



All Theses and Dissertations


2012-08-10

Influence of Family on Native American Students

Lisa Jeannette Fox

Brigham Young University - Provo

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Counseling Psychology Commons](#), and the [Special Education and Teaching Commons](#)

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Fox, Lisa Jeannette, "Influence of Family on Native American Students" (2012). *All Theses and Dissertations*. 3299.
<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/3299>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

Influence of Family on Native American Students

Lisa J. Fox

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

Aaron Jackson, Chair
Steve Smith
Mark Beecher
Rachel Crook-Lyon
Tim Smith

Department of Counseling Psychology and Special Education

Brigham Young University

December 2012

Copyright © 2012 Lisa J. Fox
All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

Influence of Family on Native American Students

Lisa J. Fox

Department of Counseling Psychology and Special Education, BYU
Doctor of Philosophy

*Native American** postsecondary education students encounter several barriers to academic persistence including cultural assimilation issues, limited access to career information services, and an individual sense of duty and responsibility to remain tied to traditional spiritual values and beliefs systems, joined with family pressure to stay home. While the presence of Native American students in postsecondary education has increased, the number of students persisting through to graduation remains alarmingly low. Much of the research on Native American academic persistence has focused on acculturation and assimilation issues, leaving the influence of family largely unexplored. To help enrich this aspect of Native American academic persistence research, this study analyzed semi-structured qualitative interviews of 25 Native American postsecondary students. Themes resulting from the hermeneutic analysis of transcribed texts that describe the influence of family on persistence were (a) transportation challenges, (b) financial challenges, (c) experiences of familiarity while at college, (d) pressure to succeed academically, (e) pressure to navigate two worlds—school and family, and (f) academic endurance.

* Author's note: Terminology for identifying indigenous individuals and groups differs across cultures and regions. There is currently no consensus with regard to appropriate terminology used in reference to American Indians and Native Americans. For the purpose of this study, the term Native American will be used throughout. Terminology used by cited authors was retained.

Keywords: family, influence, persistence, academic experience, Native American, American Indian, postsecondary education

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project marks the end of one of the most challenging yet rewarding experiences of my life. I endured challenges that prolonged this experience more than I ever anticipated, making the support I received that much more meaningful.

There are so many to be thanked—those who supported from the sidelines and those who traveled at my side—without whom I could not have traversed at all. I would like to thank my committee members for being patient and flexible with me. A very special thanks to my committee chair, Aaron Jackson: you knew when to push and when to support, and still expected great things from me. I thank both Aaron Jackson and Steve Smith for the mentor relationship they developed with me: your patience, kindness, and understanding did not go unnoticed. A warm thanks to the members of this research team, who helped make this experience enjoyable.

My deep appreciation goes out to Darrell Morris and his staff for the warmth, kindness, and assistance given to this research team and me. Of course this study would not have been possible without the courageous participants who lived and shared their experiences and in so doing seemed to articulate my journey better than I ever could; I express my deepest appreciation to each of you.

Finally and most importantly, I wish to thank my family, especially my parents, Grant and Vikke Fox, both of whom are first-generation college graduates, born and raised on reservations in Canada and the United States. It is their unwavering commitment to education and the welfare of their eight children that inspired me to be where I am today. To my mother especially I express the deepest love and appreciation possible; she was and is my biggest support in all aspects of my life. Without her willingness to journey with me, support me, and believe in me every staggering step of the way, I would not have made it; I dedicate this study to you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Literature Review..... | 4 |
| Factors Influencing Attrition and Persistence Among Native American Students..... | 5 |
| Individual factors..... | 5 |
| Social factors..... | 6 |
| Factors Affecting Minority Students Generally..... | 7 |
| Factors Affecting Native American Students..... | 10 |
| Acculturation and assimilation influences..... | 11 |
| Institutional influences..... | 16 |
| Family influences..... | 18 |
| Purpose of Study..... | 22 |
| Method..... | 24 |
| Participants..... | 26 |
| Procedure..... | 27 |
| Data Collection..... | 28 |
| Data Analysis..... | 30 |
| Investigator Assumptions and Bias..... | 31 |
| Results..... | 34 |
| Theme 1: Transportation Challenges..... | 35 |
| Theme 2: Financial Challenges..... | 37 |
| Theme 3: Experiences of Familiarity While At College..... | 39 |
| Theme 4: Pressure to Succeed Academically..... | 45 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Getting an education as the “ticket” to a better life | 46 |
| Doing what parents or other family members were not able to do | 50 |
| Giving back to family | 54 |
| Theme 5: Pressure to Navigate Two Worlds—School and Family | 55 |
| Need to simultaneously attend college and stay close to home | 57 |
| Pressure to care for family and complete other on-reservation responsibilities | 60 |
| Theme 6: Academic Endurance | 65 |
| Family support and encouragement | 65 |
| Discouragement and delayed family support..... | 76 |
| Discussion | 80 |
| Implications..... | 83 |
| Limitations of the Study..... | 85 |
| References..... | 87 |
| Appendix A: Interview Questions | 97 |
| Appendix B: Consent Form | 98 |
| Appendix C: Demographic Information Sheet | 100 |

Introduction

Attrition and persistence have been matters of national concern for United States educational institutions for several years, especially as the trend of more students entering postsecondary institutions than those graduating with a degree has increased (Larimore & McClellan, 2005). Of particular interest is the relatively limited number of minority students enrolled in and completing postsecondary education programs. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (Phillippe & Patton, 2000), nationally, about 30 percent of enrollments consist of minority students. Moreover, the United States Department of Education (2009) has tracked minority enrollment in postsecondary education since 1975 and, while the number of minorities enrolled continues to increase, there are persistent gaps between White students and minority students in respect to enrollment, acceptance, and graduation.

Consequently, America's racial and ethnic minorities continue to be grossly underrepresented in higher education and in almost all occupational fields that require a college education (Astin, 1982). As attaining postsecondary education has a direct effect on a person's employability and lifetime earning power, the consequences of academic achievement disparity can be significant.

While disparity between rates of initial enrollment and rates of graduation exist for all populations, the gap is greatest among minority students, especially Native American students (Larimore & McClellan, 2005). In 1975, approximately 15 percent of all students enrolled in colleges and universities were minorities; in 2007, the number had risen to 32 percent. However, Native American students have remained consistently low; in 1975, approximately 0.7 percent of students enrolled in colleges and universities were Native American, which climbed to 1.0 percent of the total student population in 2007. For purposes of comparison, in 1975

approximately 9.4 percent of all students were African-American, a figure which climbed to 13.1 percent by 2007 (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

The reasons for low recruitment and high attrition are not fully understood, especially as Native American students have historically demonstrated higher grades in elementary through high school than Latinos and African-Americans. Similarly, Native American high school students who take assessment exams to qualify for college enrollment achieve higher overall scores than Latinos and African-Americans (Brown & Robinson Kurpius, 1997; Reddy, 1993). When Native Americans do complete postsecondary programs, they not only have initial salary rates comparable to the general population but also complete graduate and professional programs at a similar rate (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Despite this evidence of scholarly ability, low rates of persistence have been consistently demonstrated over the past 20 years (Freeman & Fox, 2005).

Beyond its focus on ethnicity, research regarding the achievement gap has focused on what Ramirez and Carpenter (2005) call “home-based variables” (p. 600). These include socioeconomic status, home language, and parental involvement. Research conducted with other socio-cultural and ethnic groups has shown that familial influence plays a significant role in a student’s willingness to seek out postsecondary education (Hayes, 2008). Existing research on familial influences has shown that parental support is critical in students’ decision-making processes when they consider postsecondary education as an option. Familial support is also a critical component of students’ decision to persist in college when financial, social, or familial challenges (e.g. the death of one parent) occur (Harris & Graham, 2007).

Recent studies of academic persistence among Native American students have identified several barriers to success, in which family-oriented factors played a significant role (Guillory &

Wolverton, 2008; Jackson & Smith, 2001; Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003). The research indicated that family-oriented factors influence Native American students' decision to participate in postsecondary education, where (a) family encouragement was positively related to academic achievement or success, (b) there exists a propensity for students to leave school immediately to assist with family conflict at home, and (c) the student confront the paradoxical imperative to find a field of study that is practically, personally, and culturally relevant (Jackson et al., 2003). Additional research is required to identify the extent that familial factors influence the Native American student's decision to engage in postsecondary education. The focus of this study is to help provide additional insight into the familial factors which influence a Native American student's decision to seek out and remain enrolled in postsecondary education.

Literature Review

Enrollment of Native American students in degree-granting institutions has more than doubled over the past 25 years (Freeman & Fox, 2005). Despite this increase, postsecondary dropout rates are higher for Native American students than for any other minority (Freeman & Fox, 2005; Reddy, 1993; U.S. Department of Commerce, 2002, February). Native American students struggle to persist in college, have the lowest attainment of all ethnic groups, and, on average, experience less academic success than students of other ethnicities (Freeman & Fox, 2005; Humphries, 1988; National Center for Education Statistics, 1993; Stone & Grindley, 1991). Meyers (1996-1997) reports the following Native American student performance rates: 52 percent finish high school, 17 percent attend college, 4 percent graduate from college, and 2 percent attend graduate school. In 1997, Native Americans had the lowest graduation rate among all ethnic groups at Division I colleges and universities (Laanan, 2000). Data for graduation rates in the 2007-2008 academic years have shown that a slight gain in graduation rates has occurred: 39 percent of all Native American postsecondary students are now likely to graduate. However, 68.4 percent of all White students enrolled in postsecondary education are likely to graduate (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). These numbers are especially perplexing, considering Native American students earn ACT scores comparable to other ethnic minority groups, and have equivalent high school graduation rates (Reddy, 1993; U.S. Department of Education, 1998).

According to the U.S. Department of Education, “the number of American Indian/Alaska Native students earning degrees more than doubled for each level of degree between 1976 and 2003...[However] American Indians/Alaska Natives were less likely to earn a bachelor’s or higher degree than their peers” (as cited in Freeman & Fox, 2005, p. 106-108). Included in a

steadily growing racial minority college student population are an increasing proportion of Native American students, but at the same time they are often cited as the most underrepresented of minority students attending postsecondary institutions nationwide (Garcia, 2000; Pewewardy & Frey, 2004; Ward & Hergenhan, 2001).

One might argue that underrepresentation of Native Americans in postsecondary education is attributed to the small overall number of Native American persons in the general U.S. population. While many Native Americans do not participate in the census or in other formal statistics-gathering programs, approximately 4.1 million Native Americans, or 1.5 percent of the total U.S. population, are reported to live in the United States as reported by Census 2000 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2002, February). Yet when the data are adjusted to account for discrepancies in population, the number of Native Americans who participate in postsecondary education is still low when contrasted against other minorities.

A more thorough exploration of factors influencing the disparity between enrollment and graduation rates for Native American students is presented below. Factors affecting college student persistence in general will be presented, and then specifically applied to Native American students.

Factors Influencing Attrition and Persistence

Individual factors. Studies by Jeanotte (1981), Fox (1982), and McNamara (1982) used GPA and credits completed to measure persistence and found that socio-economic status, type of high school, high school grade point average, parental educational level, parental support, and financial aid were the most predictive of college performance and completion. Furthermore, Tinto (1975), while working on a theory to explain college student attrition, observed college persisters to (a) be more likely to come from families whose parents are more educated, more

urban, and more affluent; (b) have experienced more open, democratic, supportive, and less conflicted relationships with their parents; and (c) have received more parental advice, praise, expressed interest in their college experience, and their parents expressed greater expectations for their education. He noted that of the factors associated with family background, “the most important are the quality of relationships within the family and the interest and expectations parents have for their children’s education” (p. 100). Moreover, he asserted, “Parental levels of expectations may have as much influence upon the child’s persistence in college as the child’s own expectations for himself” (p. 100). Individual characteristics of persisters and dropouts included (a) measured ability, (b) personality and attitudinal differences, (c) past educational experience, and (d) goal commitment. Goal commitment was identified as the most influential personal determinant in college persistence, aside from individual ability.

Social factors. According to Saenz, Wyatt, and Reinard (1998), the creation of and need for social support was common to the successful academic experience of most postsecondary students. In a study by Wilcox, Winn, and Fyvie-Gauld (2005), “the concept of ‘social support’ [was] used to analyze interviews of 34 first-year students, investigating the processes through which social integration (or lack thereof) influenced their decision as to whether or not to leave university” (p. 707). Typically before students established new friendships, family and friends at home were their primary source of emotional support. As they began to make contacts and develop friendships at university, their reliance on family and friends at home for support began to decline. Students who failed to make compatible friends, or who continued to spend too much time with former friends, etc., were far more likely to report being homesick, to go home frequently, and thus become more socially isolated at university. Results from this study suggest that making compatible friends is “essential to retention,” and that such friends provide “direct

emotional support, equivalent to family relationships, as well as buffering support in stressful situations” (Wilcox et al., 2005, p. 707).

Tinto’s (1975) theory of departure asserts that both academic and social integration into a postsecondary education institution are necessary for students to persist to degree completion. Using grade point average (GPA) to measure academic integration, and peer-group associations, semi-formal extracurricular activities, and faculty interaction to measure social integration, he observed insufficient social interaction was more often associated with voluntary withdrawal from the university versus dismissal. Additionally, “excessive interaction in the social domain may, beyond a certain point, tend to detract from academic studies and therefore lead to lower academic performance and possible dismissal from the university. Voluntary withdrawal rarely occurs as a result of such excessive social interaction” (p. 108). Furthermore, absence of supportive groups or subcultures was more often associated with voluntary withdrawal than dismissal, and interaction with faculty is related to persistence. He also observed individual perceptions of social integration was most directly associated with persistence, where “college dropouts perceive themselves as having less social interaction than do college persisters” (p. 107). Additionally, he concluded that “individuals will direct their energies toward that activity that is perceived to maximize the ratio of benefits to costs...thus [students] will withdraw from college when they perceive an alternative form of investment of time, energies, and resources will yield greater benefits to costs over time than will staying in college” (pp. 97-98).

Factors Affecting Minority Students Generally

Lack of financial resources, poor academic preparation, differences in cultural and classroom expectations, mentor relationships with faculty and staff, and family and academic

support will be presented as some of the common factors influencing minority student persistence.

Financial concerns, while present for many college students, constitute one of the greatest barriers to minority students attending college (Canabal, 1995; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, 1997). Many minority students frequently come from families with lower incomes and consequently struggle with heavy workloads and college coursework (Canabal, 1995; Laanan, 2000). Additionally, not only are students unable to call upon family for financial assistance, but they may also need to contribute financially to their family's finances while attending college (Laanan, 2000). Thus for many minority students, financial aid is vital to their enrollment and persistence in postsecondary education (Andrieu & St. John, 1993; Langdon & Clark, 1993; Wallace, 1993).

Westby and Rouse (1993) and Tierney (1991) noted weaker academic preparation for minority students as being a barrier to academic success. This lack of preparation was attributed in part to decreased involvement and preparation by high school counselors. In fact, high school counselors were more likely to discourage minority students from aspiring to college than their European American peers (Westby & Rouse, 1993).

