcoholism, with consequences being
low retention and graduation rates. Early actions concerning American Indians on behalf of the federal legislature date back to the 1700s. The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC, 2000), in a historical overview of American Indian Education, indicated that 58 American Indian students attended Dartmouth from 1769 to 1893. There is no documentation showing that any of the 58 students graduated.

**Federal Period**

The Federal Period signified a change and a push for vocational education ending the Colonial period. The creation of the U.S. Federal government after the Revolutionary War ushered in the Federal Period and with it came a time of change in attitude and policy toward American Indian education, with the focus shifting to vocational training. Indian Education now became a matter of federal management, according to Wright and Tierney (1991), as George Washington “voiced a shift in policy from an emphasis on higher learning to vocational training for American Indians” (para. 6).

The new source of funding was the federal government, according to Stahl (1979). Assimilation through education became normative as Carney (1999) noted, “In spite of the focus on lower-level occupational training instead of higher education, the basic policy professed as driving Native American education during the federal period was assimilationist” (p. 49). Further, Carney stated, “during the entire federal period the government maintained no higher education institutions for Native Americans” (p. 50). This omission happened even though the government had a “trust responsibility,” arising out of promises made in more than 100 treaties, to provide education services and facilities to Native Americans in exchange for land (Deyhle and Swisher, 1997). This trend emerged in the 19th century and prevailed until the 20th century.
Post Indian Wars/Snyder Act/Indian Reorganization Act

The Snyder Act of 1921 authorized the Bureau of Indian Affairs to provide educational services:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that the Bureau of Indian Affairs, under the supervision of the Secretary of the Interior, shall direct, supervise, and expend such moneys as Congress may from time to time appropriate, for the benefit, care, and assistance of the Indians throughout the United States for the following purposes:

• General support and civilization, including education.
• For relief of distress and conservation of health.
• For industrial assistance and advancement and general administration of Indian property.
• For extension, improvement, operation, and maintenance of existing Indian irrigation systems and for development of water supplies.
• For the enlargement, extension, improvement, and repair of the buildings and grounds of existing plants and projects.
• For the employment of inspectors, supervisors, superintendents, clerks, field matrons, farmers, physicians, Indian police, Indian judges, and other employees.
• For the suppression of traffic in intoxicating liquor and deleterious drugs.
• For the purchase of horse-drawn and motor-propelled passenger-carrying vehicles for official use.

• And for general and incidental expenses in connection with the administration of Indian affairs. (para. 1-2)

Further legislation regarding American Indian education was largely neglected until the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934 (Jaeger & Illingworth, n.d.). The IRA of 1934 specifically stated:

An Act to conserve and develop Indian lands and resources; to extend to Indians the right to form business and other organizations; to establish a credit system for Indians; to grant certain rights of home rule to Indians; to provide for vocational education for Indians; and for other purposes. (Indian Reorganization Act, 1934, para. 1)

The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, also known as the Wheeler Howard Act of 1934, “established the powers of tribal governments and authorized loans to pay for tuition and other expenses of Indians in postsecondary educational programs” (Focus on Tribal Colleges, 2000, para. 1). Even with this Act’s passage, enrollment and retention rates of American Indians in higher education remained low, prompting American Indian leaders to take higher education into their own hands in the 1960s.

From the 1930s to the late 1960s, enrollment of American Indians in higher education remained low, and scholarships were minimal. Ruth Muskrat Bronson, a guidance counselor who was also in charge of a loan fund established by the Indian Reorganization Act (1934), stated that: “There were only 385 Indian students enrolled in college in 1932; that she could locate definite records for only 52 Indian college
graduates; and that Indian scholarships were being offered at only five colleges and universities” (as quoted in Szasz, 1999, p. 135). According to Crosby (2011), six more American Indians graduated by 1961 for a total of 58 American Indian higher education graduates. According to the Sallie Mae Education Institute, “For hundreds of years, the primary goal of postsecondary education efforts for American Indians at predominantly White, mainstream institutions was cultural assimilation rather than students’ educational development and progress” (AIHEC, the Institute for Higher Education Policy, Sallie Mae Education Institute, 2000, p. 1). In further efforts, the federal government supported boarding schools (AIHEC, 2000), initiating the forced assimilation of American Indian children into White culture.

Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)/Boarding Schools

Historically, American Indian children were mandatorily taken from their families for education at boarding schools and systematically forced into assimilation. Marr (n.d.) summarized it this way: “The goal of Indian education from the 1880s through the 1920s was to assimilate Indian people into the melting pot of America by placing them in institutions where traditional ways could be replaced by those sanctioned by the government” (para. 1). Thus, boarding school education was about acculturation of American Indians through assimilation into White culture, while being victimized by the loss of their own American Indian culture, language, rites, and rituals (Juneau, Fleming, & Foster, 2001/rev. 2012-2013). According to a National Public Radio (NPR) report by Bear (2008), “Children were sometimes taken forcibly, by armed police” (para. 20). “Early in the history of American Indian boarding schools, the U.S. government argued that Indians were savages who should be compelled to send their children to schools by
whatever means necessary” (Bear, 2008, section “From Need to ‘National Tragedy’,” para. 1).

In the late 1880s, in defense of the early days of boarding schools, Atkins (1886) reported in the Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year 1886, “If it be admitted that education affords the true solution to the Indian problem, then it must be admitted that the boarding school is the very key to the situation” (Atkins, 1886, p. LXI). However, in 1928, more than 40 years later, a report by the Institute for Government Research titled the Problem of Indian Administration (also known as the Meriam report), showed that, as Bear (2008) put it: “Children at federal boarding schools were malnourished, overworked, harshly punished and poorly educated” (Bear, 2008, section “From Need to ‘National Tragedy’,” para. 2). This was the process whereby individuals learned their group's (White) culture, through experience, observation, and instruction.

Assimilation included boarding schools indoctrinating American Indian children not to rebel. The U.S. National Library of Medicine (2010) indicated, “Off-reservation boarding schools were considered by many government and boarding school officials to be major successes in forcing Native American children to adopt the ways of white ‘civilization’ and simultaneously to abandon their own Native traditions” (para.1). Lomawaima and McCarty (2006) stated: “After all, ‘Indian schools’ were created to ‘civilize’ Native children, to eradicate Native identities, languages, and cultures” (p. 1). The effect of boarding schools denigrated children, decimated families, and created a loss of culture and language.
Despite concerted efforts throughout American history to eradicate the American Indian population, the diminished nations have resisted and steadfastly withstood the challenges. In the book *To Remain an Indian*, Lomawaima and McCarty (2006) noted:

The problem is the Native communities have persistently and courageously fought for their continued existence as *peoples*, defined politically by their government-to-government relationship with the United States and culturally by their diverse governments, languages, land bases, religions, economies, education systems, and family organizations. (p. 7)

The resultant loss of language and culture has made the American Indian student mistrust education in predominantly White institutions of higher education. This historic relationship provides an unsteady foundation for the current educational situation.

**Tribal Colleges – History (1960s)**

The 1960s became a time of “self-determination” among American Indians. Sklansky (1989) noted: “The rise of black and Chicano empowerment movements inevitably generated interest among Native Americans seeking attention, respect and self-determination” (p. 33). Davis (2001) affirmed interest by stating, “These institutions, intended to assimilate Native people into mainstream society and eradicate Native cultures, became integral components of American Indian identities and eventually fueled the drive for political and cultural self-determination in the late twentieth century” (p. 20). Seeing the need for higher education led to the creation of Tribal Colleges.

Dine’ College was the first Tribal College, created in 1968 by the Navajo Nation, with other Tribal Colleges following. The states of California, North Dakota, and South
Dakota quickly followed in the creation of Tribal Colleges (AIHEC, 1999). Public law was created in 1978 to give federal aid to Tribal Colleges.

Tribal colleges were created specifically for the American Indian student who wanted to pursue a post-secondary education. Public Law 95-471, or the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1978, provided for government aid to Tribal Community Colleges and Universities (TCUs). Public Law 95-471’s primary purpose was to “provide grants for the operation and improvement of tribally controlled community colleges to insure continued and expanded educational opportunities for Indian students” (Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act, 1978, Sec. 101).

Successfully implemented TCUs have grown steadily in number. According to the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), as cited by the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education (n.d.), at the time President Obama issued Executive Order 13592, there were . . .

. . . 32 fully accredited Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) in the United States, with one formal candidate for accreditation. . . . These TCUs offer[ed] 358 total programs, including apprenticeships, diplomas, certificates, and degrees. These programs include[d] 181 associate degree programs at 23 TCUs, 40 bachelor’s degree programs at 11 TCUs, and 5 master’s degree programs at 2 TCUs” (para. 1).

AIHEC (2016) related that during the 2013-2014 school year, there were two tribal colleges waiting accreditation, eight colleges that offered bachelor degrees, and five that offered master degrees, with 37 being the total number of colleges in the United States.
Tribal colleges have succeeded where mainstream colleges have not, by uniquely designing coursework to address the needs of American Indians and incorporating personal attention and tribal values into the core structure of institutions, along with transferable mainstream college coursework (AIHEC, the Institute for Higher Education Policy, Sallie Mae Education Institute, 2000). Students of Tribal Colleges are likely to be nontraditional; they are older than the average student, likely to be female, first generation American Indians who earn certificates and associates degrees with plans to remain in their home communities (AIHEC, 1999). The Sallie Mae Education Institute reported, “The educational programs at Tribal Colleges (TCUs) also have encouraged many graduates to continue to seek higher education, especially bachelor’s degrees” (AIHEC, the Institute for Higher Education Policy, Sallie Mae Education Institute, 2000, p. 16). According to the American Indian College Fund (2007), “TCUs provide necessary services to American Indian communities such as diabetes education and prevention, HIV education, daycare and health centers, libraries, computer centers, indigenous research, language preservation classes, community activities, and lifelong learning programs” (para. 11). Despite poor federal funding, Tribal Colleges have created academic opportunities for American Indian students.

American Indian K-12 Students Today

There is a great disparity between high school graduation rates for White students and American Indian students. In a 2014 press release, North Dakota Senator Heidi Heitkamp shared information from a Commission on Native Children, in order to help create opportunities for American Indian students: “The national graduation rate for Native high school students’ hovers around 50% compared to more than 75% for White
students” (Heitkamp, 2014, para. 2). “Those aren’t odds any parent wants to hear” (Heitkamp, 2014, para. 3). This graduation rate may be more severe than reported due to lack of government oversight on numbers. Jeffries, Nix, and Singer (2002) contended, “The discrepancy found within American Indian communities about the severity of the dropout rate could be a result of national reports that ignore American Indians due to low numbers of overall populations” (p. 38). Further, Jeffries et al. stated:

American Indian students’ educational futures are jeopardized in part as a result of extremely high dropout rates. This is a major crisis and current national efforts have statistically removed American Indians from the established theoretical discourse on the educational state of marginalized groups in the United States. (p. 39)

The 2014 Native Youth Report included issues on education, which culminated from a visit to Standing Rock reservation in North Dakota, by President Barack Obama. Noted in this report, “The specific struggles that Native youth face often go unmentioned in our nation’s discussions about America’s children, and that has to change” (Executive Office of the President, 2014, p. 3). Identification of these issues first appeared to be obvious, until further research exposed deeper issues. Obvious issues were related to federal policy. But, poverty and health concerns have also been destructive to American Indian communities. Discrimination and a loss of culture and traditions continue today. The facts are that one in three AI/AN children live in poverty.

Reservations are often poor and have few resources for their students to academically achieve a quality education. Such lack of advantages are emphasized by Lin (1985) as he chronicled, “This poverty of educational achievement within the Native
American sector might very well be the root of their over-all social problems in a modern industrial society” (p. 6). American Indian students are at an educational disadvantage from as early as grade school and junior high school, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2012):

> At both grades 4 and 8, average reading scores for AI/AN students in 2011 were not significantly different from the scores in 2009 or 2005. . . . AI/AN students scored 19 points lower on average in reading than non-AI/AN students in 2011 at grade 4, and 13 points lower at grade 8. (p. 2)

Low scores in mathematics are also a problem. “In 2011, AI/AN students scored 16 points lower on average in mathematics than non-AI/AN students at grade 4, and 19 points lower at grade 8” (NCES, 2012, p. 3). Low scores can make it difficult for an individual to meet minimum requirements for gaining admission to college.

The fewer American Indians enrolled in higher education, whether college or trade school, the fewer opportunities American Indians there are to have quality jobs. This, in turn, has negative consequences for tribal communities as they struggle to rebuild from the devastating effects of past centuries. Higher education is an opportunity that many American Indian youth may never achieve. The 2014 Native Youth Report clearly stated reasons for this crisis. Circumstances include insufficient funding, “America needs to overcome a long history of neglect and discrimination. Nearly $1 billion is needed for repairs and construction for BIE funded schools alone” (p. 15). This lack of funding affects the ability to implement the changes needed to create positive change and combat the effects of systemic poverty.
It is not only the infrastructure of buildings, but changes need to be made to school systems in order to increase the percentage of graduates. Gender differences have scarcely been examined in American Indian research, according to James, Chavez, Beauvais, Edwards and Oetting (1995). Their quantitative research study surveyed 1,607 American Indian and Anglo male and female student participants regarding high school achievement and dropout rates. James et al. noted:

There are some indications of differences in educational outcomes for female and male Native American and non-Indian students. Yet gender differences have rarely been examined in studies of Indian education. Failure to include gender as a variable obscures possible gender by race differences on predisposing factors for academic problems. (p. 182-183)

Further findings for males were reasons which forecast the likelihood of dropping out:

Seven predictors were significant for Indian males: perceived teacher liking of the individual, proficiency at a tribal language, perceived teacher liking of Anglo students, Anglo cultural identity, perceived availability of help, childhood use of a tribal language, and breadth of English use. (p. 195)

If the male American Indian student (MAIS) perceived there was bias on behalf of the teacher, there was a higher likelihood of poorer achievement and eventually dropping out of school. There was a significant correlation between culture and successful completion of high school.

Problems continue as Native youth study in disciplines without the perspective of the American Indian people. Issues included a hidden White middle-class curriculum in
public schools that differs from the culture and values of American Indians. Cortes (2000) addressed this:

Education scholars have addressed the surreptitious, sometimes unintended, and often unanticipated dimension and consequences of textbook, curricula, and other aspects of the schooling process. In doing so they have applied such labels as “the hidden curriculum” ...the metaphor suggests a schooling process—particularly ideas and values that are taught, if not always learned. (p. 20)

Historic representation of minorities is under represented in the K-12 curriculum. Ellen Swartz (1996), in referring to public education, stated: “Master scripting silences multiple voices and perspectives, primarily legitimizing dominant, White, upper-class, male voicings as the ‘standard’ knowledge students need to know” (p. 164). Historical accounts exclude a comprehensive view of the standpoints of minority individuals and the omission of the massive genocide of America’s aboriginal peoples. Cochran-Smith (2004) also found ambiguity in teaching:

But what I found when I read between and under the lines of the curriculum as racial text was a contradiction. On the one hand, the first part of my courses presented heavy critique of the inequities embedded in the status quo and how these were perpetuated by the current arrangements of schooling. On the other hand, the latter part of the course privileged pedagogical perspectives drawn from theories and practices developed primarily by White teachers and scholars of child development, language learning, and progressive education. There was as well an underlying White European American construction of self-identity and other, of “we” and “they.” (p. 94)
An article by Dick (2015) was a reflection, rather than a study, of his personal experience of teaching male American Indian and Native Alaskan students (AI/AN) in public school over a 36 year time period. Male AI/AN students value “hard work, respect, community commitment, honoring elders, etc.” (p. 28). This reflection article investigated the paradox of Common Core testing and opposing traditional American Indian training in essential life skills. He stated the lessons taught in public schools are not the life skills needed for success in the American Indian students life. The solution, according to Dick is to make testing relevant.

Life outside of school adds to the stress of getting an education. The phenomenological research by Kim (2012) studied the lived experience of a Sioux Indian male adolescent at an alternative high school in the southwest U.S., where referred students with behavior issues attended. His research on a single male adolescent was elicited from an ethnographic case study conducted at an alternative high school. The adolescent’s personal growth and development was the study focus in order to create an understanding of the boy’s lived experiences in regard to teaching and learning and how it is affected by outside influences. Kim proposed that teaching individuals is a humane process when considering the student and the world of influences affecting him.

Additionally, culture is highly responsible for absenteeism. Wilcox (2015) contended that culture in the form of American Indian ceremonies contributes to absenteeism. Jeffries, Nix and Singer (2002) indicated that family issues, feeling marginalized, not feeling safe, cultural discontinuity, economic instability at home, transportation, and foster care are all factors contributing to high dropout rates for urban
American Indian students. The issues related to K-12 American Indian education are epidemic.

**College Preparation**

For American Indian students who are determined to attend college, the undertaking is discouraging. Deloria (1999) noted, “Students preparing for college are made to feel that the task is a solitary one and that the measure of their potential is found in the entrance and qualifying tests they take” (p. 141). This effort is difficult with a perceived threat of losing self-identity according to Garrod and Larimore (1997) in *First Person, First Peoples:*

The crucial journey, both literal and figurative, is the one between their home communities and the culture that this predominantly white college represents. It is learning to walk this path in balance without losing oneself in the process that is vital. (p. 1)

Military service has been a viable and honorable alternative to higher education for the male American Indian, but one that also poses a barrier and a threat to higher education. American Indians have a long history of military service in the United States. According to the Department of the Interior’s Indian Affairs, “While American Indians and Alaska Natives have the same obligations for military service as other U.S. citizens, many tribes have a strong military tradition within their cultures, and veterans are considered to be among their most honored members” (IndianAffairs.gov, 2015, Section IV, para. 49). For the student who has higher education as a goal, the push into the military is, at times, vexing. Fann (2004) documented student annoyance in this way, “One male student expressed frustration with attempts to get information from the college
counselor, ‘…So far, she [college counselor] keeps shipping me to military people, but I don’t think I’m going that route’” (p. 23). Additionally,

Several students mentioned that they had friends who were going into the military and military recruiters were more common than college recruiters at each high school campus. The same male student who was counseled to talk to military recruiters in response to his questions about college pointed out that at his school, military recruiters are quite friendly, and walk around the school approaching students during the lunch period. (Fann, 2004, p. 23)

In 2013, ACT tests reflected the low scores of American Indian high school graduates. By benchmark attainment and subject, American Indian student scores were consistently low in English, Reading, Math, and Science. From 2009 to 2013, the percentage of American Indian students meeting three or more benchmarks dropped from 22% to 19%. Declining ACT scores places a further impediment on Native Americans attaining their prerequisites for higher education enrollment requirements.

**American Indians in Higher Education – Issues**

American Indian students enrolled in higher education face more obstacles to their success than most students. Wright (1991) stated:

Today, researchers, educators, and students repeatedly report several factors which contribute to the problems: inadequate academic preparation, in-sufficient financial support, and unsupportive institutional climate. These issues – while not necessarily exhaustive in scope – illustrate the nature of barriers to Native access, retention, and graduation. (p. 6)
A report by Brayboy (2006) on *Indigenous Men in Higher Education* for the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Health Policy Institute stated:

> On the one hand, issues that influence Indigenous men’s enrollment and their retention in higher education are of interest. On the other hand, the number enrolled is very small and the research literature on their specific experiences is almost nonexistent. (p. 1)

Brayboy (2006) presented the Dellum Report, a qualitative paper on Indigenous Men in Higher Education for the Joint Center Health Policy Institute. His paper revealed data on: enrollment patterns, enrollment by institution type, qualitative experiences, graduation and degree attainment patterns; lack of finances, K-16 education, lack of role models, cultural incongruities, and health concerns, and recommendations for research. Brayboy’s recommendations stated, “We may now turn our focus to the future—to what can be done to address the dismal rates of Indigenous men’s participation in higher education in the United States” (p. 12). His recommendation for research extend to longitudinal studies which closely mimic his proposals for federal and state government, as well as, higher education institutions. Brayboy suggested for federal research, “The connections between health care, incarceration rates, and public safety should be more fully examined” (p. 13). Additionally, while he acknowledged state governments have stepped up to a degree, he encouraged state governments to focus research on merit based funding and how low and middle income students are being priced out of higher education. The implication from this report being that Indigenous males in higher education have a potential for growth if there is an active response for more research and for resources to be made available.
Pember’s (2011) qualitative study addressed the difficulty males have in asking for assistance. Significant findings were made connecting culture and tribal language as a predictor of success in higher education. A deterrent to success, discussed in this article, was lack of financial security and child care. A form of assistance in place at Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College, in Hayward, Wisconsin, is an informal Men’s Talking Circle, “The circle is modeled on a traditional Native talking circle in which a talking stick is passed from one participant to another who then speaks free from interruption” (para 10). Topics discussed in the Circle have “personal issues including relationship and legal concerns; financial aid; internships; career and life planning; tutoring; cultural enrichment through the tribe's spiritual advisor; and networking opportunities with staff, faculty, and students” (para 13). Cankdeska Cikana Community College in North Dakota offers a men’s drumming class “a healing environment where it is acceptable to ask for help” (para 21). Incorporating culture through the Men’s Talking Circle and drumming are innovative steps in assisting male American Indian students (MAIS).

In the fall of 2015, Redhouse reviewed early American Indian higher education and made a connection between issues then and now (e.g. financial aid, lower socioeconomic background, etc.) and the lack of persistence in higher education. He pointed out institutional reasons for failure and stated,

If a suitable conceptual model can be applied that illustrates the causes for persistence rather than quitting, then perhaps colleges and universities can respond and develop new programs to successfully guide Native American men through the maze of higher education. (p. 56)
Redhouse reviewed his family educational background and stated the American Indian pattern of educational persistence is different from the traditional American student. These issues include historical accounts of past events that do not reflect American Indian accounts and racism as a deterrent that remains effective in keeping American Indian students from enrolling in predominantly White institutions of higher education.

**Institutional Resources/Support**

American Indian Student Centers (AISCs), TRIO (a federal program), Student Success Centers, Veteran Services, and Adult Re-Entry Centers actively engage and support interactions with American Indian students as well as support cultural events. The availability of Indian Study programs encourages the study of the many and various American Indian nations. Shotton, Lowe, and Waterman’s (2013) introduction to *Beyond the Asterisk* stated:

Understanding Native epistemologies, culture, and social structures provides a richer array of options through which student affairs professionals and institutions may approach their work and missions. The reader will see that Indigenous epistemologies and knowledge systems are based on relationships. (p. 3)

Diversity programs that carefully build relationships help provide success for the American Indian student.

**Financial Aid**

In 2011, the number of American Indians living below the poverty level on reservations was 21.2% (Mendez, Mendoza, & Malcolm, 2011), as opposed to 10.2% for the remainder of United States citizens. The number of students living in poverty has been high (less education, less knowledge of financial programs available) and makes the
matter of obtaining financial aid for American Indian students a challenge. Retention of American Indians in higher education is crucial for individual success and a lack of funding has been one of the major factors interfering with American Indians remaining in attendance in colleges and universities.

Complex and competing lifestyles, documented in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* article (Henig, 2006), is a factor in retention as students, “attributed their inability to graduate to poor advising or failed courses. Others, especially older students supporting families, had trouble finding child care or securing financial assistance” (p. 36). In a study by Guillory and Wolverton (2008), a faculty member is quoted as saying:

All the years I’ve worked for the American Indian students—which is 25 years now—when they get into trouble, often times academically, even in the community, you can trace their problems back to them being short of money. They can’t pay their rent so they get booted out of their house. They can’t pay their tuition bill and so they end up not being able to get their credits on their transcripts. . . . *So if, they get sufficient funding, it’s amazing how much better they do as students.* They don’t have to constantly worry about money. (p. 70)

The repayment of loans is difficult when there is no financial help from parents or other family who live below the poverty level on American Indian reservations. Research on college bound seniors from the 2005 College Board SAT report indicated that Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores of American Indians were significantly lower than the national average (College Board, 2005). This finding implies two significant repercussions of poverty as it illustrated that American Indian students are not adequately
prepared for higher education, and they will not receive scholastic scholarships. Another area of inadequate preparation is information on how to obtain sufficient financial aid.

Financial aid is available from federal sources, state sources, and through American Indian nations, according to Tierney, Sallee, and Venegas (2007). Federal aid is based on need and is acquired by filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) on a yearly basis. State aid varies in amount, but is limited and sometimes nonexistent. Tribal aid is varied related to resources. Demand for funding for higher education often exceeds the need. To navigate all these possible sources, American Indian students need counseling on financial aid information at the high school level.

Faculty

Faculty can play a powerful role in helping students understand issues related to diversity. Collins (2014) pointed out, “Building empathy from the dominant side of privilege is difficult, simply because individuals from privileged backgrounds are not encouraged to do so” (p. 255). In contrast, Collins (2014) noted that, “Members of subordinate groups are understandably reluctant to abandon a basic mistrust of members of powerful groups because of this basic mistrust has traditionally been central to their survival” (p. 255). This potential for discord by resistance in the higher education classroom needs to be addressed by faculty. Chan and Treacy (1996) asserted, “Teachers should anticipate resistance from students in courses on multiculturalism and can view such challenges to the material or to the teacher as opportunities to make the issues relevant to the students' own experiences” (p. 212). It is important for faculty to be proactive and think about ways to best address diversity issues within the higher education classroom. Higginbotham (1996) posited:
Faculty can prepare for various reactions from students by thinking about issues of power they relate to the selection of course materials that address inequality, the various interactions within the classroom between faculty and students and among students, and establishing a classroom atmosphere that is safe for exploring issues of inequality. (p. 203)

Addressing issues of inequality in a classroom are vital to success of minority students. Higginbotham contended, “Issues of power and privilege, in the content of our teaching and classroom dynamics, are key to that understanding” (p. 203). Nonetheless, there are faculty and students who are ignorant or choose to ignore issues that are of concern to male American Indian students.