Differences between cultural community expectations and classroom expectations were also noted as negatively impacting academic persistence (Dorsey & Jackson, 1995; Huffman, 2001; Taylor & Olswang, 1997). Barnhardt stated, "The level of congruence between the culture of the school and the culture of the community appears to have some influence on student success in the formal school setting" (as cited in Demmert, 2001, p. 21).

Positive interactions and mentor relationships with faculty members was observed to positively influence academic persistence for minority students (Langdon & Clark, 1993;

Wallace, 1993). Mayo, Margula, and Padilla (1995) analyzed the effect of social integration on academic performance of four minority university student populations: Mexican American, Black, Native American, and non-Hispanic White students. Relationship with faculty and staff was found to be the most significant dimension of social integration in affecting academic success for all four groups. Moreover, participants responses indicate that “minority faculty play an important role in the academic success of minority students and some majority students as well...[and] ethnically matched role models are successful in contributing to academic achievement” (pp. 548-549).

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

While these factors and conditions cannot be ignored, they are insufficient by themselves to account for the postsecondary disparity rates of Native American students.

Factors Affecting Native American Students

Poor academic preparation, low achievement motivation, irrelevant educational practices, insufficient parental support, social-psychological frustrations with low self-esteem, and inadequate financial support are common factors cited as inhibiting Native American students' academic persistence (Boyer, 1997a; Falk & Aitken, 1984; Guillory & Wolverson, 2008; Huffman, 2001; Pavel, Skinner, Cahalan, Tippeconnic, & Stein, 1998; Tierney, 1991; Wright, 1989). High incidents of drug and alcohol use, risk-taking behavior, suicide, single-mother households, and interruption of traditional culture imposed by Indian boarding school era are prevalent in many Native American and Alaskan Native communities today (Clark, 2002). Additional barriers to academic persistence for Native American students have been identified, including cultural assimilation issues (Jackson et al., 2003; Larimore & McClellan, 2005; Simms, 1999; Tashakkori & Thompson, 1991), limited access to career information services (Brown & Robinson Kurpius, 1997; Mayo et al., 1995; Simms, 1999), and an individual sense of duty and responsibility to remain tied to traditional spiritual values and beliefs systems joined with family pressure to stay home (Dodd, Garcia, Meccage, & Nelson, 1995; Jackson & Smith, 2001; Jackson et al., 2003).

Family and home obligations are dominant for most Native American students, and have been observed at times to disrupt their ability to meet educational responsibilities (Boyer, 1997a, 1997b; Tierney, 1991; Wright, 1989). Furthermore, Native American students tend to enroll at an older age and usually have the added responsibility of family and financial pressures to contend with, along with adjustment problems engendered by the university and the majority cultures

(Pewewardy & Frey, 2004; Sanchez, Stuckey, & Morris, 1998). When faced with family and home obligations Native American students often struggle to balance these obligations with their academic obligations including adjustment to the postsecondary culture. They consequently have to choose between family and home or education.

A more in-depth exploration of cultural, institutional, and family influences will be presented in an attempt to further understand the low recruitment and high attrition rates for Native American postsecondary students.

Acculturation and assimilation influences. As indicated in the study by Wilcox et al. (2005), the ability to adequately negotiate between the old life students leave behind (family, home and friends) and the new life ahead of them is imperative in their ability to persist in college. This process is often more difficult for Native American students, considering the increased pressure related to cultural identity, which often includes questioning the degree to which one maintains close family and cultural ties (Huffman, 2001; Jackson & Smith, 2001; Jackson et al., 2003; Simms, 1999; Tashakkori & Thompson, 1991). Huffman (2001) described how American Indian students initially felt like “outsiders” (p. 11), “overwhelmed by the lack of familiar cultural connections” (p. 12). They attributed much of their feeling this way to the “rigid, overly formalized, and strangely unfamiliar” (p. 11) college environment and academic procedures. Students who were unable to overcome these feelings were observed to engage in a four stage process of estrangement (pp. 10-11):

- 1) Initial alienation, i.e., feeling they have little with which to relate to.
- 2) Disillusionment, i.e., feeling extremely alienated and perceiving college as trying to force them to assimilate.

- 3) Emotional rejection, i.e., continuing to feel severely alienated and rejecting perceived assimilation.
- 4) Disengagement, i.e., withdrawing physically from college to alleviate emotional suffering.

He further stated, “No other single factor has been more frequently identified as a contributing reason for poor academic achievement among American Indians than cultural conflict” (p. 2).

Historically, the tribe and extended family were responsible for the education and training of their children (Sue & Sue, 1999). This traditional educational process was undermined by colonization which resulted in oppression, discrimination, and forced assimilation, forcing students to navigate between two worlds: the White world and the Native world. Deloria stated, “[Previous American Indian educational effort] resembles indoctrination more than it does forms of teaching because it insists on implanting a particular body of knowledge and a specific view of the world, which often does not correspond to the life experiences that [Native] people have or might be expected to encounter” (as cited in Huffman, 2001, p. 4).

Juntunen, Barraclough, Broneck, Seibel, Winrow, and Morin (2001) asserted, “American Indians who remain in rural, reservation communities are likely to maintain a different set of cultural values and traditions than those who leave, which contributes to the complexity of American Indian racial identity” (p. 275). In their qualitative study, conducted with American Indian students to examine their perspectives on the career journey, “living in two worlds” (p. 281) was identified as being an obstacle during their career journey, particularly during the academic portions of their experience. The extent to which this was an obstacle varied with the students’ willingness and ability to move between the Native and White worlds and whether or

not they had attended school with White students or had moved frequently during childhood. Regardless, the process of moving between these two worlds was frequently described by participants as “difficult, both emotionally and cognitively” (p. 281). Students’ attitude had a significant effect on this process. Those who were able to appreciate their own culture and integrate aspects of the majority culture they accepted or viewed as helpful to their Native world appeared to struggle less.

Early research suggested living on or off a reservation and maintaining traditional Native American cultural identity influenced success in college. McDonald (1992) reported that “American Indian students...who grew up away from the reservation were less likely to graduate from high school than their reservation peers” (p. 95). In his study of 115 American Indian undergraduates, 69% identified their home community as reservation, while 31% identified their home community as non-reservation. In response to the question “how well did your high school prepare you for college” 42% responded “poor”; 34% responded “fair”; 20% responded “above average”; and 4% responded “superior” (p. 65). Thus while students from reservation communities graduate high school more frequently, they do not feel well prepared for college.

As noted in Belgarde (1992), additional studies suggested that students have a better chance for achievement in college when socialized to the Native American tradition, when compared to their non-traditional counterparts (Huffman, Sill, & Brokenleg, 1986; Rindone, 1988). Furthermore, in a U.S. Office of Education study cited by Belgarde (1992) the most successful Native American college students were not the ones who came from the most acculturated environments, but were from homes where no English was spoken and where traditional Indian roots were firmly established. Similarly, Benjamin, Chambers, and Reiterman (1993) found traditional cultural identification and continued cultural ties were more of a

positive factor for persistence than acculturation. Moreover, Schwartz found the most successful students were those who described themselves as “traditional” (with respect to American Indian culture), followed by “bicultural” and those students who described themselves as demonstrating “varying degrees of acculturation” respectively. Those who described themselves as “acculturated” (into the dominant White culture) experienced the least academic success (as cited in Benjamin et al., 1993, p. 34).

To further understand how American Indian students resolved cultural conflict in postsecondary institutions, Huffman (2001) conducted a five-year qualitative study with 69 American Indian college students who identified as “culturally traditional” (p. 3). The students were categorized into one of two groups: estranged and transcultured. Estranged students identified strongly with traditional American Indian culture and actively resisted what they perceived as cultural assimilation; as a result, most reported feeling extreme emotional, social, and cultural isolation and were observed to drop out of college within their first year.

Transcultured students also identified strongly with traditional American Indian culture and did not strive for assimilation; however, they used their ethnic identity as a “firm social-psychological anchor” (p. 9) which infused them with strength, confidence, and a sense of security in who they were. Consequently most experienced “generally successful academic experiences” (p. 9), i.e. had graduated or were still enrolled and on track to graduate. From this study and additional research, Huffman determined resistance theory (Erickson, 1987) and his own transculturation hypothesis (Huffman, 2001) better explained the cultural conflict resolution process for American Indian students than did the prevalent cultural discontinuity hypothesis and macrostructural explanations. Resistance theory suggests that “during the educational endeavor, minority individuals actively resist and reject the implicit and explicit messages attacking their

ethnic identity” (p. 25) which can detract from their academic endeavors. The main observations influencing the formation of transculturation hypothesis, derived from the above qualitative study, were as follows:

- 1) American Indian students did not need to undergo a “radical form of assimilation in order to achieve in higher education” (p. 27). Students in this study used their American Indian ethnic identity as an “emotional anchor” (p. 27) which helped them to acquire what they needed to interact and achieve in college. Moreover, “the confidence, self-worth, and sense of purpose displayed by the transculturated students were not *in spite of* being an American Indian, it was *because they were* American Indian” (p. 27, italics added).
- 2) To become transculturated, American Indian students came to view their cultural identity as a “personal strength” (p. 29) and decided to use it as such. This viewpoint, called the “transculturation threshold” (p. 27), is considered by Huffman as “one of the most significant findings in this study” (p. 27).
- 3) American Indian transculturated students found a way to participate in two cultural settings without assimilating. They were able to add skills needed to interact in both cultures while keeping their primary cultural heritage intact. “The individual is conceptualized as fully capable of interaction with two different cultures without cultural loss” (p. 29).
- 4) Cultural learning was essential to becoming transculturated. Vital to the process of cultural learning is individual security in one’s own ethnic identity and willingness to engage in this process. “Ethnic confidence and security provide the opportunity to explore and learn the cultural setting of the mainstream. 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 educational institution” (pp. 30-31).

The Indian Nations at Risk Task Force stated: “The task challenging Native communities is to retain their distinct cultural identities while preparing members for successful participation in a world of rapidly changing technology and diverse cultures” (as cited in Juntunen et al., 2001, p. 275). Common to the postsecondary experience of Native American students are cultural identity questions and conflict. How these students go about resolving this conflict significantly impacts their academic experience and ultimately their completion rates.

Institutional influences. “Congruency between school environment and language and culture of the community is critical to the success of formal learning” (Demmert, 2001, p. 17). Lin, LaCounte, and Eder (1988) found that improvement in the college campus environment correlates directly to improvement in the academic performance of Native American students. The four factors they examined were attitude toward college education, attitude toward professors, the perception of campus hostility, and the feeling of isolation. Belgarde (1992) suggested that in order to influence persistence and progression there needs to be coordination with institutional programs. The choice to go to college early on, family support, and personal motivation are contributing factors to Native American student persistence; however, secondary support to prepare for college, overt institutional commitment, more complete financial aid, and supportive interaction with faculty and staff also significantly influence Native American student persistence (Benjamin et al., 1993; Brown & Robinson Kurpius, 1997; Falk & Aitken, 1984; Mayo et al., 1995).

According to Tate and Schwartz (1993), the small number of Native American students in college is influenced by the lack of administrative support from the college institutions where

students attend college, faculty misconceptions and stereotyping, and poor student relations with the college institution. Furthermore, a sense of cultural incongruity, an unreceptive or unsupportive university environment, and college stress were identified as barriers to college success for Native American students, and social support networks and faculty or staff mentors were identified as promoting college success (Sue & Sue, 1999). Additionally, personal interaction with faculty and staff was reported as an important factor influencing the satisfaction tribal college students felt with their college experience (Boyer, 1997a). Mayo et al. (1995) further explored the role of faculty interaction and mentorship on academic success and found an increase in academic success, as measured by overall GPA, for Native American students who had interaction with faculty or engaged in some type of mentorship by them.

Tierney (1991) stated that, “regardless of the challenges that Native American students encounter, each issue is enveloped in the often conflicting cultures of the students and their institutions” (p. 37). He completed a two-year ethnographic study focusing on the problems encountered by Native American students while attending college. A lack of institutional understanding of their culture and background were overwhelmingly common experiences of the students interviewed and believed to be “one of the key problems related to Indian student retention” (p. 38). As a result, he recommended institutions with Native American student populations adapt in the following ways:

- 1) Extend student typologies (e.g. gender, age, full or part-time status) for Native American students to increase understanding of how these characteristics influence the way a Native American student approaches college life, e.g., does the student come from a reservation or a city, does the student speak a native language, does the student identify as “traditional”? If so, what does that mean?

- 2) “Reorient the college environment to make the student feel welcome” (p. 39), i.e., instead of forcing the student to adapt to mainstream, find ways to help faculty and others who actively participate in student learning, adapt to the student.
- 3) Create institutional bridges between two-year colleges and four-year universities to promote easier transfer experiences, especially since “over 50% of Indian students attend two-year institutions” (p. 38).
- 4) Develop long-term organizational strategies for more complete implementation of recommendations and removal of barriers to foster Native American student success presently and in the future.
- 5) Be more willing to “listen to Native voices and learn from them” (p. 39).

As identified above, the college environment influences the academic experience of Native American postsecondary students. Institutional support and positive mentor relationships with faculty and staff can help mitigate the negative consequences of the college experience and cultural identity conflict and positively impact persistence and completion rates for Native American students. “Native language and cultural programs—and students identification with such programs—are associated with improved academic performance, decreased dropout rates, improved school attendance rates, decreased clinical symptoms, and improved personal behavior” (Demmert, 2001, p. 17)

Family influences. From the research available, family is observed to be an influential part of the academic experience of Native American students. Rindone (1988) conducted a study with Navajo students who had attained at least a four-year degree to ascertain the factors most influential in their academic persistence and success. Parents and family members were found to be the “driving force” (p. 6) behind the respondents’ desire to achieve. Furthermore, when asked

to list “the single factor that contributed to their high academic achievement, 34% responded that it was their own motivation, and 45% reported that it was encouragement from parents and other family members” (p. 6).

According to Tierney (1991), “family obligations are paramount for most Indian students” (p. 36); often students must first meet these obligations and then worry about their own situations. Additionally in Steward’s (1993) qualitative case study of two successful American Indian students, one participant stated “family problems and/or financial difficulties would be the only legitimate reasons to discontinue his education” (p. 193). To further exemplify this statement, Benjamin et al. (1993) observed a higher tendency for Native American students to go home and help their families or attend traditional ceremonies, even when it meant missing classes or assignments, when compared to their non-Native American peers. While this may not initially seem significant, it is when considering that, of the 166 Native American students followed during this six year research study, five students graduated by the end of four years, 13 students graduated by the end of five years, and 26 students total, or 16%, graduated by the end of the entire study. Moreover, during the duration of the study, only 9% of the original cohort re-enrolled after being out of school at least one semester. Finally, students who left school to help their families or attend traditional ceremonies reported knowing their absence would disrupt their education and chose to leave anyway. Similarly, Hund (1993) found that unqualified family support may negatively affect academic persistence, i.e. a student in difficulty may be encouraged to come home with or without a degree.