Faculty are, at times, well meaning, yet ill-prepared to deal with some classroom situations. Smith, Mayer, and Fritschler (2008) explained: “Professors are not always aware of the political and philosophical assumptions concealed in their thinking” (p. 2). Barcus and Crowley (2012) shared eight types of classroom examples in which faculty were unsuccessful in creating an effectively working diverse classroom:

1. Prior to playing a video, a professor asks [in class] an ethnic minority student if she is comfortable with the class watching the video. The video is a powerful account of discrimination specific to this student’s racial group.
2. Having a faculty member tell an ethnic minority student that they need to be “White” in their presentation skills.
3. Having faculty members only teach about majority culture and no diversity.
4. Diversity issues only being brought up when ethnic minority students brought it up, which then the students experienced as microaggressions from peers due to “making a big deal.”

5. Having a faculty member engage in microaggressions in the classroom.

6. When the Acculturative Stress Scale was brought up in class for class discussion, majority students as well as the faculty member (White male) stated that they felt threatened by the discussion (after they undermined the experiences of acculturative stress by saying that “everyone experiences stress” and therefore “why would we care to examine this in ethnic minority clients?”)

7. Faculty not saying anything when racial microaggressions occur in the classroom, allowing it to happen and not addressing it.

8. Faculty interpreting the lack of volunteering and competing for projects as disinterest when it would have seemed rude and arrogant to me to volunteer. The student shared, “In my thinking, if I was a good person to do the project, he would select me. I shouldn’t push to be the one chosen for the project.” (pp. 76-77)

Educators participate to affect and constructively aid in the multicultural process or they opt out. Bennett (2011) stressed, “Our main goal as teachers is to strive for the intellectual, social and personal development of our students to their highest potential . . . to provide each student with an equal opportunity to learn” (p. 37). Addressing educational development, Bennett described the preferred holistic learning pattern of American Indians is through observing a task prior to actual performance, best
accomplished in their own surroundings. Teaching which is culturally competent is specified as, according to Bennett (2011), “Teachers who have the dispositions, attitudes, knowledge, skills, and resources needed to ensure high levels of learning and the personal development of culturally different learners—students whose lived experiences, culturally developed knowledge, and sometimes language differ from their teachers and/or their classroom peers” (p. 235). Educating faculty concerning diversity measures would enable American Indian students to feel more at ease in the classroom.

**Institutional Climate and Diversity Goals**

A review of eight universities in the Midwest revealed two with diversity statements directly addressing American Indians, while one more referred to underrepresented populations and had action goals to connect with Tribal Colleges. Each of the universities had diversity statements; yet, little was learned of the climate on the university premises. Climate is determined by the receptiveness of students, faculty, and staff to the American Indian population. The institutional climate for diversity is defined as the perceptions, attitudes, and expectations that define the institution, particularly as seen from the perspectives of individuals of different racial or ethnic backgrounds. The institutional climate is influenced by several elements of the institutional context including the degree of structural diversity, the historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion of students and faculty of color, the psychological climate (i.e., perceptions of the degree of racial tension and discrimination on campus), and the behavioral dimension (i.e., the quality and quantity of interactions across diverse groups and diversity-related pedagogy; Hurtado et al., 1999). Climate can vary from classroom to classroom, as well as in student, faculty, and staff interactions.
Higher education has both embraced and encouraged diversity. Higginbotham (1996) supported this view, stating, “Many institutions in higher education have introduced courses that directly address diversity and multiculturalism” (p. 203). In the classroom, diversity is addressed through curriculum. Chan and Treacy (1996) agreed by suggesting, “Multiculturalism in higher education, which arose on many campuses initially as women’s and ethnic studies programs, is now increasingly visible in efforts to transform the curriculum by integrating issues of multiculturalism and diversity into many academic disciplines” (p. 212). While universities have implemented courses that directly address diversity issues, there are still concerns that these courses may meet resistance from culturally dominant students as well as students with diverse backgrounds.

Diversity, not assimilation, is the goal of higher education. Nonetheless, Chan and Treacy (1996) noted, “Yet for still others, diversity and multiculturalism can be empty terms that appear to address racial and ethnic fault lines, while avoiding an examination of power and continuing to promote assimilation into the dominant society” (p. 212). Higher education’s goal is enlightenment through education and not assimilation.

Diversity continues to be at risk. Clark (2011) suggested, “Given the current state of the economy in general and education funding in particular, many higher education institutions are asking the question, ‘How important is diversity?’” (p. 57). For male American Indian students or multicultural students, it is very important.
Mascots

Nationwide, sports fans have been using American Indian logos, in various forms, as mascots at events ignoring that their acquisition was actually vandalizing sacred artifacts. Pewewardy (2004) stated:

Although images of Indians in mainstream sports culture have become as American as apple pie and baseball, educators should be aware that American Indians never would have associated sacred practices with the hoopla of high school pep rallies and halftime entertainments. (p. 181)

Various higher education campuses have used American Indians as their mascots. When the loss of a mascot occurs, there are often residual effects, which affect male American Indian students (MAIS). While many in the population of students have felt they are honoring American Indians by having an American Indian mascot, MAIS may feel otherwise. The use of mascots and logos has resulted in parodies of many in the population’s uneducated view of American Indian history. LaRocque, McDonald, Weatherly, and Ferraro (2011) described:

Unfortunately, many majority culture members tend to over-sensationalize their image of the AI of the past and ignore the real AI of the present and future. This attitude is most often reflected in the names of professional, college, and high school athletic teams. (p. 2)

In actuality, the ignorant use of American Indian artifacts, symbols, and regalia does not honor American Indian history but is a misuse of sacred objects. Pewewardy, (2004) noted:
Non-Indian people may not be culturally aware that some American Indian symbols used by cheerleaders and cheering fans—war chants, peace pipes, eagle feathers, war bonnets, and dances—are highly revered or even sacred in many American Indian tribal communities. (p. 181)

The use of American Indian mascots and logos were a representation of the general public’s lack of factual history, and were racist. Pewewardy (2004) declared:

Many mascots, logos, and nicknames represent stereotypical and racist images that relegate American Indian people to a colonial representation history. The exploitation of Indian mascots, logos, and nicknames in schools is, in reality, an issue of decolonization and educational equity. (p. 181)

Education is the key to becoming culturally sensitive by creating an awareness of bias and stereotypes. Pewewardy (2004) further related:

Educators should examine the biases and stereotypes their students hold. These stereotypes, caused by ignorance, hard times, and folk wisdom socialization, can be countered by accurate and culturally responsive information. (p. 183)

Fans of athletics hold to their view of honoring the American Indian. Pewewardy contended, “Who should decide what is demeaning and racist? Clearly, the affected party determines what is offensive. Unaffected members of society should not dictate how the affected party should feel” (p. 183).

**Mentoring**

Mentoring is a relationship between two people where one person has experience and expertise in an area and communicates that information to someone who is seeking knowledge. Kalbfleisch (2002) stated, “A mentoring relationship is a personal
relationship between a more sophisticated mentor and less advanced protégé” (p. 63).

Professors as mentors are a reliable source of information and act as a support and as an advocate for male American Indian students (MAIS). Paterson and hart-Wasekeesikaw (1994) noted, “A mentor in higher education is a faculty member who guides, supports, and advises a student” (para. 1). A mentoring relationship allows a professor to have the benefit of finding out what frustrations are affecting a MAIS, thereby increasing retention through advising. When a MAIS makes a connection with their professor, they have a reliable source which creates positive outcomes for the professor and the student.

Further, according to Paterson and hart-Wasekeesikaw (1994), “Male students prefer mentors who have achieved status in the academic discipline and who are perceived as being able to aid the student's career” (para. 2).

**American Indian Students**

American Indian students represent the smallest grouping of college minority students in the United States, although the number of American Indian students has grown steadily since 1976. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; DeVoe & Darling-Churchill, 2008) stated that the numbers have nearly doubled from 76,100 enrolled AI/AN (American Indian/Alaska Native) students in 1976 to 181,100 in 2006, bringing the percentage of AI/AN students from .7 of a percent of all college students to 1.1 percent (p. 126). In 2002, the NCES reported, “Although the disparity between rates of initial enrollment and rates of graduation exists for all student populations, the gap is greatest among students who are African American, Hispanic, or Native American” (as cited in Larimore & McClellan, 2005, p. 17). According to Larimore and McClellan (2005), “The severe underrepresentation of Native Americans among those earning
degrees reflects both extremely low enrollment or participation rates and generally poor retention rates for Native American college students” (p. 18). With the total representation of American Indian students in higher education hovering at the extremely low number of one percent, male American Indian students, have the lowest representation among students in higher education at .4 of one percent.

**Male American Indian Students**

*Beyond the Asterisk* (Shotton et al., 2013) addresses the gender gap in higher education, “Native American males lag behind Native American females” (p. 5); 30 years ago, male and female AI numbers were equal; male numbers are now at 40% (77,000) of a total of 190,000 AI students (Shotton et al., 2013). Data collected from the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (2012) specified that for the 2009-2010 school year, American Indian women were the majority students at 53%, of degree-seeking students at Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). American Indian males represented 31% in the 36 reporting TCUs, with non-Indian students making up the difference. The gap in enrollment between female and male American Indian students is significant. Because this statistical finding shows an extremely low number of male American Indian students enrolled in higher education, male American Indian students (MAIS) are worthy of research. Emphasized in Brayboy et al. (2012):

> There is a dearth of research addressing the particular needs and experiences of Native males in regards to college access or persistence and, as we have suggested elsewhere . . . health care, employment and other economic issues may figure into the growing gender gap in male and female college attendance. (p. 54)
Research on male American Indian students is a profoundly neglected area. As indicated in an ASHE Higher Education report (Brayboy et al., 2012): “Although a few studies have examined the higher educational experiences for Indigenous women, next to none have looked at men” (p. 108). Brayboy et al. elaborated:

Given the enrollment declines for AI/AN men over the past thirty years, this is a critical area for future research. Indeed, we believe that Indigenous men in higher education (and we believe this may extend down to capture Indigenous boys as well) are in crisis. It is imperative that scholars examine the educational plight of Indigenous men and consider ways to increase their enrollment and retention. (p. 109)

In addition to male American Indian college students having a low enrollment in higher education, there are also low retention rates.

**Retention/ Persistence**

Although only 50% of American Indians graduate from high school, even fewer decide to obtain higher degrees at the 4-year college level. Flynn, Duncan, and Jorgenson (2012) stated: “There is limited research on American Indians and Alaska Natives who drop out of school” (p. 437). Students who have left higher education would be difficult to track. Okagaki, Helling, and Bingham (2009) asserted, “Understanding the interaction between American Indian students’ ethnic identity, bicultural efficacy, and orientation to education may be an important step in identifying ways to encourage American Indian students to further their education or persist in current educational endeavors” (p. 172). With low enrollment and a high dropout rate, it is important to ask successful students for the reasoning and techniques they employ in
order to complete their education. Feeling engaged in the higher education institution of choice is advantageous. This same directive was expressed in Gross, Lopez, and Hughes (2008), “Student persistence (retention rates) can be increased if the students feel involved both academically and socially with their institution” (p. 112). Higher education is a daunting undertaking for all students, but more so for the American Indian student. Hunt and Harrington (2008) stated:

There seems little doubt that making a successful adjustment to college in order to persist and eventually graduate is a formidable challenge for many young people. It is equally clear that the challenge of college adjustment is often most difficult for those from ethnically minority groups. This is particularly true for American Indians. (p. 1)

Impediments to reaching the goal of a degree in education are often too overwhelming for too many American Indian students to overcome.

Summary

The literature clearly indicated the absence of male American Indian enrollment in predominantly White institutions of higher education. Lack of quality education prior to college has male American Indian students ill prepared for the rigor of higher education. Additionally, the male American Indian student may experience cultural issues that deter degree completion. Financial aid, campus culture, support, and mascots on campus are some of the issues male American Indian students must deal with to be successful. With little research conducted on male American Indian students, there has been a need to investigate their perspectives.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of male American Indian students (MAIS) who attended a predominantly White institution of higher education and to determine what factors influenced their experiences. Provided in this chapter is an overview of the methodology used to conduct the research to include: description of the setting, the sampling procedures, negotiation of entry, participant selection, participant descriptions, methods of data collection, the analysis of data; codes to categories to themes and assertion, and the methods used to establish trustworthiness. In-depth inquiry was used to ascertain the perceptions and experiences of male American Indian students.

Phenomenological Design

Phenomenology was the design chosen for this qualitative research study. Creswell (2013) suggested that through the phenomenological approach, “the subjective experiences of the phenomenon and objective experiences of something in common with other people” (p. 78) would emerge. Additionally, Van Manen (2006) stated, “Indeed, it is apt to think of the basic method of phenomenology as the taking up of a certain attitude and practicing a certain attentive awareness to the things of the world as we live them rather than as we conceptualize or theorize them” (p. 720). In earlier research, Van Manen (1990) asserted, “Phenomenology is not only a description, but it is also seen as an interpretive process in which the researcher makes an interpretation (i.e., the
researcher ‘mediates’ between different meanings)” (p. 26) “of the meaning of the lived experiences” (Creswell, 2007, p. 59). This design is a good fit for educational research. Wertz et al. (2011) maintained, “With its broad transdisciplinarity, phenomenology has also contributed to such practical professions as education, health, social service, and business” (p. 129). As the researcher in this study, I hoped to understand the means of how educational goals are reached from the view of male American Indian students, while attending a PWI and the factors that influenced their experiences. Thus, through in-depth interviews, I built this investigation. The more developed the interviews were, the deeper the understanding of the lived experiences of the participants.

This understanding is imperative for qualitative research to be compelling. Creswell (2007) provided this definition: “In the entire qualitative research process, the researchers keep a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research or writers from the literature” (p. 39). The views of participants were vital. Creswell (2013) provided further description: “The final product is a holistic cultural portrait of the group that incorporates the views of the participants (emic) as well as the views of the researcher (etic)” (p. 96). The phenomenon for this research and study was based on the reality and knowledge of male American Indian student participants.

**Description of the Setting**

Northern Plains University (NPU) is located in a northern plains city of approximately 55,000 people. A military base is located near the city. This increasingly diverse community has several opportunities to participate in the arts, several fitness centers, a hospital, four long term healthcare units, and health clinics.
A two year college is located in an adjacent community. Northern Plains University (NPU) offers undergraduate, masters, and doctoral level programs in over 225 fields of study and includes a growing online population of students. Northern Plains University is a predominantly White institution of higher education, where the American Indian population comprises a small minority of students. According to institutional research on student profiles, the Northern Plains University student population, in the fall of 2015, included 236 American Indian/Alaska Native students, or 1.58% of the student body of 14,951 students. All interviews took place on the campus of NPU.

**Purposeful Sampling**

Participants included seven male American Indians students who attended the predominantly White institution. Participants were selected based on the following criteria:

- The participants were male.
- The participants identified as American Indian.
- The participants were currently enrolled in a PWI university (whose enrolled students were predominantly White).

**Negotiating Entry and Participant Selection**

A meeting with the Director of the American Indian Student Success Center was arranged and attended by the Director, Assistant Director, Program Coordinator, and me. During this half-hour conversation, I discovered this campus was an ideal setting to find participants. I explained my planned research and asked for their support in identifying potential participants. The director agreed to be a “gatekeeper” and would support my
research after approval of my topic proposal by my committee and the Institutional Review Board. I spent six weeks at the American Indian Student Center in order to become a familiar figure prior to approaching individuals for an interview. While working with staff at the Center, I posted a sign for recruiting students on a bulletin board in the common room. With the help of Cheryl, an employee at the American Indian Student Center (AISC), I was given names of students who might agree to be interviewed. Cheryl pointed me in the right direction. I recruited participants by introducing myself, explaining my role as a doctoral student, and describing my research study. All potential participants to whom I talked agreed to be interviewed.

**Methods of Data Collection**

The primary means of data collection was conducting audio recorded interviews. Seven participants were interviewed. One participant was interviewed twice, and the remaining six participants chose to be interviewed one time. Interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis, in person, in private rooms at the American Indian Student Center (AISC), my private office on campus, or in a private area of a dormitory. At the end of the interviews, I held a drawing for two $20 gift certificates to Walmart.

Each interview began with a participant signing a consent form (Appendix A). Two sets of questions were used to provide structure to the interview process. The first set of questions (Appendix B) addressed the educational experiences of participants. A second set of interview questions (Appendix C) was used as a follow up to the first set of interview questions. Interviews lasted from between 45 minutes and 90 minutes.

Information was recorded with a Livescribe pen, Livescribe notebook, and digital recorder. The Livescribe pen has the ability to record audio from interviews in addition
to writing notes on a special paper tablet specifically designed for Livescribe pens. The Livescribe pen added notes to the data consisting of short descriptions of each participant, facial expressions, and voice inflections during interviews (e.g. laughter, demeanor, tone of voice). The audio was downloaded onto a computer program for transcription. A transcriptionist was hired to transcribe the audio recordings. The transcribed interviews were stored in a password protected computer and will be kept for a minimum period of 3 years before they are destroyed. Identity documentation was placed in a locked file cabinet in my office and transcribed interviews were stored in a locked cabinet in a separate location. Pseudonyms were assigned to all people identified in this study.

**Participants**

Seven male American Indian students (MAIS) agreed to participate in the study. A brief description of participants is provided. Table 2 has information on each participant (i.e., pseudonym, degree, level of degree being pursued, and tribal affiliation).

Table 2. Pseudonym, Degree, Level of Degree Being Pursued, and Tribal Affiliation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Undergraduate/Graduate</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1 Anthony</td>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Chippewa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2 Brian</td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Colville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3 Cletus</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Blackfeet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4 Doug</td>
<td>Geology</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Chippewa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5 Eddie</td>
<td>History/Indian Studies</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Chippewa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6 Fred</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Lakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7 George</td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Hidatsa, Arikara</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Anthony

At the time of his interview, Anthony was a member of a northern reservation nation where he was raised along with his three siblings. Raised by his mother, he was switched [by his mother] from a public to a Catholic school during his elementary and middle school years due to bullying. He later returned to the public high school where he graduated. Anthony’s schooling took place on and off the reservation. He was active in programs and clubs throughout his early education and realized he wanted to go to college when he was a junior in high school. He entered college immediately after his high school graduation. He “stopped out” after the first semester and returned as a nontraditional student in his 30’s, majoring in Social Work.

Brian

Brian was a member of a northwestern American Indian nation, but was raised in Nevada. His early education in a public school “was a great program” in a large city in Nevada. “They had a lot of resources.” At the time of his interview, he had several family members living in Nevada: a daughter, his mother and several siblings, as well as nieces and nephews. Brian always knew he wanted to go to college and felt he had the abilities to do so, as well as opportunities to make it happen. He was in law school at the time of his interview and days from graduating with his law degree. Brian made good friends during his graduate studies and stated, “They will be my friends for the rest of my life.” His future plans were to work in law for a few years, before returning to his Colville reservation in order to help his people.
Cletus

Cletus was a member of a western nation. His early schooling took place on his reservation. A junior at the time of his interview, he was majoring in Communication. He was raised by his father and stepmother, and had six siblings: one was older and lived on his own, two lived with their grandfather, and a sister lived with her father (Two of his siblings whereabouts he not mention). He was involved with the Northern Plains American Indian Association and extra aspects of his work study job. He made friends easily. He had prior experiences at Northern Plains University, where he attended a summer medicine program for American Indians for three years. The science training he received in this summer program helped him get ahead in his home school. No longer attending the program led to difficulty for him in his freshman college science classes. During his returns home, he had been asked to mentor students at his former school. His goal was to return to his home nation and help them to the best of his abilities.

Doug

Doug was a member of a northern nation where he was raised by his parents in a three-bedroom home, along with his seven siblings. His early education included both public and Catholic school, with him graduating from a public high school on his reservation. Doug always knew college was in his future, but did not actually plan to attend college until he was a high school senior, and he applied for a scholarship. He was the recipient of the Bill Gates Millennium Scholarship. He attended Northern Plains University immediately after high school and left after four days, returning to his home. He enrolled in a nearby Tribal Community College, where he earned an Associate’s degree. Next he returned to Northern Plains University to finish his education and had
one semester left to at the time of his interview, before graduating with a Geology degree and an emphasis on environment. He was involved with a science and engineering club for American Indians and the Northern Plains American Indian Association. His degree will allow him to provide for his own future family and aid in taking care of his parents, brothers, and sister.

**Eddie**

Eddie was a member of a northern American Indian nation. He was raised by his mother, and eventually a stepfather. At the time of his interview, he had one sister and three brothers by his mother and “11 or 12” siblings by his biological father. During Eddie’s early education, he attended an Indian school, a Catholic school, and a public school, all located on the reservation. While in high school he attended two years of a program on research for undergraduates at Northern Plain University. He had no plans for post-secondary education until his senior year of high school, when his girlfriend’s parents strongly encouraged him to consider applying for college. He attended a tribal community college (where he earned an Associate’s Degree) and transferred to Northern Plains University, where he was double majoring in History and Indian Studies at the time of his interview. He was a McNair scholar, a component of the TRIO program, which he became eligible for as a junior. His future plans were to return to his home reservation and become a teacher and a mentor of students.

**Fred**

Fred identified himself as an American Indian with roots in a northern midwest nation, even though he was not an enrolled member of a tribe. He was raised by his mother and had a sister and two brothers. Fred’s early education took place in public
schools removed from any reservation. He was bullied until his final school, where he intentionally did not identify as American Indian. His plans for a college education were in his mind from his earliest memories. He chose Northern Plains University due to an athletic scholarship and national ranking. Fred planned to become associated with a new extracurricular activity involving leadership for athletes. Fred’s goal was to provide for his mother and siblings when he earned his doctorate in Psychology.

**George**

George identified as an American Indian from a northern midwest nation. He was raised on another reservation by his grandmother, with his parents involved in his upbringing. During his interview, he revealed that his one sibling had passed away in the last year. George’s elementary education was in a Catholic school, while his high school education was at a public school on the reservation. He was a 3rd year law student and due to graduate within the school year. George’s first experience in higher education was at a midwestern state college, where he finished several of his general requirements before transferring to Northern Plains University. His was involved on campus with a law school organization.

**Data Analysis**

After each interview was conducted, the transcript was reviewed to get a sense of what each participant was sharing. Initial coding of text segments in vivo (using the exact words of the participant) was used in the first five transcripts, when I realized that some of them were essentially saying the same thing (e.g. grandfather support, father support, mother support equals family support). I coded the remaining text segments using some in vivo, as some were unique, and used repeated codes until coding was
completed. The next step in the coding process was to have a meeting with an outside reviewer who independently read and coded two transcripts leading to intercoder agreement. A comparison of codes was conducted leading to a definition for each code. Initial coding revealed 144 codes, which were put into an Excel spreadsheet. Meanings of initial codes were established, defined, and recorded (Table 3).

Table 3. Development of the Codebook – Samples of Codes and Definitions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODES</th>
<th>DEFINITIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td>Feeling of being apart from their family, friends, home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Area of education concentration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>Professor or staff who advises, coaches, guides them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messages</td>
<td>Communication to/from another, either positive/negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Person who gave birth/raised them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Idea/place/family/nation who inspires, drive to get going/get things done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nation</td>
<td>Affiliation, tribe to which they belong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No respect</td>
<td>On the receiving end of disdain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off campus</td>
<td>Not living on campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity(ies)</td>
<td>Favorable circumstance(s), allows student to move forward in a good way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized campus event</td>
<td>Wacipi, international night, games, etc. on campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>People who raised you, gave birth to you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents split up</td>
<td>Mother and father are no longer together as a unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception</td>
<td>The way one sees things – people, places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>Collection of a student’s college work to show prospective employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive attitude</td>
<td>Self-explanatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive role</td>
<td>Taking an active, good part in something/to someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>The capability/aptitude to do well in life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>Extremely low or no income in life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise</td>
<td>Telling/hearing someone (they) did well/very well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prejudice</td>
<td>Bias/bigotry toward Native Americans, verbally or by actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous knowledge</td>
<td>Being aware of before college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors</td>
<td>Faculty at the university</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data was read and reread several times, to insure consistency and reliability, until it reached saturation. Realizing there was considerable repetition of similar codes for the same meaning, I began to integrate and reduce the codes resulting in a total of 66. I developed a codebook (see Table 3) to assure my definition of a code would be consistent.

After completion of the code book with definitions, the original 144 codes were collapsed so similar meanings were combined into 66 codes. With all codes defined, three categories emerged using the constant comparison method. When looking at codes three separate categories were apparent.

Graphical depictions of my analysis of data are shown in Figure 1 and Table 4.

Figure 1. Data Analysis Process.
Table 4. Codes, Categories, Themes, and Assertion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Argument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Support</td>
<td>Classmates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AISC</td>
<td>Classroom Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Support</td>
<td>Disconnect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Experience</td>
<td>Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping Counselor</td>
<td>Extended Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Interest</td>
<td>Greek Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Support</td>
<td>Ignorance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family as Friends</td>
<td>Impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Interest</td>
<td>Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Sacrifices</td>
<td>Logo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Support</td>
<td>Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Aid</td>
<td>No Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
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<tr>
<td>Help My People</td>
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<td>Heritage</td>
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<td>Interest/Major</td>
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<td>Mentor</td>
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<td>Opportunities</td>
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<td>Positive Role</td>
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<td>Professors</td>
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<td>Respect</td>
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<td>Siblings</td>
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<td>Success</td>
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<td>Tutoring</td>
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| Category 1: Support                                                   | Argument  |
| Subcategories                                                         |           |
| Family/Friends                                                        |           |
| American Indian                                                       |           |
| Success Center                                                        |           |
| Professors                                                            |           |

| Category 2: Giving Back                                              | Argument  |
| Subcategories                                                        |           |
| Gratitude                                                            |           |
| Goals                                                                 |           |

| Category 3: Misconceptions                                           | Argument  |
| Subcategories                                                        |           |
| No Subcategories                                                      |           |

**Themes**

Male American Indian students feel a deep seated sense of commitment to support family and to return to help their tribal communities.

**Assertion**

Male American Indian students receive elements of positive support while carrying a deep seated commitment to return and help tribal communities and do not feel valued by the general student population.