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

Smith (2001) found that students reported feeling pressure in a number of ways including to perform academically, to stay close to home, or both. They also reported feeling pressure to be able to return home to help with family conflict or trauma. Participants were less hopeful when they received a mixed message about education from their families. Jackson et al. (2003) found the following themes: (a) family encouragement was positively related to academic achievement or success, (b) a propensity for students to leave school immediately to assist with family conflict at home, and (c) the paradoxical imperative to find a field of study that is practically, personally, and culturally relevant. Juntunen et al. (2001) found family influence to be significant in the career journey of the majority of participants. Specifically, support of parents, children, partners, and extended family and a family emphasis on education helped many participants make the decision to pursue college training. Conversely, lack of support from significant others and feeling ridiculed by family and neighbors for their achievements were cited as obstacles. Implicit pressures to positively influence the next generation and contribute to family and community members' well-being were also observed.

Positively bridging school and family tended to facilitate a greater sense of belonging and improve persistence rates for Native American students. Boyer observed that tribal colleges act like extended family and provide Native American students with a "type of support that effectively prepares them for and indoctrinates them into college culture" (as cited in HeavyRunner & DeCelles, 2002, p. 34). Consequently, Native American students who attended a tribal college before transferring to a four-year institution were four times more likely to complete a four-year degree than those who entered a mainstream institution as freshmen. Furthermore, HeavyRunner and DeCelles (2002) suggested "replicating the extended family structure within the college culture enhances the student's sense of belonging and leads to higher

retention rates” (p. 29). They explained how the challenges of reservation life, coupled with poverty and family concerns, are lessened when Native American students felt a sense of family and belonging in their college environment. The Family Education Model (HeavyRunner & DeCelles, 2002) is a positive example of integrating the family into the postsecondary education experience of Native American students. Created by Native American educators, social workers, and participating university advisors, the Family Education Model helps decrease the burdens of poverty and reservation life, helps establish a sense of family while at college, and helps educate and integrate the entire family at home to provide appropriate support to the student. These aims are achieved by

- 1) Creating partnerships between university personnel and students’ families where goals and purposes of retention, respect for cultural values, significance of family support, and basic principles of student-centered learning are understood;
- 2) Organizing university activities and resources to include and support family members;
- 3) Helping families identify and develop their strengths by working closely with a family support worker;
- 4) Advocating for services and systems that are fair, flexible, and accountable to the families that are served and are responsive to emerging family and community issues;
- 5) Structuring evaluation to measure effectiveness of retention strategies and making changes as needed.

The Family Education Model has been implemented at tribal colleges and universities and has “contributed significantly to the development of methods to improve educational access for [Native American] students and to effectively support students’ persistence toward degree completion” (p. 31).

The literature on Native American postsecondary students shows they are affected by familial, socio-cultural, economic, and academic factors that are unique to their communities (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Pavel et al., 1998). The majority of the research is on cultural influences and how the unique cultural traits of Native American communities influence the students' willingness to participate in college. However, the literature on familial influences on Native American students' academic performance at the postsecondary level is sparse and generally outdated; consequently more information is needed to show how family influences enrollment and retention.

Purpose of Study

From the small body of literature on Native American academic persistence, the following have been identified as general areas contributing to persistence: support from family, supportive staff and faculty, institutional commitment, personal commitment, and connections to homeland and culture (Dodd et al., 1995; Falk & Aitken, 1984; Jackson & Smith, 2001; Reyhner & Dodd, 1995, January; Rindone, 1988). Less visible within this literature is the specific contribution and degree to which family influence affects postsecondary education persistence. The purpose of this study was to enrich the understanding of family influence from the lived experience of Native American college student participants (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) in an effort to help further academic institutions and personnel, and families of Native American students, ability to support Native American student persistence.

Mayhew, Grunwald, and Dey (2005) make the assertion that "student perceptions of their institution and its climate are important for providing a framework for understanding and interpreting institutional events" (p. 391). Moreover, understanding how students perceive their experience and the variables involved helps uncover the primary influences related to student

learning, engagement, development, and attitudes (Mayhew et al., 2005). Consequently a qualitative methodology was employed to facilitate the personal introspection process of participants to help uncover their perception of family influence in their academic experience, particularly persistence and attrition.

It should be noted that the definition of family in this study deviated from the nuclear family unit common in Western culture and society. For most of the participants' "family" included parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, children, and spouses or romantic partners. This definition of family is not uncommon within Native American culture, particularly for those from or still residing on or near reservations (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008).

Method

Researchers studying Native American student performance and persistence have generally espoused positivistic approaches, which were primarily developed to study general student populations (Belgarde, 1992; Larimore & McClellan, 2005). That is, much of the limited research exploring Native American academic persistence has used positivistic, quantitative methods, espousing Euro-American theoretical frameworks for retention (Larimore & McClellan, 2005). For example, studies by Jeanotte (1981), Fox (1982), and McNamara (1982) used grade point averages and credits completed to measure persistence and found socio-economic status, type of high school, high school grade point average, parental educational level, parental attitudes and support, and financial aid were the most indicative of college performance and completion.

While this body of research has been informative, it does not consider variance between ethnic groups. Moreover, the use of Euro-American populations as the primary reference group for studying the education and persistence of Native American students is quite disparaging. It would seem important that knowledge of the worldview of whatever population a researcher was studying would be of particular importance, especially when seeking to understand the phenomena of that population. Native American studies are no exception to this.

Theoretical frameworks utilizing the perspectives of Native Americans to study academic persistence and retention are beginning to emerge, including the use of resiliency theory (Clark, 2002) and the Family Education Model (Heavysrunner & DeCelles, 2002; Heavysrunner & Morris, 1997). Research focusing on Native American populations is also beginning to utilize methodological practices, primarily qualitative methods, which more fully consider and include the perspectives of Native Americans (Benjamin et al., 1993; Dodd et al., 1995; Garrod &

Larrimore, 1997; Jackson & Smith, 2001). Benjamin et al. (1993) suggested the qualitative interview allows researchers to better account for differences in persistence and educational attainment of Native American students not readily apparent through quantitative, statistical analysis. The effect of such research approaches has been an increased consideration for and understanding of the subjective educational experience of Native American students.

The primary objective of this study was to increase understanding of the subjective experience of Native American students. The philosophical foundation for the method of this study was based in a relational ontology (Jackson, 2005; Schwandt, 2000). This philosophy assumes that relationships are primary and necessary to understanding human experiences and are more fundamental than the individuals themselves. Therefore, the epistemological foundation for this method is hermeneutic and dialectic (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). An essential tenet of this epistemology is that “understanding is something that is *produced* in [that] dialogue, not something *reproduced* by an interpreter through an analysis” (Schwandt, 2000, p. 195, italics in original). In alignment with this philosophy, Kvale and Brinkmann’s (2009) approach to interviewing will be integrated. This approach includes the following aspects (adapted from Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, pp. 28-32):

1. Attention to the everyday “life world” of the participants.
2. Efforts to understand the meaning of the themes in the dialogue.
3. Dialogue aimed at qualitative rather than quantitative knowledge.
4. Encouragement of in-depth descriptions of the participants’ experience.
5. Encouragement of descriptions of specific experiences.
6. A deliberate openness to novel and unexpected perspectives.
7. Focus on the phenomena of interest without using restrictive questions.

8. Acknowledgement of possible ambiguities and contradictions in the dialogue.
9. Awareness of new insights that may come to interviewer and participant in the interview.
10. Knowledge that each interviewer brings varying degrees of sensitivity to different aspects of the participants' experiences and perspectives.

Participants

A total of 35 interviews were conducted for this study; 25 interviews were used and 10 interviews were excluded because participants did not meet one or more of the inclusion criteria, i.e., they were not Native American, they had not grown up on a reservation, they had not been enrolled in postsecondary education as a full-time student for at least six months. Being Native American was a necessary selection criterion for this study; the remaining criteria were used to help specifically explore the influence of family. By including only those participants who had grown up on a reservation, it was hoped that the potential for acculturation influences would be reduced. Furthermore, by excluding those students who had not been enrolled in postsecondary education as a full-time student for at least 6 months, it was hoped that flexibility and depth of participants' educational experience would be increased.

All of the participants were recruited on a volunteer basis by staff of the Native American student centers or by faculty members at each of the education sites. Recruiters were instructed by the researchers to select students who were currently enrolled in postsecondary education courses and identified as a Native American. Participants were invited to participate in one-on-one interviews about their postsecondary education experience and were offered a t-shirt, cap, or mug in thanks for their participation.

All 25 participants were enrolled at one of two universities or colleges in the Southwestern United States. These sites were selected because the Native American student

enrollment numbers were higher (due in part to their bordering reservations) and because the faculty members of the research team had created positive relationships with contact persons at these sites. While establishing these positive relationships may appear unnecessary and create questions of sample bias, they were essential to facilitating trustworthiness. Native American populations have intrigued social researchers for hundreds of years; unfortunately, Native Americans have too often been studied with “impudence and insensitivity” (McDonald, 1992, p. 8) creating an attitude of suspiciousness and bitterness toward researchers.

Participants included undergraduate students with the following tribal affiliations: 22 participants were Navajo/Diné, 1 participant was Zuni, and 2 participants identified as members of both of these two tribes. The participants included 11 males and 14 females with an age range of 18 to 41 years old and a mean age of 24 years old. Each participant had grown up on a reservation; the range of years participants lived on a reservation was 7 to 37 years with a mean of 19 years. All participants included in this study had been enrolled as a full-time student in a postsecondary institution for at least six months.

Procedure

The research team consisted of two Caucasian male faculty members with extensive qualitative and Native American research experience and six graduate students (four Caucasian males, one Caucasian female, and one Native American female) who had training and experience in qualitative methods. All six graduate students conducted interviews; the faculty members provided mentorship and guidance but did not conduct any of the interviews. Eight interviews were conducted by the principal researcher. All of the interviews were done privately, one-on-one and in person. A list of interview topics with guidelines and sample questions was used to help interviewers avoid leading questions and to maximize the depth and breadth of interviewee

responses (Patton, 1990). The interviews ranged from six to 87 minutes in length and averaged 10 minutes in length. Fifteen of the 25 interviews were 15 minutes in length or longer.

Divergence in interview length is attributed to factors involved in the selection process and to variance between interviewers. All of the participants were volunteers and were observed to be most available for interviews either between their classes or at the end of the day.

Consequently, they often did not have very much time before their next class started or before they had to go home or to work. It is hypothesized that individual characteristics of interviewers and varying degrees of interviewer sensitivity to aspects of the participants' experiences and perspectives (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) also contributed to the divergence; it should be noted that the principal researcher's interviews averaged 37 minutes in length, perhaps due in part to her increased familiarity with Native American culture.

Data Collection

A semi-structured interview format was used to collect data for this study. This format allows the interviewer to use guiding questions as needed, remain open to changes in the type and sequence of questions asked based on the participants' responses, and spontaneously respond to the interview situation (Kvale, 1996; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The questions used for this study were created by the principal researcher after careful review of questions used in similar Native American qualitative research studies and in collaboration with the faculty members of the research team (see Appendix A).

Participants completed a brief demographic questionnaire. The purpose of the study was explained and consent was asked for, fully explained, and a consent form completed.

Additionally, potential risks and benefits of participation were outlined. After consent was

obtained, the interviewer proceeded with the interview, recording the conversation with a digital recorder. The types of questions used include (adapted from Kvale, 1996, pp. 133-135)

1. *Introducing questions* which start the conversation and provide spontaneous, rich, descriptions of the phenomena, e.g. “Can you tell me about your experience leaving the reservation to attend college?”
2. *Follow-up questions* which allow answers to be extended, communicate the interviewer’s listening attitude, and create the opportunity for further exploration.
3. *Probing questions* which allow the interviewer to probe the content of answers, e.g. “Can you say more about how your family supported you in college?”
4. *Specifying questions* which allow the interviewer to obtain clarification and more in-depth descriptions, e.g. “How have you experienced family pressure yourself?”
5. *Direct questions* which allow the interviewer to directly introduce topics, e.g. “Have any family issues made it more difficult to go to college?”
6. *Indirect questions* which allow the interviewer to gain additional insight via projective questions, e.g. “What advice might you give to parents and family members about how to best support someone who is going to college?”
7. *Structuring questions* which allow the interviewer to “directly and politely break off long answers that are irrelevant to the topic” (p. 134), e.g. “Sounds like an interesting experience. Can you tell me what’s been hardest about coming to school?”
8. *Interpreting questions* which allow the interviewer to check their interpretation with the interviewee and make adjustments as needed, e.g. “So when you got together, it felt like you were back home in a secure, safe place?”

Kvale also mentioned the importance of silence in the interview, saying it allows the interviewee “ample time to associate and reflect and then break the silence themselves with significant information” (p. 135) instead of being bombarded with question after question by the interviewer.

Each interview was recorded and transcribed by the researchers. The principal researcher then de-identified each transcribed interview and assigned it a code. The interviews were then interpreted by the researchers using hermeneutic interpretive methods as described in the next section (Gadamer, 2004; Kvale, 1996, 1987; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Packer, 1985; Polkinghorne, 1984, 1991). There were a total of 203 pages of transcribed material.

Data Analysis

The interpretation of the transcribed interviews subscribed to the same philosophical and theoretical assumptions as used in conducting the interviews. The interpretive process is described below (adapted from Jackson & Smith, 2001):

1. “An unfocused overview of the text” (p. 33). This is an effort to study the text with as few assumptions as possible and to carefully represent the meanings articulated in the dialogue with the participants (Jackson & Patton, 1992; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).
2. “Interpretations through successive readings of the material” (p. 33). This process, sometimes referred to as the hermeneutic circle, has been described as a spiral or reflexive process, in which, the investigators seek to uncover progressively deeper levels of meaning in the text (Hoshmand, 1989; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Polkinghorne, 1984).
3. “Finding language that accurately conveys the findings” (p. 33). Once valid interpretations have been made (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), the research team works to

effectively communicate the findings. Precise description of the meaningful themes is the goal product.

Three researchers, the principal researcher—who is Native American—and two faculty members, conducted several successive reviews of the transcripts, using the process described above, to identify an initial set of themes. Themes that continued to be supported in successive readings of the transcripts were retained. Themes that did not have broad support in successive readings of the transcripts were removed. Once the researchers concluded this initial independent analysis, they brought their findings together for comparison and additional analysis. Themes that were found by the researchers were retained. The remaining suggested themes were evaluated by the researchers, using the procedure described above, to determine whether or not there is sufficient evidence to warrant inclusion of the theme. Themes were retained only if the researchers were able to come to consensus about their validity.

Investigator Assumptions and Bias

There are several assumptions made in this study. First, it was assumed that obtaining a postsecondary education within a Western educational system was important for Native Americans, and that family was a significant factor influencing whether or not Native Americans persisted to degree attainment. Second, it was assumed that since participants were currently pursuing postsecondary education they were being influenced by family in their pursuits, and that how these students perceived this family influence would affect their decision to persist or not in their educational pursuits. Third, it was assumed that conducting interviews on a college campus near a reservation would access a population of Native American students who interacted with family and were currently engaged in postsecondary pursuits. Fourth, while it is possible that conducting interviews in a different location (e.g. on the reservation) may have

produced different transcriptions, it was assumed that interviewees would be more comfortable describing the influence of family in a setting familiar to them, yet away from family, thereby facilitating increased openness. Fifth, it was assumed that qualitative interviewing is an effective method of understanding the lived experience of Native American students, and that this understanding will be beneficial to the students themselves, their families, their communities, and educators of Native American individuals.