The student population has little to no understanding of American Indian Culture and tradition resulting in male American Indians feeling marginalized.
Codes, Categories, Themes and Assertion

The first category included 25 codes that were identified relating to category one: Support. Three subcategories emerged: Family/Friends, American Indian Support Center and Professors. The second category included 24 codes relating to category two: Giving Back. Within category two, two subcategories emerged: Gratitude and Goals. Category three included 14 codes with no subcategories. Patterns from these three categories separated into three themes. Using inductive reasoning from the themes, I derived a single assertion. Further discussion of findings will be presented in Chapter IV.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a term used in conjunction with validation in qualitative research. To achieve trustworthiness, primary researchers check themselves for accuracy and credibility in their findings. The primary investigators reflect on their roles in the project, becoming reflexive through personal biography, both ethical and political, as part of the project. Trustworthiness and reflexivity are aspects of qualitative research.

Triangulation was used to insure validity. Maxwell (2005) described the benefits of triangulation: “This strategy reduces the risk of chance associations and of systematic biases due to specific methods, and allows better assessment of the generality of the explanations that one develops” (p. 112). In order to achieve triangulation and insure trustworthiness, I enlisted a fellow scholar to review and code two manuscripts. After the review process, we engaged in a peer debriefing that provided an external check of the research process. Additionally, I conducted member checks as the participants reviewed transcripts for accuracy and completed triangulation. These methods validated my research, but did not necessarily validate my conclusions.
Validity in qualitative research was constantly checked throughout the research project in order to verify accuracy. I am aware that researcher subjectivity is a threat to validity. I made it clear what expectations and values were brought to this research in an effort to insure integrity to avoid possible bias (Maxwell, 2013).

**Research Bias**

As the researcher, it is imperative for me to address my biases. According to Stake (2010):

> All researchers have biases, all people have biases, all reports have biases, and most researchers work hard to recognize and constrain hurtful biases. They set up traps to catch their biases, and the best researchers help their clients and readers to be alert to those biases, too. (p. 164)

As a friend and teacher of male American Indian students, I had been given the opportunity to listen to their concerns. Thus, I made an effort to remain neutral while interviewing and making observations during interviews. Through discussions with my advisor and chair, we were able to circumvent instances where I could possibly show bias. When I questioned myself as to whether I was biased or not, I checked with my chair, and we talked things through to be clear that I remained neutral.

In the following chapter, I provide a presentation of the findings in relation to the literature. The chapter includes a short review of the purpose of this study, the three categories: Support, Giving Back, and Misconceptions, as well as a presentation of participants’ perceptions of their feelings and lived experiences at a predominantly White higher education institution supported in the themes.
CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of male American Indian students (MAIS) who attended a predominantly White institution of higher education to determine what factors influenced their experiences. Seven participants were interviewed between December of 2014 and September of 2015. The following research questions directed this research study:

1. How do male American Indian students perceive their experiences at a predominantly White institution (PWI) of higher education?
2. What factors influence their perceptions of those experiences?

After completion of initial coding (see Figure 4), 144 codes were reduced to 66 and yielded three categories: Support, Giving Back, and Misconceptions. The first section of this chapter includes categories and themes that have emerged from the data. Data includes text segments from the transcripts of participant interviews. Three themes emerged:

1. Male American Indian students rely on academic support from professors and the American Indian Student Center, as well as family and friends to be successful.
2. Male American Indian students feel a deep seated sense of commitment to support family and to return to help their tribal communities.
3. The student population has little to no understanding of American Indian culture and tradition resulting in male American Indian students (MAIS) feeling marginalized.

**Categories, Themes, and Assertion**

The categories of Support, Giving Back, and Misconceptions are strongly supported by data gleaned from interviews of the participants. These participants have been successful in their efforts to connect with their professors, the American Indian Student Center, and their family and friends, thereby creating a system of support. This support in turn generated a commitment to giving back to their families and their tribal communities. The misconceptions of the many in the population of students on this university campus created a climate detrimental to the emotional well-being of the participants, making support a needed factor to effectively complete their higher education goals.

**Category 1: Support**

The first category, “Support,” refers to a participant’s perception of support received while attending a predominantly White institution (PWI) of higher education. Data revealed that support was extremely important to participants and came from various sources.

**Theme 1: Male American Indian students rely on academic support from professors, the American Indian Student Center, and family as well as friends to be successful.** Academic support came from professors who provided encouragement, especially when students sought help and showed an interest in a class. Participants who
initiated contact with their professors made connections and received abundant support.

Fred shared how he purposely established a connection with his professors:

We’re getting the help that we need. So, they provide a lot of the support, but most of the support are the professors that I talk to. Because I become…. I like to develop a connection with the professor so they understand where I’m coming from, and they’ll understand if I need help or not. So, I come with them. I come to them asking questions. I ask them how they are doing each day. Stuff like that.

Fred gave an example of how he approached professors and how this broke an invisible barrier to create a personal connection. Fred related:

My Introduction to Psychology class, I came up the first day after the class. I didn’t do this first semester because I was very timid. I was very . . . my first semester on this University. I came up to my Psychology professor. I asked him, “How you doing? My name is Fred. Nice to meet you. I hope I enjoy your class.” And he got. . . . It broke his barrier. I’ve learned this. If I initiate stuff first, it breaks their barrier and allows them to connect to me on a personal . . . not a personal level, but more of a connection than I would if I would sit there in the back of the class and sleep all day.

Eddie appreciated when professors would take a personal interest in him and push him to do better work. One example was when a professor allowed him to make corrections to papers which enhanced his learning experience. Eddie related:

Dr. Fitzsimmons, I just really like his teaching style and the way he teaches and that he is open minded, I guess . . . open-minded to things that he really pushed
me to excel. Like in a lot of papers, he’ll let me rewrite it. I’ll get a B or C or something. He’ll show me what I did wrong and is really persistent in that, in showing me my flaws and working on them. So, I really like him because of that.

And Gretel Hansen, she’s really supportive, and she really has an interest in my future career. Because she actually wanted us, me and a couple other Affair students – Connie and Kara, to present a paper at the American Historical Society conference. Well, like I said, for Gretel, she really took an interest in my future career and she ah. . .. Both of them actually really want to see me do well, I think.

Brian enjoyed when his professors brought their expertise and a new perspective to a subject. Their experiences were inspiring to him. He indicated:

> Expertise. . .. Insight from the professors, from the instructor. . .. I really enjoy when an instructor shines a light on a subject in a way that you can’t get out of the book. But you can have an appreciation for what they know, what their experiences have taught them, and that they can share that with you in a way that is inspirational. That’s the best part of school.

Brian also felt his professors were mentors and a source of support. He stated, “We have our mentors in our program that have taught us Indian Law and that’s good support.”

One professor’s support, in particular, impressed Brian. He related:

> Well, one I would say is Peter Forrester. He spent a lot of time with us. A lot more than other instructors did, and he would have got a sense of who we are. As far as myself, you know, I appreciate the time and effort he put into the program for us. So that’s why he’s invested . . .. I think as far as our group is concerned.

He was invested because we were invested. We wanted to be competitive at these
national competitions. We wanted to make sure that NPU had a good showing at all of these Indian Law networking events. Because we showed interest, he showed the interest. On top of him doing it because he loves the program, the Indian Law program here. It’s good, and it was beneficial for all of us.

The American Indian Student Center (AISC) as a support system was invaluable according to the data. The AISC provided a warm and encouraging sense of community for the participants along with tutoring and advice. Doug’s initial experience with AISC was as part of a class visit to campus. He reflected on that recruiting experience. Doug stated, “We came with one of our classes. They just brought us to the Native American Center over there. They gave us their little spiel about recruiting, and they fed us lunch, and we toured the campus.” Later, when Doug first came to Northern Plains University (NPU) he left after 4 days. During frequent calls home during the first 4 days, his mother told him to stay in school. On the 4th day, he called his father who said to come home. He picked up his already packed belongings and left. The American Indian Student Center (AISC) tried to convince him to stay, “Actually when I moved home the first time, that’s the place that said, ‘No, you don’t, you shouldn’t.’ They were trying to keep me to stay here.” Later, when Doug returned to NPU he was again helped. He was tempted to skip class and study and read on his own, but he was encouraged to attend classes by Gail (administrative secretary). Doug described:

But to get to class I have Angela (program coordinator), at the Native American Center. She said, “Oh, you better go. You better not skip.” So, I was like, I suppose I better go to this class. Otherwise, it’s like, I’m not going to listen to you talk. I can get the work, and I’ll do the work, because you’re going to talk
about this anyway. If I can figure it out on my own, it’s better for me. I learn better that way anyway because I have. I’d rather teach myself than have somebody teach me. That’s weird? They’re actually, really, really, supporting. Especially that they’re always happy, and they want you to succeed. That makes you want to succeed.

Doug received academic support through AISC in the form of writing and rewriting his paper:

Cheryl does a good job over there like with helping you with homework. Like if you need help with a paper. She’ll be like you structure the paper. Actually my 2nd semester here, we learned how to write a scientific paper. Because usually, it’s always like an English paper but it’s different from a scientific paper. So she helped me with the paper, and I was like, “Oh, yeah, we did a good job. I’ll go turn it in, and I’ll be good.” I brought it in, and ah, his name is Dr. Donald Patterson. He just inked it up. This is wrong. This is wrong. This is wrong. What? You know, my self-esteem dropped. Then I brought it back to Cheryl and she’s like, “What the heck? I don’t know, I must be writing a different style or something” and sure enough. We learned how to write a scientific paper. Actually my paper was the best in the class. He put the best on top and the least best on the bottom.

Rather than sticking to his safe American Indian community on campus, George first tried to fit in with the general population on campus. George indicated that he did not seek out AISC right away. George related:
I’ve had tutoring [at AISC]. Usually here, or I didn’t right away. Right away. But I didn’t come [to AISC] and start utilizing it until after a couple of years into school – a few years into school. I think what I was trying to do was integrate into the community here at large. It’s kind of easy to experience some culture shock if you grow up on a reservation for the majority of your life. But when times get tough, and you miss home a little bit, and you know, there’s nothing like coming around here. It does feel like home. They treat you like family here but of course it’s a professional type of deal. Their main focus is making sure that you find success in your classes or whatever it is that you’re doing. I know that helped me adjust.

Eddie discovered AISC prior to entering Northern Plains University (NPU) through an undergraduate summer research program. He was a work study at the American Indian Student Center (AISC) besides using it as a resource. Eddie noted:

I guess working here, too, is a really, really good experience, I think. Yeah, I’ve worked here. I think I started my second semester at NPU so three semesters of working, which is a good experience – a lot of social networking and stuff. I think. But yeah, places like this and the Undergraduate Research Program helped me, helped out a lot. Then, we also visited here, of course, and got all kinds of help from this place.

Cletus stated that he felt a connection with AISC, like they were family. He related how they offered many kinds of support:

Naturally, I spend time at the American Indians student services. And it’s easier to talk to them there because we all, you know, feel that we are connected
It’s just kind of a non-spoken brotherhood really. So it’s easy to make friends over there. We usually find something to laugh at.

The support received as soon as he entered the AISC made it a frequent stop for Cletus. He was greeted by inquiries of hunger and then asked how his classes were going. With regular visits the staff became like family. Cletus stated:

I always stop in at American Indian students services, and they of course, they are always, as soon as you walk in the door, first thing they ask you is, did you eat, are you hungry, there is food, then they tell you there is food, go get some. It’s not, they are not really asking you if you want to eat, they tell you, you should go eat. Then after that it is usually, so how are classes going? Is there anything you need help with? You know, you come here for letters of rec. (recommendation) if you need them, that kind of thing. That’s, you know, that’s just about every day you walk in. For sure they ask you if you, if you’re hungry, every time. I think of everybody, or all the staff over there, might as well be aunts and uncles.

All seven of the participants revealed a sense of feeling overwhelmed, isolated, and lonely, and reported that their family and friends provided a vital link of support through encouragement, motivation, and listening. The participants relied on support from family and friends to be successful. The data revealed that support was extremely important to the participants. This came across clearly from Fred, Anthony, Eddie, and Cletus.

Fred shared that his mother was his primary means of support while he was attending the university. Through frequent contact via phone, FaceTime, and Skype, his mother assisted in his motivation to be successful. Fred stated:
Not my dad any more, it’s more my mom. She helps keep me steady. She helps me. If I’m having a really bad day or bad week or couple bad weeks, my mom’s there to help support me. She’s always there to motivate me to go beyond the limits that I know that I can do. We do a lot of phone conversations, a lot of FaceTime, a lot of Skype.

Anthony attested that friends were a major support and helped him move forward during a particularly arduous college experience. Anthony described:

Friends, if you have people who, that you can lean on, and just support you in a way where they can relate to you. Just relate to your experience and whether it’s negative or positive is a huge support for you as a student. For that journey, that’s what is the support for undergrad experience. I had to talk with people and get some feedback and get some insight and get some support. I just needed some support. I needed one person, just one to tell me, “Don’t worry about this. Don’t worry about this. And don’t worry about this. These are things that will pass. This is a storm that will go away.” And I did. I got that support, and I moved forward.

Feedback from family and sharing success helped Anthony, “An answer off the top of my head that I could think of, it’d be family. Anytime something was good, I couldn’t wait to tell them and hear some feedback with improvements.”

Family support helped by them just being there. Eddie stated, “I guess family support helps, of course. My mom. I don’t know, she just, is there for me when I need her.”

When asked about support, Cletus shared his loneliness away from his tribal community. Cletus noted:
Actually having friends. . . . I mean, ah, at times things can get, it can get pretty lonely, cause you just come from. Where I come from, you know, we are a pretty tight knit community. You know, having friends, it’s a big thing. There is always support there. Cause I hear about, you know, students that talk about not having friends around here, and I think about it like, well how can you not have friends. I think, well if you didn’t you’d be, you would be really lonely. Things would be harder.

While talking about support, Brian related he had made many close friends in his cohort in law school. He stated:

I have met some good friends here while I’ve been to school. Some are out of the ordinary because of the amount of Indian students we had in law school. At least in my class, so we have a good group. They will be my friends the rest of my life.

**Discussion of Category 1: Support**

Data from this study clearly showed participants relied on several forms of support in order to be successful in their academic careers. Participants wholeheartedly agree that support came from making a personal connection with their professors. The American Indian Student Center (AISC) provided mentorship, advisement, and a community away from home. The feeling of home was also a connection to their culture. Participants were in frequent contact with their family members to relieve feelings of being overwhelmed, isolated, and lonely. Pember (2011) asserted, “There is a growing body of research showing that success and persistence for American Indian men in higher education is directly tied to knowledge of and connection to traditional tribal language and culture” (para. 23).
Faculty, when approached, were a wealth of support for participants.

Higginbotham (1996) stated:

Faculty can prepare for various reactions from students by thinking about issues of power they relate to the selection of course materials that address inequality, the various interactions within the classroom between faculty and students and among students, and establishing a classroom atmosphere that is safe for exploring issues of inequality. (p. 203)

Working with students means investing in equal opportunities for them to learn. Bennett (2011) stressed, “Our main goal as teachers is to strive for the intellectual, social and personal development of our students to their highest potential . . . to provide each student with an equal opportunity to learn” (p. 37) and,

Teachers who have the dispositions, attitudes, knowledge, skills, and resources needed to ensure high levels of learning and the personal development of culturally different learners—students whose lived experiences, culturally developed knowledge, and sometimes language differ from their teachers and/or their classroom peers. (p.235)

The American Indian Student Center (AISC) supported students through early recruitment, mentoring, and advice to the participants. Larimore and McClellan (2005), stated:

Native American students who are able to draw strength from their cultural identity while adapting to the demands of campus life are more likely to succeed in their academic pursuits than are either culturally assimilated students or those unable to establish a level of comfort within their campus environment. (p. 21)
Family, home, and the atmosphere of family on campus was a source of participants’ support. This type of support was evident in the article by Guillory and Wolverton (2008), “This intervention-based model suggests that replicating the extended family structure within the college culture enhances an American Indian student’s sense of belonging and consequently leads to higher retention rates among American Indians” (p. 61). Further evidence stated, “Individuals further attributed family, academic and faculty as having an influence on academic success” (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008, p. 71).

Category 2: Giving Back

Theme 2: Male American Indian Students feel a deep seated sense of commitment to support family and to return to help their tribal communities. The notion of giving back to their community was from a deep sense of gratitude that resulted in a commitment to give back to their family and community. Anthony talked about his drive for an education, as well as, his journey as a nontraditional student and the humbleness he felt. When asked, Anthony replied:

And I think family. Thinking about what’s best for my family is the drive. I still moved and worked, but I’m grateful that I did it that way though. I have no regrets. I don’t have any ill feelings about being older and going back to school. And all because of the fact that had I done it at the age that I was trying to do it, I would have been totally worn out for one. Number two, I wouldn’t. I don’t think that I would have done as well as I did now. And three, I wouldn’t have had the same experiences or the opportunities, I think, that I did. I think that it’s without that experience, I wouldn’t be the same person or maybe I would be the same
person and not really know how to get through some things. I think I needed to go through that in order for me to be humble, as humble as I am now.

George was grateful to have been able to adjust to life away from the comfort of the reservation. He felt that getting an “A” was a significant accomplishment. George noted:

But, you know, it was a reward when I was able to get an A in it. That was a big confidence boost. You feel like you can do anything if you get an “A” in a class of that caliber because that was a hard class. So, other than those instances for the most part, the campus climate has been good. You almost get hit a couple times going across the cross walk, but who doesn’t? I think I’ve evolved. To being strictly comfortable around Indian people, other Indian people to maybe be a little bit more comfortable being out there on my own. But at the same time, there’s still moments where I just need to be around other people who kind of understand my ways and understand some of the things that I’ve been through.

The memory of his grandmother, who raised him, was a source of initiative as he worked and moved forward in her honor to succeed. George stated:

Memories of my grandma, and ah, all the efforts that my family put into me. . . . You know, you kind of go by the motto sometimes, if you can’t do it for yourself and you’re running low on energy, try to do it for them. Learn about it a little bit and then maybe you’ll understand a little bit more. Take some initiative. I’ve been forced to take initiative to learn more about society outside the reservation so that I can find success. You can do the same, so that you can respect others.
For Brian, earning a doctoral degree was important not only monetarily, but it would help him create a career and allow him to support his family. Family sacrifices were a reason to succeed. Brian related:

Well, I have a college degree but to get a doctor’s is important because it sets me up. It sets me up for a career that I can always fall back on. That’s important. But just to make good on all the sacrifices that were done for me by my family, by myself, that’s important. I appreciate all that.

Brian felt strongly about finishing his degree and planned to use his education to serve his people. Brian spoke passionately about why he wanted to achieve his academic goal. He described:

But, I think the lesson needs to be the same. You have to finish school because you need to be disciplined in, have an expansive education to where you can serve your people, because that’s why you are there. You are not there for your personal gain. You’re there because the sacrifices that your forebears made for you puts you in that position, and that’s why you have to finish what you start.

Cletus was very clear about what his education and college degree would do for him. He wanted to make a difference for his family and tribe. Cletus stated:

Ultimately, I decided it was, it would be the best thing to do for myself, and then eventually that going to college and getting an education would allow me to help my people. So, and that would extend to my family, and then of course, just all members of the tribe. I figure with an education, I will be able to make a greater impact than without one.
One goal for Eddie was to show future students, that regardless of daunting experiences, they can succeed in spite of their family background. With his degree completed, Eddie planned to get work experience before returning to his tribal community. With experience under his belt, he planned to return and become a mentor and teacher. Eddie related:

I wanted to be a first generation graduate with PhD in my family. So pretty honorable thing, I guess, prestigious. I’m not quite sure but what I have planned in the past was to get my PhD and maybe do some work in like an urban area for a little while, then my overall goal is to just go back to the reservation and show students, be a mentor to students and a teacher. Just like to show them, yeah, I grew up with a single parent just like many people do on the Rez, and I just want to show them that the opportunities and stuff that are out there. . . . What they can accomplish. How they can get away from the reservation for schooling. I think it is very important.

Discussion of Category 2: Giving Back

The data revealed gratitude and giving back to the tribal community was important to participants. Participants strongly felt their academic success was from the efforts of their family. Their families understanding and the memory of their elders was an incentive to succeed. Further, their future families had an investment in their accomplishment as their careers would insure a future income. Guillory and Wolverton (2008) found that giving back was ingrained in the tribal community. They stated, “These cultural practices of giving back to community members and the community itself
are ingrained within the tribal members and remain guiding forces throughout their lives” (p. 75).

Their academic success in hand, the participants felt a strong sense of commitment to give back to their family and to help their people. While I watched and listened to the students, I did not hear a sense of obligation but a determination or commitment of spirit. According to Brayboy (2005), “The notions of competition and individual success are often at odds with the reasons many Indigenous students pursue postsecondary education in the first place—to serve their families and communities better” (p. 2). The data indicated a strong commitment to help and be of service to their people.

Category 3: Misconceptions

The third category, “Misconceptions” refers to misunderstandings and fallacies encountered on the Northern Plains University (NPU) campus and in the surrounding community. The participants had strong opinions about their experiences. One theme emerged from this category.

Theme 3: The student population has little to no understanding of American Indian culture and tradition resulting in Male American Indian students feeling marginalized. The data revealed compelling narratives of encounters between the participants and many of those in the student community. The participants believed they faced preconceived notions, bias, and a sense of the student body being “riled up” about the former mascot. Cletus spoke about the general campus climate. He was quite frank when he stated:
You know, they are pretty great, except for when, ah, people get all riled up over, you know, cultural issues on both sides. When I say sides, I’d talk about, ah, you know, Native Americans and nonnatives, cause that’s usually what it comes down to unfortunately. The NPU logo is always a prevalent issue. It is. Even when it is not. If that makes any sense.

Cletus elaborated on the campus climate. He had the feeling that certain topics were always on the minds of many in the population of students. Cletus explained:

’Cause it comes up. It’s, it’s on everybody’s minds. I know it is. It’s, it’s in the back and, cause it’s always, it always on my mind. I just try to avoid talking about it, but one way or another, it comes back around. And, ah, events, you know, things like, ah. . . . The shirt indecent with the super drunk, and the incident with the Gamma Phi poster. There is things like that, you know, it’s, ah, how would I describe it. Like, they just kinda spark it back up again, I suppose. For a couple weeks there, you know, everybody on both sides of the issue, they’re all fired up again. And that goes on for, like I said a few weeks, sometimes a month. Other than that, everybody is pretty calm about it. Everybody would like to avoid an argument, I’m sure. But it only takes, well, I wouldn’t call it, either of those events I named, the shirts and the poster, I wouldn’t call them little, but it only takes something little to start it up again. But it doesn’t necessarily ruin my experience here. As much as [you] could expect out of an entity as big as Northern Plains University.

Cletus had encounters with students at various times. In retrospect, his approach appeared to open doors for conversation. Cletus reflected: 80
I have never really had any run ins, because I tried to avoid them. I’d like to act as an ambassador for, of course my tribe, but ah, you know, the American Indians in general, and when I lived in the dorms, or anybody really, but especially in the dorms, I told most of them out right. Because now and then you would see like they were dying to ask me something. It’s really funny. You gotta learn to laugh at these things, but I encourage them to ask questions because, you know, if I ignored them and, you know, it’s, ah, they are trying is what it is. They want to know. They want to learn. I would rather not let people be ignorant, I suppose. Doug questioned two of his friends about their impression of him when he first came to class. Doug stated:

Like my first day of class. I sat in the back of the room, and they’re my good friends now. But those last spring semester, I asked them, what did you guys think of me when I first came here, you know? I say my friend, his name is Bob. So there’s three people to a table. So there’s me, Bob, and then Luke. I asked them, I was like, oh, I was scared of you. I didn’t want you to sit by me. I was like, what the heck were you scared of me for? So there’s just that stereotype.

Encounters on campus were a range of different experiences. Doug felt like he stood out because he is tall, has an athletic build and wears a braid. He sensed it was a cause for discrimination. Doug explained:

Yeah. I could walk outside and there could be somebody standing there glaring at me, just for no reason at all. Just for being a big Indian, I’ll say. I feel that all the time, but I don’t do anything about it because if somebody says something to me I’m going to say something right back because that’s the way we were raised.
Almost every day when you walk to class, you get smiles. You don’t say anything, just smile a good morning smile. Just a glare, it’s like oh my god, lighten up, what the hell’s the matter with you? Yeah. It happens all the time. I always sit in the back of the room, too. But there’s always those ones that you know, don’t look at you if you look at them. Or ask them for help, and they don’t say anything. But it’s like, whatever. You can’t just . . . you can’t let it hurt you.

Doug had been a recipient of a physical encounter while walking on the street. There was an unanticipated outcome. Doug noted:

Just because I’m a big guy, so I stand out, and then of course I got a braid. So people see that, and “Oh, look at that guy.” One time somebody tugged my hair. I had a buddy of mine. I met him downtown one time, and somebody tugged my hair. I was like, “What the hell,” you know. He, my buddy, the White guy, he went and got that guy, and he made him apologize to me. So that was pretty cool I thought. Yeah. He was like, “Oh, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to do that.” I was like, “Yeah, no problem,” you know. That happened to me at the concert last week too but I didn’t do anything. I was like, “Ah, whatever.” You just got to keep going. There’s always going to be something that tries to hold you back. There’s always going to be a bump in the road. But you just got to work through it.

Eddie related an experience about misconceptions held by many in the student body on Northern Plains University (NPU) campus, and the lack of diversity. Eddie disclosed:
Ah, we actually were talking about this in class today, to mix up or be more diverse, and actually be diverse. Because, like, we were just talking, for the center [American Indian Success Center] as an example. A lot of students think that only natives come here [American Indian Success Center] and are allowed here. Because Julie’s [Eddie’s girlfriend] friend, she just made a [new] friend four months ago. She thought we still got tuition paid for. She thought we still go to school for free. She didn’t want to come in here because she thought it was native only. No, she’s not ignorant or anything personal. Just not educated.