Finally, the principal researcher recognizes the presence of personal bias, as a Native American, pursuing a graduate degree, from a family where education was both valued and supported and in which all immediate members had obtained at minimum a bachelor's degree. Consequently, there was a possibility of being less open to dissimilar experiences and more open to similar experiences and vice versa. Additionally, the principal researcher recognizes the potential for cultural bias, in the form of attempts to balance openness to novel meaning with an intrinsic desire to be protective of Native American participants. Historically, early social researchers studying Native American populations were insensitive and did not have the best interests of Native Americans in mind (McDonald, 1992). Consequently, inaccurate stereotypes of Native Americans were created and perpetuated which created distrust and suspiciousness toward social researchers (McDonald, 1992). As a result, the principal researcher attempted to accurately and respectfully convey the experience of participants without repeating the mistakes of early social researchers. In this way, the personal-self of the principal researcher became a tool for fostering trustworthiness and provided "an insight into cultural issues that non-Native American researchers may not" (McDonald, 1992, p. 8).

It was assumed that through the use of non-Native American interviewers, collaboration with and mentoring from non-Native American professors fluent in qualitative research with

Native American populations, and through the hermeneutic process these biases and assumptions would not diminish the validity of the results.

Results

From the analysis of the transcripts, six themes emerged related to family influence on the participants' academic experience. Three of the themes were more obvious while the remaining three were less obvious, more complex, and contained sub-themes. The more obvious themes were Transportation Challenges, Financial Challenges, and Experiences of Familiarity While At College. The more complex themes were Pressure to Succeed Academically, Pressure to Navigate Two Worlds—School and Family, and Academic Endurance.

The process of organizing, categorizing, and articulating themes was complex and arduous. Several readings of the transcribed text were done to gain a general sense of the interviews. Written notes and impressions were kept during these readings. Broad categories were created based on prominence within the transcribed text. These categories were labeled with a term used in the actual language of participants and hermeneutically condensed into themes.

The principal researcher opted for literal transcription rather than edit the interview dialogue into proper written language. While there are pros and cons for each, the decision to convey participants' experience literally was an attempt to maintain the mood and subtlety of the interview and convey the unique conversation structure and style of the participants. "Native American narratives do not generally follow the mainstream story structure format...[and] portray a different view of space, time, and motion than do narratives produced by persons from Western cultures...Indeed, oral narratives of Native Americans are often described by Anglo Americans as unorganized and rambling...From a Native American perspective, there is no need for cohesive ties across topic changes since an implicit commonality exists across subjects that binds them together" (Pipes, Westby, & Inglebret, 1993, pp. 151-152).

Theme 1: Transportation Challenges

When asked what made their college experience difficult, participants reported transportation challenges as primary difficulty. Participants described lengthy commutes to and from school, high cost of fuel, limited financial resources, and unreliable or unavailable transportation. When asked how these hardships were resolved, participants often responded through family; including providing rides, money for gas, use of their vehicle, and arranging rides for the participant with friends, extended family, or co-workers.

Interviewer: What kind of things do you think were the things that got in your way that held you back the most?

Participant B-120: Umm, mostly the transportation cause right cause last semester uh my parents we had car trouble k, our ride wasn't running so we um, we had to borrow um one of my uncle's rides, cars, and he helped us out.

Interviewer: So that transportation again was a huge barrier for you and it sounds like your family's really, really helped, they've all kinda pitched in and made sure ya got here.

Participant B-120: Yeah.

Interviewer: What's been the hardest thing so far about coming to college?

Participant B-103: Uh maybe the ride situation...cause I don't have my own car, I can't afford that neither can my parents. My brother was the one who was taking me here but he got into a car accident like last week and it was like a few days before my mom was supposed to get insurance, so we don't have a car right now.

Interviewer: So what do you do now for a ride?

Participant B-103: Uh just depend on other people from my family or some people from my mom's work.

Interviewer: What do you think has been the hardest thing coming from the reservation to this school?

Participant B-114: Mmm (pauses) hardest thing (pauses) I can't say nothing about it just the distance is probably what's the hardest...and right now it's kind of hard because I don't have my car right now with me so it's getting repaired I guess. So it's kind of hard for my mom and them.

Interviewer: So your family's right now having to bring you in and stuff like that?

Participant B-114: Yeah.

These acts were perceived by participants as supportive and symbolized their family's willingness to do whatever necessary to help them attend and succeed in school.

Interviewer: How specifically does your father support you?

Participant B-105: Well every time I come [to school] he asks if I need gas money or if I come [to school] for tutoring, if my car breaks down then he gives me his truck and that has happened a couple of times. If I don't have a ride he'll take me or let me use his truck.

Interviewer: How do you think your parents support you in going to college?

Participant B-112: Well sometimes I don't have like gas money or something they like give us some. They like sometimes when our ride is not functioning right, they'll give us

a ride to school sometimes. That means they have to leave at, well my dad kinda wakes up early cause he has to go to work...sometimes when my brother was tired I'd just ride in with my dad, he'll take me to school and he'll go to work cause he starts work at seven.

Interviewer: So why do you think they do that? Why do you think your parents are willing to get up earlier?

Participant B-112: Probably because they don't want us to be like them, like live out there [reservation] still, they probably want us to be successful or something like that, probably want us to do pretty good, like achieve more than they achieved or something like that.

Interviewer: And how do you think you know that's kinda maybe what they want you to do?

Participant B-112: Ah because my mom well she like, well she doesn't really like um like saying she compares us to like her family, some of them are like not really good, most of our family never went to college...I guess my dad really wants us to be like successful like in our lives [so] we can support our kids or something like that.

Theme 2: Financial Challenges

Financial challenges for the participants ranged from obtaining money for food and fuel to obtaining scholarships and financial aid. As mentioned above participants frequently commuted to and from school, on a daily or every-other-day basis, which created financial hardship. Additionally, a majority of the participants relied on financial aid and scholarships and were first generation students, which often meant learning how and where to apply for financial

assistance. For most of the participants financial aid received did not cover all of their academic expenses. Family members were reported by participants to help alleviate these financial difficulties, when able, by providing money as needed.

Interviewer: How do you think your family supports you?

Participant B-115: Oh they give me money to pay off the first semester tuition here.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Participant B-115: My grandma gave me a little bit of money for food and gas, my mom helps me out with putting the gas in my car, my aunt gives me twenty dollars once in a while to help with food.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Participant B-115: So they support me economically I think, so yeah.

Interviewer: What are your family's views about you going to college?

Participant B-110: My older brother is two years older than me and he has tried going to TVI and he lives in Albuquerque on his own for a number of years and he said that it was hard paying for college and car payment and rent and food so he ended up dropping out and going to work full time.

Interviewer: Does he say much to you about your college experience?

Participant B-110: Yes he is happy that I didn't give up. It is hard because I have my own family. He helps me out if I need something financially he will help out just as long as I stay in school. He pretty much knows that I won't give up.

Interviewer: So what is your family like support kinda been like or how does your family feel about you being in school and stuff like that?

Participant B-127: My father's helped me um in the beginning with a lot of financing um he's paid for my books and my tuition.

Interviewer: How did your family feel about you going to school?

Participant B-102: When I told her [mom] that I was leaving to college away out of New Mexico she didn't like it...But um when I was going to school she started um sending, she would send me money maybe thirty, forty dollars a month and which I was grateful for because I knew she couldn't afford to send anything. And then um when I told her I wanted to come home for Thanksgiving she bought my plane ticket.

Theme 3: Experiences of Familiarity While At College

Participants tended to navigate the transition to college better if they had a family member who had attended college, a family member currently attending college, and encouragement from family. Friends or peers attending the same college, persons from the same racial background at the college, persons from different racial backgrounds they felt they could "identify" with at the college, and institutional support (e.g. teacher encouragement, Native American student centers) were also reported as helping ease the transition to college.

Interviewer: How did your family support you, what was the most helpful thing that they did to help you get into college?

Participant B-120: Ahhh...my umm, well one of my cousins he graduated from here and he helped me he's transported me over here and helped me fill out scholarships and showed me around the campus a little bit and that's about it.

Interviewer: So to have somebody come and get you from the reservation and bring you here that already knew the area and could show you a around a bit sounds like that was really helpful.

Participant B-120: Yeah.

Interviewer: How was it for you to leave the Rez and come to school, and the different colleges that you have been to?

Participant B-131: I started thinking about it in high school probably my junior year, and when the time came, it was exciting to get up and go. For me it was exciting. Thanks to my parents, we traveled a lot all over the Southwest, so they exposed me to a lot of different things and a lot of different cultures. So for me it was not a scary thing to leave. Some people might think it is stressful, or worrisome, but for me it was an exciting time.

Interviewer: How was it to be that far away from them?

Participant B-131: Oh that was...It seemed like a world away because, being a male, I don't really call home much (laughs) we just don't. Maybe it's different for different cultures, but I had a good time and I was focused on what I was doing, and I never really called home very much. Maybe once a week or so to let them know I was still there, and that things were going good, but for me I was OK with it. I maybe the first week I kind of felt a little homesick, but after that I started to talk to people, meet people, and it was just like home.

Interviewer: So it became like a home away from home.

Participant B-131: Exactly, college just became a home, you know. What really helped me personally, was actually meeting other Native Americans there around the area, and getting involved with Native American activities and such. That helped.

Interviewer: In what ways did that help you?

Participant B-131: I could still feel a connection to home. Actually I knew that there was a connection to home, just by seeing other Native Americans, it was just that connection to home. I guess I don't know how else to explain it, but that connection to home, a place that I can always go back to. I felt secure knowing that other people from my culture were out here going through the same thing, and that we could all go back.

Interviewer: So when you got together, it felt like you were back home in a secure safe place.

Participant B-131: Yeah.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit about what it's been like leaving the reservation and coming to school here?

Participant B-117: Umm, I like, I used to live in Gallup and um I've heard so much wonderful things about San Juan College; my brother got his associates here at San Juan College and um and he continued on and um and he just says it was smaller, it was better and he liked it. And then my cousins that live here in Kirtland they attended here too for the nursing program all three of them and they liked it and so [I decided] why not I'm gonna try.

Participants who struggled with the transition to college described homesickness, lack of contact with family, and an absence of people with similar racial backgrounds at their school as contributing to their transition difficulty.

Interviewer: You said it was pretty hard to leave your family, tell me a little bit more about that.

Participant B-119: With the Navajo tradition, you know, we're families just like any other culture, with your mom, your dad, I guess we're pretty family-oriented. I think the most difficult part about leaving the family was just not being there to talk to them, and being in that little comfort zone that you had with your family. Because when you move out of the Rez, you don't have anyone there to fall back on. And so you spend a lot of time on the phone.

Participant B-106: I went to school in Sioux Falls, South Dakota...and um I think just the homesickness got to me. You know I tried to keep busy the more I kept busy the more I missed home (chuckles) for some reason...I would take all these classes thinking I would forget but then it would always (pauses) I would always miss home. You know I had regular contact with family it's just I guess I've never been away from my family for so long so and like distance was really a big thing...yeah even though I would call my mom mostly every other night, it just, it wasn't the same (chuckles). I just actually think I really needed to see them and be in their presence so.

Interviewer: Even though you had that contact with them over the phone it wasn't the same.

Participant B-106: No the presence, the physical. Not only physical but I think just like I said presence like I mean sometimes you don't have to say anything between people you're just connected, you know they're there and it's nice...it makes you whole again is what it was yeah.

Interviewer: What was the hardest thing besides leaving family what was the most difficult thing?

Participant B-130: Mmm, probly ah not having, not knowing anybody, you don't know anybody, being by myself, you know I had to I was always been in my comfort zone of around my family all my cousins, my uncles, everybody and then going off to school I was I had to be by myself, you know I didn't have anybody around to to look up to or ask questions or you know anything. No adult um people that I could trust I guess probly it was the trust and being on my own.

Interviewer: What was it like um what's it been like to kind of leave family and come to school? I know—do you still have a lot of contact with your mom and siblings?

Participant B-109: Um not really. Well at first it was hard, I used to call my mom every day.

Interviewer: Really?

Participant B-109: Yeah. Now it's just like "oh well."

Interviewer: What led you to, like what things were hard for you, what made you call your mom?

Participant B-109: Um like homesick, missing the things that I used to do at home, all those.

Interviewer: Was it, what things at home did you miss?

Participant B-109: Um spending time with my mom and my sister.

Interviewer: What was it like to come to school after living on the reservation, specifically college we're talking about, what was that like for you?

Participant B-102: The first thing I noticed was the physical difference, the physical environment was really different. And, um, in Gallup, um the Gallup community is you know mostly Native Americans but when I got to Kansas there was a few Native Americans just [at] our school was Native Americans and every time we stepped out into Lawrence, that's where we were at was Lawrence, Kansas, it was like there's white people everywhere. And here in Gallup, um there's you know, you can't tell there's racism or prejudiced people but when I got to Kansas that was the first time I felt uncomfortable with who I was with, where I was at and people just looked at us and I mean I never felt racism before... You walk into a class that you know a lecture hall with so many other students and you can't even ask a question cause you feel you know you feel little compared to these other people...and after one semester I left, I moved to Washington State. I lived on a little reservation called Colville reservation and it was really small. And the reason why I came back to New Mexico was I got homesick and I was away for 3 years and I came back to New Mexico and I thought of leaving again but the experience I had off, being away from home, made me think twice about it.

Theme 4: Pressure to Succeed Academically

Participants reported feeling pressure from their family to do well academically. Further analysis of this general theme produced three sub-themes that more specifically described this pressure: (a) education as the “ticket” to a better life; (b) doing what parents and family members were not able to do; (c) giving back to family. It is important to note that many of the participants did not view this pressure negatively and instead perceived it to be positive, helpful, and supportive.

Interviewer: Are there any pressures from your family and stuff like that that you currently experience?

Participant B-123: Well there was pressure actually you know...they [parents] worry about what I'm thinking all the time and...I'll be thinking about what I'll be doing with my friends or what I'll be doing at school, mainly I'll just think about what I should be doing in school you know and once I started drifting off they start saying “what's wrong with you” you know “what's going on” and I'll be like “oh I'm just thinkin' about this and thinkin' about that” and they'll be like “hey you should be thinkin' about school ALWAYS thinking about school.” They're always like that to me always thinking about school and I'll just look at them and say “hey yeah well I'm thinking about something else I wasn't really thinking about school” and the pressure still came onto me that you had to think about school you had to keep thinking about school you know cause that was the only thing I was doing you know.

Interviewer: You think them always telling you to think about school does that make it harder for you to be in school or how does it affect you?

Participant B-123: It brings pressure on me actually you know because...I'm doing school, something that got me out of the Rez you know, they want me to do good so pressure is school, school, school, and always stay in school (laughs) so I was just like alright then...And I don't have nothin' against it you know I came from some kind of bad place where I put myself in and now I got myself out and now I just have to have that Rez, reservation thought you know my parents trying to push me to keep going on you know just keep going on that's why I respect my own family.

Interviewer: Are there any pressures from your family that you feel make it harder to be in school?

Participant B-119: Well, they expect me to have that 3.0, and they expect me to graduate on time, and not bring home any bad grades. Other than that, that's really the only pressure and in a way that's really not pressure, I think that's kind of like their way of looking over my shoulder and whatnot.

Getting an education as the “ticket” to a better life. Several participants described how family members, especially parents and grandparents, conveyed to them the importance of education and that it would provide them with opportunities that nothing else could. The following quotes exemplify the family's influence and their beliefs about having an education.

Interviewer: How did your family feel about you going away, coming to school?

Participant B-119: They were excited. I had a lot of family members tell me that they didn't make that choice...They were excited...I remember my grandma and grandpa telling me from day one that education, that's what the key is now to help you. That's

what's gonna make it better for you, that's what's gonna make your life better so you can drive a nice car, that's what's gonna give you the things that you want in life, is education. And my father always told me that education is something that no one can take away from you. They can strip you of your freedom, they can lock you away, take your clothes away, take all your valuables, but they'll never ever be able to take away what you know... When my grandpa was younger, when *he* was younger, when the boarding school people came around, his parents weren't willing to let him leave. They told him that school wasn't important, that herding sheep outside is his life and that's what's gonna get you through your life, and not through school. And so I guess you could say that he had learned through his experiences that school *is* important, and it is valuable, so I guess you could say that kind of changed from his parents, and he passed it on to my parents and forced it into their lives that hey, encourage him to go to school.

Interviewer: Do you feel like your family members were pretty supportive?

Participant B-130: Yeah my mom was my mom was the main one, I looked up to my mom the most and my grandma also and you know they really wanted me to have an education you know because of the way they grew up they knew that was the ticket to have a better life was to um you know go to school.

Interviewer: How does your family feel about you coming to college?

Participant B-103: They want me to go to college...cause they don't want me to struggle the way they've had to.

Interviewer: What are some of the ways that they've struggled that they want you to be able to avoid?

Participant B-103: Uh they never really had money for anything and they're still in debt and they just can't really do anything.

Interviewer: How did your family feel about you going to school? You'd indicated that they didn't have, your parents didn't have um high school education. How did they feel about you going away to school?

Participant B-102: Well um, my dad passed away when I was in 10th grade and he was an advocate for education. He always told me go to school, go to college and he would tell me this every night at dinner we would sit down and eat and he would tell me that. I mean that's all he talked about and I got so sick of it that I blocked it out of my mind and all I wanted to do was get away. You know I didn't like living in a home with no running water or you know just living month to month on a check that we would get at the first of the month. And you know I didn't want that so I wanted to get away...my dad told me a few times that "the sheep and the goats and the cows they're not gonna give you money when you get older, they're not gonna provide for you and your family when you get older"...there's gonna be opportunities that come up with the person that's going to school that they wouldn't have had. And for me it's a better way of life, there's just not like an easier way of life but a healthier and a better quality of life and you just have to think about that and um you know the person that's going to school is not being selfish by going to school they're doing it for their future you know for just to have a better quality of life.

Interviewer: What has it been like for you to come to college from the reservation?

Participant B-115: It is a pretty cool experience. You know on the Rez there's usually low education for everybody but here you get to have many opportunities for what you want to be, it's almost like a dream but not really, kind of what you want to pursue actually in life. On the Rez you really don't have an option you're either gonna be at home, take care of your grandparents, and have some crappy ass job and that will be like farming, tending your cows flat. So over here off the Rez you get to go to a college where your possibilities are endless, you can make a family, you can turn your family to gold, you can give them whatever you wish you had when you were a kid but whatever they want when they were a kid. That's how I see things I guess.

Additional insights about the importance of having an education and the influence of family came from participants' responses to the question, "what advice might you give to parents and family members about how to best support someone who is going to college?"

Participant B-129: Encouraging your kids to go to school so they can get better things in life.

Participant B-100: I don't know....mainly I guess just tell them that you want the best for them and that the best for them is if they go to school and get a degree it just seems easier going into the work force but hard work does pay off and just try to keep that in mind. And know that they [student] have a hard time as much as the family does when they [student] are in school.

Participant B-117: Be there for them regardless, regardless. You know they call you in the middle of the night you take time out and you listen to them, sometimes that's all, that's all you need you know. I tell my 10 year old you know "I'm not gonna be here forever your education is gonna be your mom and dad and that's gonna be what clothes you, that's what's gonna put food on the table for you, and you give it all that you've got because the more you give to your education the better off you will be."

Participant B-130: Shoot man, um hound on them, tell them you know tell them "hey you know school's important," just like what my mom did to me, my grandma did to me, my grandpa, you know "hey school's important, school's the ticket" you know other than winning the lottery...I've seen...that side of working, working you know six bucks an hour you know working for like five, you know whatever the minimum wage was when my daughter was first born you know I didn't like that life you know I was struggling.

Participant B-126: Basically you need an education nowadays to be successful in this world. Education is what every job looks at.

Doing what parents or other family members were not able to do. Many of the participants were first generation college students and came from homes in which parents had not completed high school, graduated from high school but did not attend college, or attended college but did not graduate. As a result family members expressed their own regret and remorse for not obtaining an education to these participants and encouraged them to do what they were not able to.

Interviewer: You feel generally like they're [family] pretty proud of what you're doing?

Participant B-119: Yeah, they're proud of what I did in my life. I mean, I haven't done a whole lot in my life, but for what I have done. They're just glad that I'm not drinking, doing good in school, and doing a positive thing. I think that's what they're most proud of, me just living a positive life.

Interviewer: And how has that been helpful for you to continue going on?

Participant B-119: It's motivational to know that you have a strong family behind you, but in a way, there's like half of me is doing it for them just so I can not only represent... Like half of it's for myself in a way cause I do like nice things... and another half is like this is kind of for my family too. My mom, she went up to high school, and she didn't even graduate from high school. My grandfather never went to school and he worked so hard in his life that he never got to do anything. My grandma only went up to like sixth, seventh grade. My grandfather, when he died, you couldn't even have a conversation with him in English. They didn't have the opportunity that I have, and for me not to take advantage of those opportunities is like an insult to them. So I look at it as in a way I'm doing it for them. Half of it is for me in a way, but another half is for them too.

Interviewer: How does that feel to have that responsibility for them?

Participant B-119: It holds me accountable, you know, in the mornings when I don't want to wake up to go to class, or the days I start getting tired or I get lazy, I just keep thinking back to them. Just the way they presented themselves... My grandparents never ever.... The hardships I've experienced in my life, they never viewed them as hardships. They viewed them as opportunities. Like I remember when my grandpa and grandma would always be saying "I wish I could have had that chance, I wish I could have gone

off to school, I wish I would have tried to further my education.” And so they always tried to make me not see it as a struggle, but more as an opportunity. Not as a struggle or hardship, but to see it as an opportunity because they never got to.

Interviewer: What are your family views about you going to college?

Participant B-100: Very supportive they did want me to get a higher education because my parents never really did that. So my other family members they kind of just got into the work force right away because it’s hard living on the reservation, you’re far from anything and money is real hard to come by. So they were all supportive of all the grandchildren going to high school and finishing and going to college. So I’m the second person who’s been to college so far.

Interviewer: In your family you are the second? Who was the other?

Participant B-100: My old[er] cousin, he is graduated; he got his bachelor’s degree and working. Everybody is waiting on me now...I know my family looks up to me. In my family, my mother, father and brothers I am the only one that has went this far.

Interviewer: How do your parents feel, what were their thoughts when you told them you wanted to go to college?

Participant B-105: They were very happy. They said that hopefully my brother and I will be the first ones to graduate from college.

Interviewer: From your immediate family?

Participant B-105: Yeah from my immediate family. So they’re pushing us, encouraging us and it feels good.

Interviewer: With you coming to school how does your family feel about that?

Participant B-114: Um they're actually proud of me, you know they're the one that actually told me to go back to school and everything because after I graduated I was planning to take a year off and don't even come back to finish my education. But then my sister told me that it's just best to go back to school after you graduate cause she didn't go to high scho—she didn't go to college she just had a baby and now that's her whole life and she regrets it so she's the one that really pushed me to go back to school. They're pretty much proud of me...my mom, she's really proud of me...she only finished tenth grade in high school and she didn't finish her education at all.

Interviewer: So how do you know that she's proud of you?

Participant B-114: Well she tells me like you know that I'm "you're making me really proud" and "I'm glad that you're doing this" and "don't be like me" and tells me stuff like that. I just tell her don't feel bad about it.

Interviewer: What have your like, what are your parents like kind of or family kind of thought about you coming to school here?

Participant B-115: Well they encouraged it, my mom's a single parent. My grandpa and grandma didn't have education they stopped at sixth grade because they couldn't speak right because they're fluent in Navajo and the other kids just started like making fun of them like the way they talk because they couldn't read so they just couldn't hack it and then they [grandparents] forced her [mom] and [their] two other kids to go to school. And sure enough my mom works in a hospital, she finished two years of college somewhere in Shiprock. My aunt had four, six years of college done and now she's like a nurse like for Elders.

Giving back to family. The desire to give back to family was strong for some the participants; education for them was the vehicle for being able to give back and express appreciation for all their family had done for them. Other participants expressed desires to give back to the community upon obtaining their education by helping to improve circumstances within the community and encouraging others to obtain education.

Interviewer: You got a lot of people you're responsible for it seems like.

Participant B-130: Yeah when I look at it yeah you know when I step back and look at it I was like 'dang' you know 'why me' you know 'why do I have to do this' but you know I did, I enjoy it, that's what I came out same reason I came out of the Marine corp was to ah you know take care of my family, I missed my family you know and be around them and give back you know everything that they've given me, give back so.

Interviewer: Seems like you feel pretty connected with your family.

Participant B-130: My family's a big part of my life you know it's just a majority of my life, that's what revolves, everything that I do is for my family you know. If I'm gonna go to school it's for my family so I can make it better you know and I went to the Marine corp so I can get money so I can you know support my family and yeah that's basically it's all about with me you know my family.

Interviewer: So what's it been like for you to come to college?

Participant B-101: I've always wanted to go to college when I was young cause my parents they just went up to high school and they completed. But for me it was always it was my goal that's why I put off everything else and I went to Devry and I didn't,

everything else was second but that's the only reason why it's because I want to surpass and help my family in a way cause I was the first one to go to college. So I wanted to help out, so that's the only reason why I went to college, so now after I have two kids I decided to go back and complete it. Because I feel like I haven't accomplished anything so I want to finish it.

Interviewer: Wow sounds like education has been in the family.

Participant B-106: Yeah my dad really, I guess encouraged us to go to school and do the best we could so we won't have to rely on other people for finances or whatever...be self-sufficient I guess...I still remember him talking about (pauses) you know being, taking care of yourself, taking care of each other and not relying too much on other people because you know your family is always gonna be there for you. You shouldn't rely on other people so much you know.

Interviewer: You said before that college was like for higher class people and now listening to you college is for you, you're going to college, you're gonna get a certificate shortly, you're gonna work, you're gonna quit that and you're gonna go back and do your schooling, you sound very determined.

Participant B-123: I have to be somebody, I have to be like a role model you know and I was just mainly thinking of my heritage you know.

Theme 5: Pressure to Navigate Two Worlds—School and Family

The decision to navigate these two worlds was based on the idea that, in order to progress, participants needed to move beyond traditional aspects of the reservation and obtain an

education in the dominant culture. Moreover, they felt they needed to learn to appreciate the reservation for what it is, respect those that are able to make a living there, and try to find their own way without disrespecting those that do not have their same vision. While family members were generally supportive of this endeavor they were also strong advocates for balancing cultural traditions with new knowledge and experiences—the need to know one’s heritage and make it in the White world. The two sub-themes identified were (a) the need to simultaneously attend college and stay close to home, and (b) pressure to care for family and complete other on-reservation responsibilities.

Interviewer: What’s it like to leave the reservation and then go to school?

Participant B-119: Well, the Rez is.... it’s almost two different worlds, in a way, like, it’s not very far apart, but it’s almost two different cultures, and you’re in the comfort of your own home and your family’s there, but once you make it out and you don’t have anyone there to fall back on.

Interviewer: So you were able to still keep that connection with your family a little bit then, even when you had left.

Participant B-119: Yeah, you know, before I left, my grandpa, and a lot of the elders would say “you’re making a transition, don’t forget who you are, and don’t forget where you come from.” Don’t forget your blood you know who your family is and where you come from.

Interviewer: So your family’s been really helpful for you?

Participant B-123: Yeah, I think it's the only place I can I feel more connected to the reservation is my family in a way, but people off the reservation don't really see it that way they you know they make jokes of the reservation.

Interviewer: So why do you think your family all of a sudden decided to um to change and to be so supportive of what you were doing?

Participant B-102: I guess um they don't want to admit it but tradition the old way of life is you know is fading away I guess and they know that um that education is the way to go I mean I see a lot of, I know through my family, extended family I know that there's a lot of things that go against us like you know living on the reservation is hard enough, you're isolated away from all kinds of resources even coming into Gallup from the reservation is like it's hard you know. People don't have gas money, people live way out there where they only live on one income which is usually the elderly's income you know they get checks once a month and um if you go to school at least from the way I see it, when you go to school at least you get a full meal, a nutritious meal, you know you're away from stress you might um, you make friends which help you get your mind off you know things at home or problems.

Need to simultaneously attend college and stay close to home. The pressure to simultaneously attend college and stay close to home was sometimes resolved by attending colleges in border towns or by the entire family moving to the college town. Participants who attended colleges in border towns reported feeling pressure to visit home frequently, which some

participants described as an opportunity to receive strength and support, while others felt it was a burden.

Interviewer: Do you mind telling me a little bit about your experience, your educational experience from high school to college and how that all worked out for you?

Participant B-100: High school went by really fast and I kind of didn't apply to colleges as much as I wished I did. But I did get accepted to Yavapai University out in Prescott, Arizona. But I chose to stay because I...it was closer to home and I found those people who chose to go far got a little bit out of hand and ended [up] coming back here anyway. So I just decided to stay close by.

Interviewer: Okay, stay close by home because of family or because of obligation?

Participant B-100: Well family mainly. I did help out my mother when my dad wasn't around. My older brother had already left the house so it was just me, my mom, and my younger brother. I chose to stay around and work at the same time.

Interviewer: How did your mother feel about you attending college because you mentioned you had to go home and help out at home?

Participant B-100: Yes well it was very hard because my mom had worked all her life and I raised my younger brother. And I felt that I was like abandoning them if I just go to school in Arizona where I was accepted. She never really said that to me, but I got that feeling from her so I chose to stay.

Interviewer: How did she portray that feeling to you?

Participant B-100: I could just tell in her voice that she would be sad because I went down there for a week for orientation, and getting used to the campus and registering and stuff like that. I could tell that was hard for her because well mainly because we lived in

Tohatchee, New Mexico but she also worked in Window Rock, Arizona which is a border town about 30 minutes away and it was hard going back [and] forth for her. My brother was there not by himself but with the neighbors, but I know that that would be hard for her.

Interviewer: So do you feel that there is kind of an expectation to help out your brother and go back to the reservation?

Participant B-100: Yes I do. I usually go back there on a weekly basis. Just to visit and to see if they need anything. Usually I try to help my younger brother with his math and English areas and if he usually gets homework I just try to explain it over the phone. I just try to keep him going and on a straight line because I know he is starting to go off the path there sometimes.

Interviewer: How has that been on you...I am sure you have a full load here at school, you have your own family, your son and your husband and you still have your family back on the reservation. How has that been on you?