Brian has had negative experiences with prejudice in the community at large. Brian’s experiences ranged from general negativity in the forms of stares and “bitchy” attitudes, to feeling targeted as a shoplifter. He feels this is due in part to the former mascot the general feeling of intolerance and discrimination. Brian stated:

All around Three Rivers (changed for anonymity), me and my girlfriend get it all the time. Negative. Like people will like, ah. You can tell. They don’t say anything, but say we’ll go into a store, and I don’t know, they’ll just like watch you or something – just acting bitchy basically. Yeah, they’ll act bitchy like you’re trying to do something or trying to steal something. I’m like, what the hell am I going to steal? Just because I’m Native doesn’t mean I’m going to steal. It’s just. And a lot of things like that. Then with the mascot issue within the past two years has just been very, very hectic and would honestly not recommend a native student coming here. Because of the mascot and just the prejudices that Three Rivers has. I mean, there are some really good people, really good programs. NPU is a decent school.
George felt the campus climate was not good because students did not understand how the former mascot was offensive. This was a “noise” he needed to block out. He felt there were times when he could handle it, and other times that he wasn’t able to keep it from bothering him. George contended:

It’s going good. Well, I don’t . . . it wouldn’t be good for others, but I’ve kind of found a way to block out some of the noise; but at the same time, it still does get to me. You know, there’s a lot of hurt feelings over the nickname ordeal here. They don’t understand why it’s offensive and all that garbage and nonsense.

The misuse of their sacred culture, and the use of American Indian regalia was insensitive and insulting to George. He felt education was key for the general population to understand. George explained:

You know, my brother passed away last year and part of the way we honor him in the traditional Hidatsa way, and the Lakota do it as well as, we have a dance for them. Only the elder men are allowed to wear head-dress, and it’s considered one of the highest honors. They’ve done a lot. They’ve given a lot to the community. They’ve displayed generosity and hard work and made sacrifice after sacrifice after sacrifice for others. I’ve been working my entire life to be able to have that honor, to be able to put one of those on. And to see other people to wear it as a way to celebrate a hockey game win or just because they want to get drunk and have a good thing for a party, is something that really makes. . . . Then, they turn around and say how’s it offensive? We’re just having fun. No, no, no. Learn about it a little bit, and then maybe you’ll understand a little bit more. Take some initiative. I’ve been forced to take initiative to learn more about society outside
the reservation so that I can find success. You can do the same so that you can respect others. Yeah, when they retired the nickname, everybody went and bought up their fighting . . . [NPU] . . . gear and that was just cute. I was thinking, “Well, that couldn’t change anything, you realize that, right?” Yeah, you’ll get some mocking comments. Not directly to you, but you know, they [many in the student population] say amongst each other, in your presence. They know you’re there. [the White students say] If we can’t have the nickname, we should just cut off all Indian programs here. You know, I mean things of that nature. It’s frustrated me over the years, but I think I’ve, for the most part, found a way to move past it. But it’s hard for others.

**Discussion of Category 3: Misconceptions**

The data identified specific situations in which participants felt they were put on the defensive, whether on or off campus; and they had been subjected to uncomfortable situations. The perceptions of the participants were that there was an undercurrent of feelings by many in the population of students that made the participants uncomfortable, often resulting in as little contact as possible, with the predominantly White students on campus. The campus climate on a one to one level could be stressful and intimidating. An unsupportive institutional climate is one of the problems for male American Indian students. As Wright (1991) asserted:

Today, researchers, educators, and students repeatedly report several factors which contribute to the problems: inadequate academic preparation, in-sufficient financial support, and unsupportive institutional climate. These issues while not

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necessarily exhaustive in scope illustrate the nature of barriers to Native access, retention, and graduation (p. 6).

On campus incidents contributed to the exposure of racism. Phillips and Rice (2010) stated in referencing the Northern Plains University:
The NPU narrative also highlights the role of historical research in revealing the distortions and inaccuracies that may become part of the institutional history and in helping to expose the strands of racism embedded in a White institution’s practices and behavior. (p. 512)

According to Phillips and Rice (2010), many in the student population had been insensitive to the culture of the participants by using sacred objects and using American Indian regalia for entertainment. The lack of knowledge of American Indian culture and the dispute over the logo at Northern Plains University (NPU) has created a strained environment for American Indian students. Not only have American Indians been stripped of their culture but their sacred symbols and artifacts have been reduced to tokenisms by using them as symbols in athletics and by their fans. Phillips and Rice (2010) in referencing the Northern Plains University:
The NPU narrative also highlights the role of historical research in revealing the distortions and inaccuracies that may become part of the institutional history and in helping to expose the strands of racism embedded in a white institution’s practices and behavior. (p. 512)

Charlene Teters in Norris Nicholson (2003) stated:
Our people paid with their very lives to keep what little we have left...and that is what I am protecting. At home, we are taught to respect eagle feathers, respect the
Chiefs, respect that paint is sacred, that dance is something sacred to us. If you've never been taught to respect these things, it might not bother you, but if you've grown up in the community, where those things have meaning, it's going to have that impact on you. (p. 211)

"Words used to describe the participant’s perceptions were “riled up,” “simmering pot,” and stereotyped. The participants felt discrimination in looks from students which ranged from being ignored to glares. Misconceptions were still held regarding their tuition and free education. Walking in two worlds was an uncomfortable reality. Styres et al. (2010) explained:

Additionally, we focus on the tensions of walking between two worlds: addressing the intransigence of university protocols, developing a MOU, negotiating the tensions between insider and outsider perspectives, negotiating and navigating ethical space, as well as exploring the internal challenges that were triggered by these experiences. (p. 621)

**Assertion**

The single assertion from this research is: Male American Indian students receive elements of positive support while carrying a deep seated commitment to return and help their tribal communities, but do not feel valued by many in the student population.

**Summary**

In Chapter IV the three categories of Support, Giving Back, and Misconceptions were identified and discussed with relevant data supporting the themes. Further, pertinent literature was furnished for discussion of the findings. The three emergent themes were:
1. Male American Indian students rely on academic support from professors and the American Indian Student Center, as well as family and friends to be successful.

2. Male American Indian students feel a deep seated sense of commitment to support family and to return to help their tribal communities.

3. Many in the student population have little to no understanding of American Indian culture and tradition resulting in Male American Indian students feeling marginalized.

The first theme, based on the Support category, indicated that professors, the American Indian Student Center (AISC), and family and friends provided necessary support for the participants. With the support of professors, the AISC, and family and friends, participants were able to retain their culture and identity. Huffman (2001) said, “The concept of transculturation incorporates the idea that American Indian college students need not necessarily relinquish their Native ways in order to be successful” (p. 29). This was a success for the participants as they did not feel the need to wholly integrate themselves into the White middle class culture of the university.

While the drop-out rate for male American Indian students is high, successful students have crafted ways, on and off campus, to be effective. Chizhik and Chizhik (2009) indicated that “Resistance theories, in particular, provide a unique description of the classroom culture by examining how students or teachers perceive and respond to cultural dominance” (p. 2). The successful student is well aware of his surroundings, but does not allow himself to lose himself, or his culture.
The second theme, based on the Giving Back category, was informed by data on gratitude and goals of the participants as they reflected on support they received, and in turn, they were committed to return and help their tribal communities. Reaching their individual educational goals was a source of pride for them and their families. The participants firmly stated they were going to return to their tribal communities to help in some capacity, whether law, communication, social work, or teaching. Each participant made simple and direct statements about their intentions.

The third theme, based on the Misconceptions category, related to challenges participants faced through campus life and interactions with many in the student population. Many in the population of students had misunderstandings about several “facts” about the participants. These ranged from the fallacy of free higher education, to their misinterpretation of the use of the American Indian Support Center (AISC). The participants’ quiet nature was mistaken for being haughty, and negative feelings from physical and emotional encounters on and off campus were detailed. Many in the student population had little knowledge of the culture of the participants or the meaning of their regalia or sacred artifacts. The former mascot was a “simmering pot” and was perceived as an adverse undercurrent throughout campus. Data from the in text citations of participants is supported by research found in the literature.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of male American Indian students (MAIS) who attended a predominantly White institution of higher education and to determine what factors influenced their experiences. Chapter I was an overview of the purpose for this study, the theoretical framework guided by Resistance Theory, Transculturation hypotheses and Biculturation regarding the issues faced by male American Indian students in higher education. Chapter II included a review of literature related to male American Indian students and American Indian students in general (including a history of higher education from Colonial times to Tribal Colleges and American Indian K-12 education to today). College preparation and issues related to degree attainment in higher education were also discussed. Provided in Chapter III was an overview of the methodology used in this research. The methods of data collection, a description of the participants, and steps in the data analysis process with codes, categories, and themes were provided. In Chapter IV, three emergent categories – Support, Giving Back, and Misconceptions – were discussed and validated by text segments from participant interviews and relevant literature. Chapter V includes a summary of this study, limitations, conclusion, and recommendations.
Summary

The participants interviewed in this study were seven male American Indian undergraduate and graduate students from Northern Plains University (NPU). Interviews took place on the campus of NPU and were recorded and transcribed for data analysis, which included triangulation to insure trustworthiness and validity. Text segments were coded, similar codes were grouped and reduced, and a codebook was created. Categories were derived from codes and were then identified as Support, Giving Back and Misconceptions. Three themes emerged from those categories from which I derived a single assertion. Two research questions guided this study:

1. How do male American Indian students perceive their experiences at a predominantly White institution of higher education?
2. What factors influence their perceptions of those experiences?

Theme 1

*Male American Indian students rely on academic support from professors and the American Indian Student Center, as well as family and friends to be successful.*

The need for support, both academic and personal, was a major factor in participants’ experiences. Male American Indian students (MAIS) identified three types of support: professors, the American Indian Student Center (AISC), and friends and family.

**Professors**

Data indicated that some participants intentionally introduced themselves to their professors. They initially approached professors at the beginning of a semester to introduce themselves to create a connection. This simple method of communication
provided a professor with firsthand knowledge of the participant’s attendance and garnered personal attention, while building additional support. Participants valued the professors who reviewed their papers and allowed them to make revisions. This practice allowed participants to strengthen their knowledge and understanding of their professor’s expectations, while improving their grades. The professor/student connection shifted as participants pursued more interactions and conversations with their professors and were able to request advice while preparing presentations, understanding assignments, and discussing career opportunities. It was apparent from the data, that for some participants, a mentoring relationship occurred. Whether this happened within a semester or over a period of semesters, mentorship and advisement played a role in their education. This connection created a foundation in students’ minds to stay and finish their academic goals, as well as being a valuable source of academic and personal support to participants.

**The American Indian Student Center**

A second source of support came from the American Indian Support Center (AISC). The center provided critical support for participants as a one stop home away from home with tutors, caring staff members, as well as food, and a place to study, relax, and socialize. The AISC was also a place where participants established friendships with other American Indian students. A critical aspect of the center’s support was providing a homelike atmosphere which was important to students who were homesick and missing their culture. Participants often heard the admonishments of “go to class” and inquiries of “are you hungry, you had better eat,” in addition to questions about classes and homework. Staff were referred to as “aunties and uncles,” an extension of immediate
family support vital to American Indian culture. The support from the AISC was professional and yet friendly, which created a safe and relaxing atmosphere in addition to respite from their perception of a negative campus climate (described further under Theme Three).

Friends and Family

A third type of support that emerged from data related to family and friends. Participants reached out to their families by frequent phone calls, texting, and FaceTime or Skype to stay connected and to receive support. For each participant, being connected to his family was fundamental in order to sustain and maintain his academic career. Topics of phone calls to families were usually to vent about frustrations concerning courses, homework, tensions with fellow students, and to receive encouragement. Connections with family were made frequently, sometimes multiple times a week, in order to withstand the loneliness of being away from home, and also, to receive the support needed for academic and personal success in reaching goals.

The participants made friends on campus who helped to lessen their loneliness. More often their friendships were with fellow American Indians and family members who also attended the university. However, participants reported that they had a few nonnative friends. They developed these friendships while living in dormitories or taking classes within their major area of study. At the same time, the major tendency was to separate themselves from nonnative students and remain within the American Indian community on campus.

Support and mentoring from professors, along with the multifaceted support (i.e., tutors, caring staff members, food, a place to study, relax and socialize) from the
American Indian Student Center (AISC), as well as families and friends served to create a community on campus. These aspects of support, and reinforcement of their sense of culture, were fundamental to the participants’ success. It appeared that family and friends, emotionally and financially, were actually the foundation to participants’ success, while the AISC academic and emotional support, and academic support by professors were significant factors.

**Theme 2**

*Male American Indian students feel a deep seated sense of commitment to support family and to return to help their tribal communities.*

Participants viewed higher education as a privilege. The data clearly revealed a common goal: Participants planned to return to their tribal communities and serve and benefit them. Participants felt a commitment to compensate their families for the emotional and financial support given to them in order to attain success. As a part of their achievement, participants planned to show gratitude to their families for the encouragement they received throughout their education.

The participants related how their degrees would enable them to earn an income which would help to repay their families for financial and emotional support. Their education meant both a success to themselves and to their families. At the same time, their success would also demonstrate to their tribal communities that a degree in higher education was (is) achievable. Their education would bring skills that were needed, but were usually limited or even unavailable, to their home communities. Their return with a degree in hand would be an asset they could use to build strong foundations for the future of their families and homes.
Finances were only one way participants planned to show their gratitude. It was inspiring to listen to them as they related their commitment to return to their homes and give back to their families and communities in order to make a difference by helping their families and their tribal communities. There was no duress or hesitancy to this, but a simple premise, “I will go home. I will help.”