Participant B-100: Ummm, it's not much different. Because my younger brother is like a son to me I pretty much raised him. It's a little hard because I know I can't be there all of the time. I try to call on the phone but I usually get out of class late so...it's a little hard and yes I do worry but I try not to. Because he should be responsible enough to take care of things and I think that is what I was trying to teach him before I left.

Interviewer: I am getting the sense here that your mother did want you to go to college but at the same time she needed you at home...how did that weigh on you?

Participant B-100: Well I was a little disappointed that I did not get to go to the Arizona college, but because being on my own would have been fun and not having to worry

about house work or taking care of my brother. But I just knew that family was more important and I could just come here to be near them.

Pressure to care for family and complete other on-reservation responsibilities.

Several participants reported feeling pressure to care for family at home on the reservation and carry out other on-reservation responsibilities. This pressure seemed to be experienced more intensely by students who came from single-parent households or were the oldest child.

Interviewer: How was it for you to actually leave home, would it have been easier to stay there?

Participant B-119: In a way it would have. I had a lot of responsibilities at the house, taking care of my little sisters, and making sure their homework was done. Both my parents work.

Interviewer: What was it like to leave the reservation to attend school?

Participant B-130: Ah, it was it was hard because I had to get away from my family, you know I had to leave my grandma, my grandpa, my mom and all my uncles and ah that was the difficult part about it about leaving for school off the reservation you know all my responsibilities at home I left and—

Interviewer: What were the responsibilities?

Participant B-130: Like uh herd sheep, take care of the cattle, the horses, um you know I was the oldest, watch my little brothers and sisters it was mostly helping around my grandpa's ranch you know, and helping down there you know.

Interviewer: Have you felt that some of those family obligations and responsibilities have really been an obstacle to your education at times?

Participant B-130: Yeah like uh, like specially in college now because my grandma passed away about 2 years ago and my grandpa he's dying from cancer now [*Interviewer:* Oh wow]. And so there's a, you know we got cattle, we got horses, we got sheep, and we got the land down there we got to take care of and ah my grandma uh was responsible for building a big church at where she lives at. We've always had a church when I was little and you know it's grown so there's all these family obligations I got to take care of over there you know. And at times it's rough because probly about especially when my grandpa left, my grandpa was responsible, you know he took care of the horses you know and then he got weaker and weaker and ah finally he got put in the hospital [*Interviewer:* Wow] so this is just recent. And so after that happened so there's nobody up there to ah you know watch the horses, watch all the livestock out there so I had to stay down there sometimes during the week, and I have to miss classes here, I had to miss classes and I fell behind and ah last semester, at the end of last semester. So I struggle, I struggle real hard I was able, I was able to overcome it and now I got my step-dad now lives down where my grandpa lives so he stays down there during the week and then I go back during the weekend and I go handle the situation down there and ah [*Interviewer:* On the weekends?] on the weekends yeah. Sometimes I go down there during the week to go haul hay down there or I'll feed the sheeps during the week, I'll go down there after I get out of class I'll head straight down. It's about a two, about a five hour round trip [*Interviewer:* Oh man] so I go down there, come back and then I got to study get ready

for the next day of class you know it's difficult at times, but I manage. And I got my own family.

Interviewer: Have there been any like family difficulties or things that have you know been problematic for you in going to school?

Participant B-127: Back in the fall of '04 actually the whole year of '04. My older sister, one of my older sisters, her and her husband got involved in a drug problem, which is prevalent in this area it's increasing and they have four children and my husband and I we have a two bedroom home and we took in her oldest son, my nephew, and he was fifteen at the time...I got together with her mother-in-law who took the younger children and I took the older child, my nephew, and he lived with us from about March '04 til about November of '04.

Interviewer: Any other things were difficult during that time?

Participant B-127: Like during the week when I had assignments I tried to always get my homework done and I had classes on Monday thru Thursday and if I had homework through the weekend I forced myself to do it all Friday. And because I had to drive to Kirtland to drop off my nephew I would come up to the college anyway, even though I didn't have class and did my homework that day while my hus, while my nephew was at school.

Interviewer: So what have been some of the challenges that you've faced?

Participant B-101: The challenges would be when my mom got sick and then going back in it [college] took a while to go back into college because when I went to Devry it was like a trimester and then I told myself well you know I'll just take a semester off and

then it would be easy to come back. But then I've realized that it was harder than I thought. That's why I kind of got stuck here.

Interviewer: How long did you say you took time off for her?

Participant B-101: She was sick back in 2000 she had some sort of tummy stuff and my youngest brother was 8 at the time and then my other sister was 11. So that's the reason I came back because I'm the oldest and I felt like it was my duty to come back. My brother had his own family to worry about and my sister she was still in high school. So I felt like I had to go back and help out.

Interviewer: Sort of a belief thing, being the oldest I need to go back and take care of mom.

Participant B-101: Yeah that's it.

Interviewer: You didn't get any pressure from her or any other family members to do that?

Participant B-101: No. For me it was up to me and I had to, it's like I had to do it. But it's good I don't say you know I regret it, but it's been a good thing I guess.

Interviewer: In what ways would you say it's been good for you?

Participant B-101: Mmm cause my grandma always told me "do this for your parents" it's like something that she put in me to think about my parents first and then think about my siblings and then think about myself. So right now I'm trying to do the opposite where I think about myself first but I'm so used to helping out, that's what I do, I help out.

Interviewer: It's a hard balance.

Participant B-101: Yeah because my husband will say you need to think about yourself and I'll say I don't want to. I always put myself last.

Interviewer: Have you felt like there's been any like family pressures or difficulties that's you know or pressure or things that come from your family that make it difficult at all?

Participant B-107: No not really but I was afraid when my mom went into surgery in the beginning of this year and I was afraid like is it ok for me to go back to school or shall I put a hold on it again and it's like I was debating in there but my dad just pushed me and told me "just go ahead go to school we'll be ok."

Interviewer: So um other than like your mom's health and you know stuff like that has there been other things that are pressures or anything from the family that have like made you think twice about being in school?

Participant B-107: No, not if there's a death in the family that's the only thing that we'll like maybe struggle with, make me miss a lot of classes but I try not to let that really bother me and just try to go on the day of the funeral instead. So like school and the education is more important.

Interviewer: Was there ever a time that you were at school that you felt like you needed to go home, that you were needed at home?

Participant B-125: Yeah, a lot of times. Because we have a field, we're always working out in the field. A lot of Navajos, they have livestock, a lot of... It's kind of different

now, but a lot of them they have a lot of...mainly livestock. The elderly are always looking to the youngers to help them and stuff.

Theme 6: Academic Endurance

Several participants in this study have taken longer to pursue their college degree than what is typical for college students. Throughout their educational experience participants entered and exited college multiple times without a degree. They attributed their return to school to support and encouragement from family members. Moreover these participants recalled being taught the importance of education in their families and described this early teaching as an encouraging factor for returning to school. Some participants also described receiving discouragement and decreased support from family; in these instances the students felt disheartened and alone but persevered with support from alternative sources and a personal commitment to education. The two sub-themes identified were (a) family support and encouragement, and (b) discouragement and decreased family support.

Family support and encouragement. Family support and encouragement emerged as the most influential factor in participants' persisting academically. The most common types of family support experienced by participants included financial, physical, emotional, and verbal.

Interviewer: What do you think was helpful in your transition to school uh you know having grown up on a reservation school and then going outside?

Participant B-130: Uh probably my family support all the values that I learned from my mom and from my uncles and how to be a man. Seeing all these people in my life, you know I have five uncles, I have one aunt you know all these people I looked up to when I was young. And then my grandma, my grandpa and then you know all these

people...And I think that's what really helped me was having my family around, you know support.

Interviewer: So what kind of support, you mentioned support, how do they [parents] go about doing that?

Participant B-105: Well they ask if I did my homework, or if I have any homework. Sometimes I go to tutoring if I don't get my work and stuff. So they will ask me if I go to tutoring if I don't get my work. Just basically keeping up with me and keeping up with my study habits and stuff.

Interviewer: How does that feel knowing that you have that support?

Participant B-105: It feels good because some of my friends and some of my family even don't have that support from their families. Some don't even communicate with their families. They say that I am lucky to have my parents that let me still live in their house and stuff like that. It makes me happy because the people that don't have parents like that, their parents are pretty much into drinking and stuff so they say that I am very lucky and I know that I am. It also makes me happy to, to have them pushing me.

Interviewer: How does your family feel about you coming to school?

Participant B-112: Uh they don't, they don't really have a problem with it, they're kind of happy cause they never went to college.

Interviewer: So when you say they're kind of happy, like how do you know that?

Participant B-112: Well um (pauses) I guess uh my dad like always asks me all kinds of questions like how's college and stuff and when you tell him how it's going, like how

good you're doing in college he's like kind of proud of you, puts a smile on and stuff...Nobody really discourages me about going to college or anything they're like proud or something. Like when I graduated [from high school] my whole family was there and they were pretty proud of me they were like hugging me and everything. It was kind of embarrassing in front of everyone else.

Interviewer: What expectations do you think your father had on you and your family as far as education went?

Participant B-108: Well he has always encouraged education; education has always been a big thing with him. He has always encouraged us to do really well in school and praised us when we did. "You're doing a really good job keep doing it." And he was really happy when I started my first semester here.

Interviewer: How would your father feel if you happened to quit?

Participant B-108: I have had to [quit] before when I had my girl. "Don't quit all together, do what you need to do and then go back." I had to I had my little girl and then she had a lot of problems so we had to be with her in the hospitals and stuff like that. So I had to quit.

Interviewer: So that probably was a hectic and difficult time to go through. And your father was always there, but still encouraged you to return?

Participant B-108: Yeah.

Participant B-119: I think parents are more supportive now than they were before. Like my mom, she can hardly remember my grandpa encouraging them to go to school, and now she encourages me to go to school and finish up my degree.

Interviewer: Have there been times that you felt that you needed to go back, or that your family has asked you to come back?

Participant B-119: You know, my family has been through some rough times, but they never asked me. They always said to me “you should stay up there and keep doing your thing” and “we’re always here don’t worry about us, we’ll be fine, just finish what you’re doing up there.”

Interviewer: Are there any other things that have been helpful for you from your family to support you while you’re here?

Participant B-119: Well, just encouraging, like if something happens like a family emergency, don’t say, “oh you gotta come back, you should be here.” Just try to let them decide whether or not on their own if they want to come back. Don’t put them in a situation with, “do I have to go back?”

Interviewer: Does that seem like it happens a lot, that families want their kids that are away to come back when emergencies happen?

Participant B-119: Yeah, I’ve seen it happen to a few friends and I know of friends who had that pressure on them.

Interviewer: But for you it’s been helpful to have your family say you make the decision and...

Participant B-119: “It’s up to you, if you want to come back, great, but you’ve got school up there and if you want to make the trip back you can, but if you don’t it’s fine, everything is ok here.”

Interviewer: So it sounds like they do their best to help you stay here.

Participant B-119: Yeah.

Interviewer: How do you think your family supports you?

Participant B-115: Oh they give me money to pay off the first semester tuition here. My grandma gave me a little bit of money for food and gas, my mom helps me out with putting the gas in my car, my aunt gives me twenty dollars once in a while to help with food. So they support me economically I think, so yeah.

Interviewer: Any other types of support that comes from them?

Participant B-115: Um sometimes they ask me what I’m reading, school work, that’s sometimes, I think it’s just mainly the money the reason is to make sure I’m there and have enough money to get my books so I can do my school work, so yeah.

Interviewer: How did your family feel about you leaving to go to college?

Participant B-123: Well they were pretty excited about it, well not excited they were just like um there was just like a question mark cause I always told them I never see myself in college you know...And after a while they started realizing that I have that light in me you know, to enjoy to enjoy the college and they kept finding ways to you know finding money that I don’t have to hurry up and get me here to this day you know and that’s the kind of respect I have for my family you know.

Interviewer: So with coming back to school how does your family feel about that?

Participant B-106: Oh my mom loves it (laughs). My mom always encouraged me to do something else besides what I'm doing so (pauses) yeah my family are very supportive of me just going back to school and doing something different.

Interviewer: That's neat. So supportive, what does supportive mean?

Participant B-106: Supportive um just encouraging me, telling me you know to keep going to school um (pauses) I guess (pauses) not financially supportive, I'm doing everything paying for my school on my own. Um I don't get no financial aid cause I don't qualify they say so um (pauses) just encouraging me emotionally. Sometimes when I'm stressed out with work and school um I usually talk to my mom or my older sister about it. Um (pauses) but yeah just mostly emotional and just supportive.

Interviewer: So with coming here and stuff was there anything that did make it difficult or any you know...

Participant B-117: I'm really close to my dad and my dad is you know, as long as he gives me the support I know I can do it

Interviewer: What kind of support?

Participant B-117: Emotional support (sighs) I talk to my dad about anything. My mom I mean (pauses) my mom is more of a parent than my dad is, my dad's my best friend, you know he is. And I don't know he's just really a great person, he's my best friend and he's someone I can talk to, I can cry on you know and I don't know he's just really there, like I said he's more of a friend than he is my dad.

Interviewer: Coming back to college was there, um how did your family feel about that?

Participant B-117: My aunt was the one that told me you know what, you know she taught me and so did my dad and everybody basically and they all basically told me that “you’re sacrificing time away from your child, use that time wisely” and that’s all and “if you need support, if you need anything call on one of us, we’re here if you need somebody to talk to or something like that.” So my aunt [name] was the one that really stressed that to me you know and so did my dad...I use that time wisely I make it to class and I do my homework and you know and I could be doing things with my son but my son on the other hand, he’s so understanding, he’s really a great kid and God blessed me with him and I don’t know like last night you know when I had so much homework (pauses, tearfully continues) he makes my day by cooking dinner for me sometimes, he’s only ten. And yet, I don’t know he’s just a great kid (pauses) he’s such a wonderful child and he knows when he comes in and he checks on me and asks me if I need water or if I need something to drink and then he’ll just lay down and he’ll read a book beside me and when we have homework together like I said he sits in front of me and when he has a question, when he has a problem he talks to me, he tells me “I can’t figure this out” and I show him what to do and he tells me sometimes when I’m struggling with my work he goes “mom I wish I could do the same thing for you that you do for me, I wish I could help you with your problem, help you solve this you know” and I don’t know he’s just really a blessing like I said he’s just a really, truly wonderful kid (pauses, tearful)...My dad [told me] “I know you’re gonna be ok, you’re a survivor.” That’s what he told me and that, to me that was the greatest thing my dad has ever said to me (pauses, tearful) and I know I can do it, I know I can um live life to the fullest I know I can whatever

challenges I have, I know I can do it because my dad has faith in me and that was like “wow” you know. Of all the crazy things I did in life it was really something for me for my dad to say that to me, that was like “wow” you know. And my dad is I mean I don’t know he just that’s what he said to me he says “I know you can do it” and for me that was like (sighs) I’m at the top of the world and I can accomplish it...I have positive support I have a lot of it I mean my uncle too he was kind of skeptical about me going, coming back to school but now he knows that I mean business and he’s there for me too.

Interviewer: How about with your family, how’s that been?

Participant B-101: Good they’ve been very supportive, like right now my husband is the one that’s supporting me now to finish up. So he helps out with our little boys, cause I have almost a four-year-old and a two-year-old. So he helps out with the stuff and he’s telling me to finish up, so he’s encouraging me.

Interviewer: Are there any pressures from your family that you feel about leaving the area or going to school?

Participant B-108: No.

Interviewer: Nothing like that, would you say overall they have been supportive?

Participant B-108: Yeah...he [husband] is supportive of my college because he paid for this semester. He bought books and everything.

Interviewer: So he is gung-ho about it he wants you to pursue and succeed then. That is excellent.

Participant B-108: We had made a deal a long time ago that after I finish college I was going to work and take care of the house and he was going to go back to school.

Participant B-127: My husband he's very supportive you know he wants to help me pay for school and he doesn't want my dad to pay for anything...the way my husband puts it is that school's my job and I need to do it, so it helps because he's very supportive.

Interviewer: And your husband has he been supportive?

Participant B-100: Yes he has. We try to help each other. I try to give him time to finish his work and get to class on time. And get him to work and also he does things for me when he can.

Some additional insights regarding family support were obtained from participants' responses to the question, "what advice might you give to parents and family members about how to best support someone who is going to college?" Their responses seemed to reflect either the family support they experienced or the family support they would have liked to experience.

Participant B-100: Mainly I guess just to tell them not to give up. There is always a way you can get through certain issues. Sometimes not but to try to always get back into school as soon as possible because if you wait years and years and years you just won't want to do it.

Participant B-105: Well just like my parents do, just ask questions like "how's it going, how do you think you're doing, is there anything I can do to help?" Just little things they don't have to be extreme. Little things count you know.

Participant B-108: Just encourage them and give them all the support that they can by if they have children offering to help with the children. I don't know, encourage them to keep going if it takes you a while just keep going.

Participant B-112: Probably to support your um child and um like be there for them all the time when they need you cause sometimes they'll like sometimes they'll need help and um it's really good if you help them because sometimes they can't really do stuff on themselves cause they're not really, I think they're not mature yet to be on themselves and I guess going to college helps them like get through that and the parents can help them get through that too so. That can, so support from the parents is pretty much everything. And ask them how they're doing and stuff and that kind of stuff really helps them out, it helps me out. And I guess if they like need help money-wise or something you can probably help them out or they can get a part-time job or something yeah that's gonna be kind of difficult but they'll figure something out.

Participant B-114: Well encouragement's one (chuckles) just encouraging your kids, the parents of the kids and you know just be there for them um you know support them in every decision they make. Be strong to advise them to just continue in school, like right now there's a lot of jobs that require um degrees and stuff right now and if they don't get that it's gonna be hard for them to find jobs and they'll just be flipping burgers, just kidding, and that's not what I don't want to do. So that's what I would strongly advise.

Participant B-106: I guess my most, I would think just to be supportive emotionally especially when it comes to stress like um like if sometimes they feel like, well I used to feel like "oh I can't do it, it's just too hard" but at the same time I was like "yes I can,"

you know what everybody else can do it they just need sometimes like tutors and I guess guidance for the first two or three years is really important.

Participant B-125: Yeah. They've got to be there for them, they've got to support them. Show their support. Make them believe, try to be as available, and make them realize that in this time and age it's important. You've got to put aside your feelings and realize that you're going to benefit, otherwise you're going to be behind. It's part of growing up and life. After you graduate that's when you get you're degree. You could be working in another state, another country, so regardless you're going to have to manage and realize that your friends and all that high school level is gone. It's time to grow up and see the world, and to understand the world, and that's what the world's about. So many changes. But being supportive I think is like the biggest because...mom and dad, or whatever, brothers and sisters, dog, cat, you know (laughs). Just knowing that you're there, visiting, letters, phone calls, that really helps. And that's also true because I was in the military, and I was overseas for three years and it was hard. I had a fiancé, lost her, but...I had to grow up and manage and understand that, and realize that I was there to do a job and there was no going home. You're stuck there, you know, and I think that really taught me a lot how to become emotionally strong. I try to be strong and just, maturity. I think that from the time I left BY—before BYU—when I was in the LDS program, I think that's when I really realized that I can make it, it's not that bad. There is good people out there that do care about you. It might not be your family members, you know there's always help there, no matter where you go. If kids would realize that there's always help; it might not be your family, but there's people that are willing to take the time to help you along the way. So that's a great thing. It's good to set goals before you even hit college.

That would be my advice, and stay with it. The bottom line is that you finish what you started...just knowing that somebody is caring, and pushing you along and making you realize that you're doing something good for yourself. We all want to get to that, to better ourselves. Get a degree, finish some schooling, get a job.

Participant B-119: Well, just encouraging, like if something happens like a family emergency, don't say, "oh you gotta come back, you should be here." Just try to let them decide whether or not on their own if they want to come back.

Discouragement and delayed family support. Instances of verbal discouragement and delayed family support were reported by a small number of participants. Verbal discouragement included family members negatively questioning and commenting on participants' decisions and efforts to pursue education. Delayed family support occurred when family members were initially indifferent or discouraging toward participants' academic pursuits and at a later date became encouraging or supportive of participants' academic pursuits. While participants described being negatively affected by these experiences their reaction to it highlighted a type of educational resilience observed more generally within the participants of this study. Specifically, the extent to which participants were negatively affected by these or other obstacles was not enough to make them quit; in fact they seemed to have an increased internal commitment to education that fueled their determination to succeed. This internal commitment appeared to be influenced by family members who taught them in their youth the importance of obtaining an education. Non-family sources, including teachers, friends, and church, also helped counteract the lack of support and encouragement experienced at times by these participants.

Interviewer: How did your family feel about you going to school?

Participant B-102: When I told her [mom] that I was leaving to college away out of New Mexico she didn't like it and she started telling me "well going to school's not good for you, you know look at your brothers they went to college and look at them now they're not doing anything with their education they didn't even get a degree. You know look at your sister she graduated she started working right after high school and she's got a home and she's got a family now, you know college is for nothing." But I did agree with her in the beginning but I wanted to get away from home so bad I just said it don't matter I'm leaving and I broke her heart when I left...And um you know then um when I came back to New Mexico I started working and [I] told her I wanted to go back to school and she said "well you've been saying that, you went away and came back you didn't get a degree, you know that's what I told you was gonna happen to you." So I kind of, after that I just didn't say anything to her about my plans and I just took classes you know here and there and then finally started going to school full-time and she would just, just, she didn't say anything but every time I started talking to her about what my plans were, what my goals were, what my dreams were she just looked at me and said "you know you've been saying that all this time and look you're still in the same place"... Then when I met my husband we um, my husband don't have a high school degree, he dropped out um his senior year, he had to get some responsibilities that came up. Um my husband thought the same thing because his dad used to say that to him too that college is for nothing. So it was like I was by myself trying to go to school and my mom and my, like at that time me and my husband we weren't married we were just living together and all he did was work and I would be working, I would be going to school and I would be tired you know I'd be like "can't you help me with something, you know help around the

house.” And he got all frustrated he started telling me “you spend all your time away from home, you spend all your time away from us” and at that time I was really like independent and I told him “well if you don’t like it you can leave and um I’m doing this for myself and I’m gonna do it even without your support.” And we kind of like went our separate ways after a while and um then I got pregnant and after I had my son I went back to school and my family were upset with me because they told me that I was abandoning my son and my family. And I told and I didn’t try to explain myself because I already knew they weren’t gonna understand.

Interviewer: Did you feel selfish I mean was that kind of the impression you got from your family when you first left?

Participant B-102: Yeah specially after I had my son they were even my sister was saying “you should stay home and take care of your son why you coming home late you leave in the morning, you come home late at night and um you spend all this time away from him” and I just let them say it but at the same time it was killing me on the inside and I just keeping thinking I mean when my dad used to tell go to school get an education come back and help your community I mean I shut it out but those are the things he told me and was what I hanged onto when I was alone.

Interviewer: Your parents seem very supportive of you, how about your brothers and sister what do they do to show their support, or is there anybody in your family that is not content with you going to school?

Participant B-105: Probably my sister, because she always said that she wanted to open a salon or daycare. And we always tease her that she would have to go to school first and

she gets mad. When my parents ask me how I am doing and if I say something good she tends to get mad or put in her rude little comments. I just ignore it.

Interviewer: How does that make you feel when she does that?

Participant B-105: It irritates me. I mean because if she wanted to, if she really wanted to, she would do everything she needed. Because she wanted to go to school this semester and I kept telling her well you have to do this and how come you don't do that. I offer her to bring her here and like to do all her paper work and help her where she is stuck. But she says oh it's at the trailer and just kind of puts it off and then it was too late.

Interviewer: Any pressures from your family that make it harder to be here?

Participant B-117: Just a lot of negative stuff and I think most of it has to do with jealousy and the fact that I'm doing this on my own.

Discussion

Several barriers to the academic persistence of Native American students have been identified including difficulty transitioning from high school to college, inadequate academic preparation, inadequate financial support, unsupportive campus environments, and cultural assimilation issues. Recent studies suggest a complexity of family pressures and support as reemerging influences on academic persistence (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Jackson & Smith, 2001; Jackson et al., 2003).

This study attempted to further explore the influence of family on the academic experience and persistence of Native American postsecondary students. A qualitative method of inquiry was used. After analyzing the participants' responses, themes were created based on prominence within the transcribed text and topics that were both expected and surprising. Three surface themes identified were (a) transportation challenges, (b) financial challenges, and (c) experiences of familiarity while at college. These barriers, while discouraging, were observed to be significantly alleviated by family support; this support appeared symbolic of the family's greater commitment to their family member attending and completing college.

Further analysis produced three complex themes with sub-themes: (a) pressure to succeed academically, (b) pressure to navigate two worlds—school and family, and (c) academic endurance. An interesting paradox emerged from these complex themes the family as supportive and encouraging and the family as creating pressure and discouraging. On the one hand, these pressures appeared to be generated by family, while on the other hand, the participants' ability to successfully navigate them was also significantly influenced by family.

Family support and encouragement was observed to positively influence participants' persistence in their pursuit of postsecondary education. Verbal discouragement of education,

while rarely reported by participants, did occur. Interestingly, family members were the primary source of this discouragement and the primary source of alleviating it by becoming supportive of participants' education at a later date, i.e., delayed family support. Participants also described being taught from their youth about the importance of education from their family members; these teachings were frequently remembered by participants at times when they felt discouraged and were reported to help them persist through them. Non-family sources such as peers, friends, mentors, and teachers also helped to alleviate instances of verbal discouragement.

A few participants turned to the military to help them financially attend school; these participants described having the desire to attend school but were not able to obtain scholarships and did not come from families who could support them financially. Some of the difficulty obtaining financial aid was due in part to academic ineligibility (i.e. poor grades) and not knowing how to find, apply for, and complete financial aid paperwork. As a result, some participants described working part or full-time jobs while attending school to help finance their education; some of these participants were single-parents and carried the burden of supporting their own family, and in some cases, their family of origin. When asked about persevering in such circumstances the participants' responses typified the belief that earning a college education is the ticket to a better life for themselves and their family and the strong connection to their family such that they were willing to endure these difficulties.

The college transition experience appeared less difficult and participants were more likely to persist if they had established a support network while at school, especially if this support network resembled positive aspects of their family. This observation is consistent with the Family Education Model (HeavyRunner & DeCelles, 2002) which suggests "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” (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008, p. 61). Relationships with people from a similar racial group or non-majority racial group, Native American student centers, and positive mentoring relationships with teachers were described as helping participants establish a sense of family while at college; as a result, they were better able to positively deal with their academic experience, homesickness, and family pressures.

Participants who persisted in school learned to successfully navigate school and family worlds; sought help and support from non-family sources (e.g. friends, Native American student centers, and teachers); used pressure to succeed academically as a positive motivator; and persevered with or without support of family by remembering and focusing on benefits of education and end goals. Furthermore these participants had or intended to pay it forward by setting a positive example for their family members, returning to their reservation upon graduation to improve community circumstances, and mentoring other Native American students currently enrolled or preparing for college (e.g. helping with financial aid and scholarship applications).

Previous research in the area of Native American students and academic persistence has reported a tendency for these students to withdraw from education in times of family crises (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Jackson & Smith, 2001; Jackson et al., 2003). While the participants in this study described pressure to care for family and other on-reservation obligations, they tended to stay enrolled; they found ways of managing these obligations so they could continue their education and frequently received support and verbal encouragement from family members to stay in school during these times. This observation was surprising given the previous research and the large number of participants in this study who reported knowing

Native American students who were “pressured” to return home by family members, did return home, and quit or were struggling to finish their education; these participants seemed to use these examples to motivate them to stay in school. They also described appreciation for their own family members who did not pressure them to return home but encouraged them to stay in school and assured them that they could take care of family situations without needing them to return home.

Another motivating factor for pursuing and persisting in postsecondary education was discouraging examples and situations experienced on participants’ home reservations. Experiences with alcoholism, poverty, and lack of employment opportunities were the primary factors referenced by participants. They described not wanting to become like the people and situations they saw and were at times embarrassed by them; they felt these examples were “pushing them” to go to college and become something more. Additionally these examples created a desire to help their reservation communities upon completing their postsecondary education. Leaving the reservation to “see other cultures” and “expand your mindset” was described as necessary by some participants to combat the negativity and hopelessness of their reservations and help prepare them to leave the reservation for school or work.

Implications

From this study we learn that, in one form or another, family influenced every aspect of the participants’ postsecondary education experience. This suggests the culture of family is imbedded and is not easily severed nor should it be if retention and persistence rates are to be improved. Participants away from family were observed to try and maintain close family connections or try to establish family-like connections in their academic environments while navigating the transition to college and their academic responsibilities. Whether or not they were

successfully able to do these things significantly influenced their persistence. Consequently the recommendations that follow are an attempt to merge the significant influence of family and the postsecondary institution to help establish an academic environment more considerate of and conducive to retention and persistence of Native American postsecondary students:

- 1) Counselors and educators should be aware of and help students deal with potentially contradictory, ambivalent, or paradoxical family pressures they may experience.
- 2) Educators and tribal leaders can help families articulate their values around education and reconcile any contradictions or paradoxes.
- 3) College support services should provide venues for students to discuss the various pressures related to their families.
- 4) High school guidance counselors should provide opportunities for students and their families to obtain information about postsecondary institutions and provide assistance with admissions and financial aid application processes.
- 5) College support services and Native American student centers should work collaboratively to provide peer mentors and/or liaisons for pre-college and college Native American students.
- 6) Tribal leaders should collaborate with colleges and universities to bring relevant distance learning programs to reservations thereby reducing transportation, financial, and transition difficulties and creating opportunities for traditional values to be integrated into education experience.

Limitations of the Study

First, this study was conducted in a limited geographic area; thus there was limited variation in tribal affiliation among participants. Unlike quantitative research methods, the focus of qualitative research methods is not to achieve generalizable results. However, future research into the influence of family on Native American student persistence could be enriched by expanding into other geographic regions with diverse tribal affiliations.

Second, this study did not include validation checks with the participants, due to limited research resources and difficulty contacting participants for follow-up. Future research should include follow-up interaction with participants to illicit feedback on themes and ensure participants are being accurately represented. Additionally, researchers should ensure results of their studies are presented at research sites to increase feelings of trustworthiness between Native American participants and current/future social researchers.