Theme 3

Many in the student population have little to no understanding of American Indian culture and tradition resulting in Male American Indian students feeling marginalized.

The participants’ perception was that many in the student population held attitudes and opinions, identified here as misconceptions, about male American Indian students and American Indian students in general, which created a discord between participants and the campus student community. Although friendships were made among participants and members of the predominantly White population of students, the campus climate was perceived to be negative. They voiced that many in the student population had misconceptions about them.

Participants felt they experienced frequent encounters which were unfriendly and found it challenging when faced with perceived glares from many in the population of students. Doug related, “A bad experience is always being stared at by students. It’s a constant glare.” When the mascot topic arose, he overheard a White student say, “If we can’t have the nickname, we should just cut off all Indian programs here.” Participants described an undercurrent concerning the former mascot. According to Cletus,

The NPU logo is always a prevalent issue. Somehow, things always come back to logo issues. If the majority of the student body isn’t happy of where that is going,
then it does reflect, maybe not always in the classroom, but in the environment.

You can see when students aren’t happy.

Anthony stated his thoughts:

What’s important to them as far as the logo issue? So once they come, they’re sort of this, like, well, you’re not really on the same page as everybody else. Then you get a whole other process of, or cycle of discriminating things that can happen again. I don’t know that they fully think that they are being discriminating. I don’t think that they do, because otherwise why would they do those things? Such as making derogatory remarks about race and people and human beings, it’s ignorant. These are things I dealt with, with them. That was something that I don’t think I’ve ever received on the reservation as a student, as a human being, and as a professional, as somebody who is educated and worked for their education. I’ve never experienced that kind of racism, blatant racism.

When asked about campus climate, Brian was direct in his assessment of the mascot, “The mascot is the sore issue for people on campus.” Social media impacted the participants negatively as the general population of students are able to write derogatory statements anonymously on web applications. Social media has had mascot postings. Eddie asserted, “Well with the context I’m in, with the logo issue, I don’t know what NPU would be able to do about that, but that’s probably the biggest thing right now.” In answer to a question about how he was treated by other students, Eddie further stated:

Not necessarily, personally, but social media and now there’s like apps on your phone that you can be, it’s anonymous. You post whatever you want. Nobody
knows who you are or anything. So, it tells the truth. It shows the true side of a lot of people in Three Rivers. And it’s within a mile radius.

George has learned to deal with the “noise,” but acknowledged it bothers others:

It wouldn’t be good for others, but I’ve kind of found a way to block out some of the noise, but at the same time, it still does get to me. You know, there’s a lot of hurt feelings over the nickname ordeal here. I don’t understand why it’s offensive and all that garbage and nonsense.

George was hurt by the use of regalia as part of having fun at a sporting event.

The data suggested participants felt many in the population of students was unaware of the resultant insult and affront that occurred.

American Indian culture is an integral part of American history, yet is disregarded by our history books. Participants felt that misconceptions and misunderstandings ranged from a lack of knowledge of American Indian history and culture, the part the participants’ played in regard to the former mascot, assumptions of free higher education, and the use of the American Indian Student Center (AISC).

**Limitations**

This study had several limitations. First, the study was limited to seven male American Indian students who attended Northern Plains University. Common themes did arise from these interviews, but credibility would be increased by the perspectives of additional students. Second, this study was focused on males, leaving out the perceptions of female American Indian students. Lastly, it did not include the general population of students, administrators, general staff, the staff at the American Indian Student Center (AISC), or faculty at the Northern Plains University. It would be beneficial to have data
from the staff at the American Indian Student Center (AISC) or administration, other
university staff and faculty on the Northern Plains University campus who may have
given further insights about male American Indian students.

**Conclusion**

Male American Indian students received elements of positive support while
challenged to help their tribal communities, but do not feel valued by many in the student
population at Northern Plains University. Participants, faced with many challenges on
campus, need support from several support systems, including: professors, the American
Indian Student Center, and family and friends in order to successfully reach their
academic goals. Participants employed a strategy of approaching professors and making
their acquaintance, which in turn, reaped rewards by being given the opportunity to
rewrite papers, and in some cases created a mentoring relationship which spanned over
many topics and even future job searches. The American Indian Student Center was an
academic resource for studying, getting help with papers, and receiving tutorial services;
it also provided a homelike atmosphere, a place to find fellow American Indian students,
and a professional caring staff.

Participants were most grateful for support they received from their family and
friends. Their goal was to reimburse their families monetarily for fiscal support, and
also, by giving emotional support to their parents and siblings. Additionally, the
participants’ goals were to return to their tribal communities to help them grow.

Finally, participants faced misconceptions on campus, which created a negative
campus climate. They were clear that this climate was ongoing, and it presented itself in
many forms: receiving glares, being ignored when asking questions about class, offensive misuse of their regalia and sacred artifacts, and being personally accosted.

Because of support received, participants shared about their gratitude toward professors, the AISC, and family and friends, and how they had goals to return and help their families and tribal communities. Because of support they received, participants were reaching their academic goals.

**Recommendations for Institutions**

**Advisors**

The findings suggest that successful American Indian students who participated in this study approached their professors and made connections. The first recommendation from this research is for advisors to encourage future students to make contact with their professors. If future students are informed by advisors across campus that making contact with professors is encouraged, it may establish groundwork for further support.

**Professors**

The second recommendation is that faculty receive training for working with male American Indian students (MAIS). Free educational classes, offered on campus through the university system, would inform faculty of the importance of making connections with MAIS to aid in their academic success. I encourage future Brown Bag lunches be held for faculty at the American Indian Student Center (AISC), where they can obtain firsthand experience in a MAIS homelike environment and find out from the AISC what topics need to be addressed.
**Campus Climate**

My third recommendation is to educate and assist the general population of students in critical thinking, knowledge, and acceptance regarding the American Indian culture. The Powwow on the NPU campus would be an example of American Indians sharing their culture. This enables others to understand their culture, gain their respect and even participate in events. The general population of students is unaware of the rich and diverse American Indian culture or of ways they may unintentionally contribute to a negative campus climate. I recommend students take part in “Bafa’ Bafa’,” a cross-cultural training simulation, perhaps as part of Greek Life and other campus clubs.

**American Indian Student Center**

My fourth recommendation is to develop a task force with the office of Diversity and Inclusion to identify additional ways to support and develop opportunities for cultural awareness on campus. According to the mission statement of the office of Diversity and Inclusion at Northern Plains University (NPU), there is a longstanding commitment to the education of American Indian students and the cultures and traditions of the American Indian people. Northern Plains University (NPU) has policies in place to foster awareness, sensitivity, acceptance, and understanding of cultures. It is recommended they develop a task force from the office of Diversity and Inclusion, on campus that will foster the awareness and sensitivity necessary for acceptance and understanding of all people in society.

**Male American Indian Students**

The fifth recommendation is that MAIS receive education on specific ways they can serve their communities with their degrees. Participants voiced their goal of
returning to their tribal communities to be of service. So often American Indian reservations are poor and without resources. While some MAIS had specific degrees in law, social work, or teaching, others may flounder and need direction. With guidance and career counseling while working on their degrees, these students might enroll in classes that would help guide their future goals.

My sixth recommendation is that each male American Indian Student would do well to be paired with a student in the general population. When students live their academic lives overly alert to perceived prejudice, it then closes them off to those who are genuinely interested. A pairing with a student from the general population might encourage growth and understanding for both students. I propose that this role may best be accomplished by a student ambassador, or perhaps as part of service for fraternities. This pairing, or mentorship, would educate both students and make inroads to reduce misconceptions on behalf of many in the population of students; and also, it would build friendships.

In order to increase retention of male American Indian students (MAIS), research was (and still is) vital to give voice to their experiences. These experiences provided knowledge of how MAIS successfully navigated their journey in a higher education predominantly White institution. Sharing this information with other male American Indians may encourage them to enroll in higher education and attain their academic goals.

There is a need for further research on male American Indian students (MAIS). While this study sought avenues for successful retention at Northern Plains University (NPU), there is a need to look at what other higher education institutions have been implementing. I propose a follow up longitudinal research study be done with the same
participants, conducting interviews 5 years following participants’ attainment of their academic goals, to ask about their experiences at the institution and what they would have done differently. Additionally, I propose a qualitative inquiry be conducted of MAIS who dropped out of the predominantly White higher institution of learning to ascertain what factors influenced their decisions.

**Closing Statement**

As an educator and friend, I am interested in the retention and education of male American Indian students and the successful mechanisms we can provide to guide them to accomplish their higher education and future goals. By researching successful students, my intention was to find specific approaches used by male American Indian students to attain their academic degree goals. Information from this research is intended to be used to promote successful retention and graduations among male American Indian students. Their success is our success.
APPENDICES
Appendix A

Consent Form

Perspectives of Male American Indian Students in Higher Education

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Pat Jordheim a doctoral student in the Department of Teaching and Learning. This study will be conducted under the supervision of my advisor, Dr. Kari Chiasson. This study will help provide information for my dissertation on the perceptions of male American Indian students at the University. The duration of your participation will be approximately one hour in length for two separate interviews.

The possible risks from the study are that you may recall times that were stressful. Counseling is available if you feel the need for it. You will be anonymous in this study and will have the opportunity to stop the interview at any time and/or withdraw from the study. I will be sensitive to you and cease the interview process if you become too distressed. The benefits of the study are to gain insight on how staff, faculty, and administrators can understand, support, and retain future male American Indian students in higher education. I cannot guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from this study. At the conclusion of taped interviews, I will have a drawing for two $20 gift certificates.

You will not be identified by name. Any information will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Taped interviews will be transcribed and then stored in a locked file. All data and consent forms will be kept in separate locked cabinets for a minimum of three years after the completion of this study. Only myself, my advisor, and people who audit IRB procedures will have access to the data.

Participation is voluntary. You are free to leave the study at any time without penalty.

If you have questions about the research, you may call Pat Jordheim at 218-791-5483 or Kari Chiasson at 777-3236. If you have any question regarding your rights as a research subject, or if you have any concerns or complaints about the research, you may contact the Northern Plains University 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. You will be given a copy of this consent form for future reference.
Participants Agreement

All of my questions have been answered, and I am encouraged to ask questions that I have concerning this study in the future. I give my consent.

________________________________________________________________________
Participant’s Signature                                           Date

________________________________________________________________________
Researcher’s Signature                                              Date
Appendix B
Interview Protocol

Date: ________________________    Individual ID _________________

Pseudonym____________________

Introduction

- Introduce myself and thank them for their participation
- Discuss the purpose of this study
- Provide informed consent and have them sign
- Provide structure of the interview (audio recording, taking notes, use of pseudonym)
- Ask if they have any questions
- Test audio recording equipment
- Smile to put participants at ease

My name is Pat Jordheim, and I am a doctoral student in Teaching and Learning, Higher Education at the University of North Dakota. I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. The purpose of my study is to find out about your perceptions and experiences at the Northern Plains University. I have an informed consent form that addresses the interview process, confidentiality assurances, and that any time you can refuse to answer any interview questions or discontinue the study.

Go over Informed Consent form and have them sign it. Answer all questions they may have.

Primary Interview Questions

1. Where are you from, and would you mind telling me about your family?

2. What American Indian nation do you and your family belong to (mother, father, grandparents)?

3. What do you remember about your school experiences (elementary, middle, and secondary)?

4. Can you recall when you first thought about going to college? What were your thoughts?

5. Why did you decide to go to college?

6. Where are you in your college career (major, year)?
7. What were one or two memorable experiences when you came to NPU? Were these positive or negative to you?

8. When you first got to NPU, how did you figure out how to get around (campus, community)?

9. What have your living arrangements been here at NPU? Did that have an influence on your overall experiences?

10. Let’s talk about the social part of the University. Did you have family or friends that you knew before you came to NPU? Can you tell me about that?

11. After you got to NPU, did you make new friends? How did you do it?

12. Are you still in contact with those friends? Have you made new friends?

13. Let’s shift to academics. Have you received any academic support? Please describe it to me. Did the support you receive meet your needs? Why or why not?

14. Are there other ways in which you think NPU could support you?

15. Are there other kinds of support that help?

16. Are there things you think NPU could do better?

17. Are you involved on campus? (sports, extracurricular activities, clubs)

18. Are there any classes you have attended that stand out? Anything else about campus?

19. I’d like to change the subject to campus climate. How are things going on campus, in general? In the classroom? Other aspects of campus?

20. Do you feel you have changed throughout your college career?

21. What does it mean for you to get a college degree?
Appendix C
Secondary Interview Questions

1. What helps to keep you motivated?
   How so?

2. What kind of support keeps you in the classroom?
   Is it adequate?

3. What types of support have you received at this university?
   On the university level?
   On the classroom level? Be specific.

4. Has there been a professor you have connected with who understood you better than others have? How so?
   What do you think is the reason?
   What did he/she do that made you feel understood?

5. Has there been a professor who did not understand you?
   What do you think is the reason?
   What could have been done differently?

6. When you speak in the classroom, do you feel you are heard?
   Why or why not?

7. What kinds of outside challenges do you face?
   What strategies do you use?

8. What attitudes, concepts, and/or techniques do you use to keep yourself going?
   How do you prepare yourself?

9. What would you share with future students?
REFERENCES


http://bia.gov/FAQs/index.htm


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