Third, while this study was conducted by a Native American principal researcher, the richness of this and future research could be increased by involving additional Native American researchers. Future research might also include the use of Native American auditors not directly involved with the research, thereby improving validity and trustworthiness.

Fourth, the sample was generated entirely on a volunteer basis. While this was an appropriate selection method for this study, participants often participated in the interviews between their classes or at the end of the day which partially influenced the divergence in interview length. Future research might include sign-up sheets for 20-minute, 40-minute, 60-minute, and 90-minute blocks of time to more explicitly inform participants of time commitment and allow the interviewers to respect participants' academic commitments.

Fifth, the use of the specific sites and manner in which participants were included and excluded created sampling bias toward individuals who were persisting in school and were influenced by family. Both of the postsecondary institutions used in this study bordered reservations, meaning many students lived on the reservation and commuted to school. Future research might include postsecondary institutions further from reservations and individuals who are not currently enrolled in school but had been at one time. It is imagined by doing this the understanding of the academic experience of Native American students would be further enriched.

References

- Andrieu, S., & St. John, E. (1993). The influence of prices on graduate student persistence. *Research in Higher Education, 34*(4), 399-419.
- Astin, A. W. (1982). *Minorities in American higher education: Recent trends, current prospects, and recommendations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Belgarde, M. J. (1992). *The performance and persistence of American Indian undergraduate students at Stanford University*. (Doctoral dissertation, Stanford University). Retrieved from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text database. (Publication No. AAT 9221595).
- Benjamin, D., Chambers, S. & Reiterman, G. (1993). A focus on American Indian college persistence. *Journal of American Indian Education, 32*(2), 24-40.
- Boyer, P. (1997a). First survey of tribal college students reveals attitudes. *Tribal College Journal, 9*(2), 36-41.
- Boyer, P. (1997b). *Native American Colleges: Progress and prospects*. Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.
- Brown, L. L. & Robinson Kurpius, S. F. (1997). Psychosocial factors influencing academic persistence of American Indian college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 38*(1), 3-12.
- Canabal, M. (1995). Hispanic and non-Hispanic white students attending institutions of higher education in Illinois: Implications for retention. *College Student Journal, 29*, 157-167.
- Clark, A. S. (2002). *Social and emotional distress among American Indian and Alaska Native students: Research findings*. (ERIC Digest). Charleston, W.V.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools. Retrieved from ERIC database (ED 459988).
- Clayton, K., Garcia, G., Underwood, R., McEndree, P., & Shepherd, R. (1993, December).

- Family influence over the occupational and educational choices of Mexican American students.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Vocational Association, Nashville, TN.
- Demmert, W. G. (2001). *Improving academic performance among Native American students: A review of the research literature.* (ERIC Digest). Charleston, W.V.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small School. Retrieved from ERIC database (ED 463917).
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 1-29). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dodd, J. M., Garcia, M., Meccage, C. & Nelson, J. R. (1995). American Indian student retentions. *NASPA Journal*, 33, 72-78.
- Dorsey, M., & Jackson, A. (1995). Afro-American students' perceptions of factors affecting academic performance at a predominantly white school. *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, 19, 189-195.
- Erickson, F. (1987). Transformation and school success: The politics and culture of educational achievement. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 18(4), 335-356.
- Falk, D. R. & Aitken, L. P. (1984). Promoting retention among American Indian college students. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 20(3), 25-31.
- Fox, M. J. T. (1982). *American Indian students in higher education: Factors related to their undergraduate college entrance.* (Doctoral dissertation).
- Freeman, C. & Fox, M. (2005). Status and trends in the education of American Indians and Alaska Natives (NCES 2005-108). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

- Gadamer, H. G. (2004). *Truth and method*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Garcia, F. M. (2000). Warriors in education: Persistence among American Indian doctoral recipients. *Tribal College Journal*, 11(3), 45-50.
- Garrod, A. & Larimore, C. (Eds.). (1997). *First person, first peoples: Native American college graduates tell their life stories*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Guillory, R. M. & Wolverson, M. (2008). It's about family: Native American student persistence in higher education. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 79(1), 58-87.
- Harris, Y. R. & Graham, J. A. (2007). *The African American child: development and challenges*. New York: Springer.
- Hayes, B. (2008). Increasing the representation of underrepresented minority groups in U.S. colleges and schools of pharmacy. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 72(1), 1-4.
- Heavyrunner, I. & DeCelles, R. (2002). Family education model: Meeting the student retention challenge. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 41(2), 29-37.
- Heavyrunner, I. & Morris, J. S. (1997). Traditional native culture and resilience. *Research/Practice*, 5(1).
<http://education.umn.edu/carei/Reports/Rpractice/Spring97/traditional.htm>
- Hoshmand, L.T. (1989). Alternate research paradigms: A review and teaching proposal. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 17, 3-79.
- Huffman, T. E. (2001). Resistance theory and the transculturation hypothesis as explanations of college attrition and persistence among culturally traditional American Indian students. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 40(3), 1-23.
- Huffman, T. E., Sill, M. L., & Brokenleg, M. (1986). College achievement among Sioux and

- White South Dakota students. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 25(2), 32-38.
- Humphries, L. G. (1988). Trends in levels of academic achievement of Blacks and other minorities. *Intelligence*, 12, 231-260.
- Hund, J. S. (1993). *Cultural marginality and structural disadvantage as factors explaining attrition of American Indian college students*. (Unpublished master's thesis). Arizona State University, Phoenix, AZ.
- Jackson, A. P. (2005). Relationships. In Jackson, A. P. & Fischer, L. (Eds.), *Turning Freud upside down* (pp. 200-214). Brigham Young University Press: Provo, UT.
- Jackson, A. P., & Patton, M. J. (1992). A hermeneutic approach to the study of values in counseling. *Counseling and Values*, 36, 201-209.
- Jackson, A. P., & Smith S. A. (2001). Postsecondary transitions among Navajo Indians. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 40(2), 28-47.
- Jackson, A. P., Smith S. A., & Hill, C. L. (2003). Academic persistence among Native American college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 44(4), 548-565.
- Jeanotte, L. D. (1981). *A study of the contributing factors relating to why American Indian students drop out of or graduate from educational programs at the University of North Dakota*. (Doctoral dissertation).
- Juntunen, C. L., Barraclough, D. J., Broneck, C. L., Seibel, G. A., Winrow, S. A., & Morin, P. M. (2001). American Indian perspectives on the career journey. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 48(3), 274-285. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.48.3.274
- Kvale, S. (1987). Validity in the qualitative research interview. *Methods*, 1, 37-72.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviewing: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand

- Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Laanan, F. S. (2000). Community college students' career and educational goals. *New Directions for Community Colleges, 112*, 19-33.
- Langdon, H., & Clark, L. (1993). Profiles of Hispanic-Latino American students. In L. W. Clark & D. E. Waltzman (Eds.), *Faculty and student challenges in facing cultural and linguistic diversity* (pp. 88-113). Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Larimore, J. A. & McClellan, G.S. (2005). Native American student retention in U.S. postsecondary education. In Fox, Lowe, & McClellan (Eds.), *Serving Native American students new directions for student services, 109*, 17-32.
- Lin, R. L., LaCounte, D., & Eder, J. (1988). A study of Native American students in a predominantly white college. *Journal of American Indian Education, 27*(3), 8-15.
- Longerbeam, S. D., Sedlacek, W. E., & Alatorre, H. M. (2004). In their own voices: Latino student retention. *NASPA Journal, 41*(3), 538-550. Retrieved December 19, 2006 from Wilson Web database.
- Mayhew, M. J., Grunwald, H. E., & Dey, E. L. (2005). Curriculum matters: creating a positive climate for diversity from the student perspective. *Research in Higher Education, 46*(4), 389-412.
- Mayo, J. R., Murguia, E., & Padilla, R. V. (1995). Social integration and academic performance among minority university students. *Journal of College Student Development, 36*(6), 542-552.
- McDonald, J. D. (1992). *Attitudinal factors affecting academic success of American Indian*

- college students: The development of the Native American college student attitude scale (NACSAS)*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of South Dakota). Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304002277?accountid=4488>
- McNamara, P. P. (1982). *American Indians in higher education: A summary of findings and recommendations*. Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute.
- Meyers, B. (1996-1997). Keys to retention. In *Winds of Change* (College Guide, pp. 63, 65). Boulder, CO: American Indian Science and Engineering Society.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (1993). *Digest of Education Statistics*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.
- Packer, M. J. (1985). Hermeneutic inquiry in the study of human conduct. *American Psychologist*, 40, 1081-1093.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Pavel, D. M., Skinner, R. R., Cahalan, M., Tippeconnic, J., & Stein, W. (1998). *American Indians and Alaska Natives in postsecondary education*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.
- Pewewardy, C. & Frey, B. (2004). American Indian students' perceptions of racial climate, multicultural support services, and ethnic fraud at a predominately White university. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 43(1), 32-60. Retrieved December 19, 2006 from Wilson Web database.
- Phillippe, K. A. & Patton, M. (2000). *National Profile of Community Colleges: Trends and Statistics*. (3rd ed.) Washington, D.C.: American Association of Community Colleges.

- Pipes, M. A., Westby, C. E., & Inglebret, E. (1993). Profile of Native American students. In L. W. Clark & D. E. Waltzman (Eds.), *Faculty and student challenges in facing cultural and linguistic diversity* (pp. 137-172). Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1984). Further extensions of methodological diversity for counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 31*(4), 416-429. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.31.4.416
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1991). *Generalization and qualitative research: Issues of external validity*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL.
- Ramirez, A. & Carpenter, D. (2005). Challenging assumptions about the achievement gap. *Phi Delta Kappan, 86*(3), 599-603. Retrieved December 19, 2006 from Wilson Web database.
- Reddy, M. A. (Ed.). (1993). *Statistical record of native North Americans*. Washington, DC: Gale Research.
- Reyhner, J. & Dodd, J. (1995, January). *Factors affecting the retention of American Indian and Alaska Native students in higher education*. Paper presented at the First Annual Conference of Expanding Minority Opportunities, Tempe, AZ.
- Rindone, P. (1988). Achievement, motivation and academic achievement of Native American students. *Journal of American Indian Education, 28*(1), 1-7.
- Saenz, T. I., Wyatt, T. A., & Reinard, J. C. (1998). Increasing the recruitment and retention of historically underrepresented minority students in higher education: A case study. *American Journal of Speech Language Pathology, 7*(3), 39-48.
- Sanchez, J., Stuckey, M. E., & Morris, R. (1998). Distance learning in Indian country:

- Becoming the spider on the web. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 37(3), 1-17.
- Schwandt, T. A. (2000). Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 189-213). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Simms, W. F. (1999). The Native American Indian client: A tale of two cultures. In Yvonne M. Jenkins (Ed.), *Diversity in college settings: Directives for helping professionals* (pp. 21-35). New York: Routledge.
- Steward, R.J. (1993). Two faces of academic success: Case studies of American Indians on a predominantly Anglo university campus. *Journal of College Student Development*, 34(3), 191-196.
- Stone, B. J., & Gridley, B. E. (1991). Test bias of a kindergarten screening battery: Predicting achievement for White and Native American elementary students. *School Psychology Review*, 20(1), 132-139.
- Sue, D.W., & Sue, D. (1999). *Counseling the culturally different: theory and practice* (3rd ed.). New York: J. Wiley & Sons.
- Tashakkori, A., Thompson, V. (1991). Race differences in self-perception and locus of control during adolescence and early adulthood: Methodological implications. *Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs*, 117(2), 133-152.
- Tate, D. S. & Schwartz, C. L. (1993). Increasing the retention of American Indian students in professional programs in higher education. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 33(1), 21-31.
- Taylor, E., & Olswang, S. (1997). Crossing the color line: African Americans and predominantly white universities. *College Student Journal*, 31(1), 11-18.

- Tierney, W. G. (1991). Native voices in academe: Strategies for empowerment. *Change*, 23(2), 36-39. Retrieved June 7, 2008, from Research Library database. (Document ID: 1566055).
- Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research*, 45(1), 89-125. Downloaded from <http://rer.aera.net> at Brigham Young University on June 7, 2008.
- U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. (1997). *Statistical abstract of the United States: The national data book*. Washington, DC: Author.
- U.S. Department of Commerce. (2002, February). *The American Indian and Alaska Native population: 2000. Census 2000 Brief*. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.
- U.S. Department of Education. (1998). *American Indians and Alaska Natives in postsecondary education*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2009). *Digest of Education Statistics, 2008* (NCES 2009-090).
- Wallace, G. (1993). Profile of African American students. In L. Clark & D. Waltzman (Eds.), *Faculty and student challenges in facing cultural and linguistic diversity* (pp. 63-87). Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Ward, D., & Hergenhan, J. (2001). Foreword. In Williams B. Harvey (Ed.), *Minorities in higher education 2000-2001: Eighteenth annual report*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.
- Westby, C., & Rouse, G. (1993). Facilitating text comprehension in college students: The professor's role. In L. Clark & D. Waltzman (Eds.), *Faculty and student challenges in facing cultural and linguistic diversity* (pp. 181-225). Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Wilcox, P., Winn, S., & Fyvie-Gauld, M. (2005). It has nothing to do with the university, it was just the people: The role of social support in the first-year experience of higher education.

Studies in Higher Education, 30(6), 707-722.

Wright, B. (1989). Tribally controlled community colleges: An assessment of student satisfaction. *Community Junior College Quarterly, 13*, 119-128.

Appendix A: Interview Questions

Note: The interviews should be conducted in a relatively unstructured manner to facilitate spontaneous, genuine, and open responses. Interviewers will use minimal encouragers and reflective listening to maximize the depth of participant responses. The following questions are samples of ways the interviewers might ask questions. They also are guides to content that is expected to be covered in the interviews.

Guiding Questions

1. What has it been like leaving the Reservation and coming to school?
2. What's been hardest about coming to school?
3. What's been helpful in making the transition to school?
4. How did your family feel about you going to college?
5. How did your family feel about you leaving home to go to school?
6. How did your mother/father/guardian support you in going to college?
7. How do they support you now?
8. Have any family issues made it more difficult to go to college?
9. Are there pressures from your family that make it harder to be in college? Can you tell me more about these?
10. What advice might you give to parents and family members about how to best support someone who is going to college?

Appendix B: Consent Form

Introduction

This research study seeks to gain further insight and understanding into Native American students' perceptions of family pressure and its ensuing affects on their academic development. This study is being conducted by Dr. Aaron Jackson, Lisa Fox, and Dr. Steven Smith (student and faculty members at Brigham Young University). You were selected to participate because you are a Native American student who grew up on a reservation and are currently enrolled as a full-time student at a postsecondary institution.

Procedures

You will be asked to participate in a personal interview, typically lasting 30-60 minutes. During this interview, you will be asked questions regarding your personal, family, and academic experiences. The interview will be tape-recorded and then transcribed.

Risks/Discomforts

Participating in this study is not expected to pose any risk to you, however there is a possibility you may experience some emotional discomfort as a result of sharing your personal, family, and academic experiences.

Benefits

There are no known direct benefits to you for your participation in this study; however there is the opportunity for you to gain insights into the role of family pressure and expectations on your academic development. Additionally, it is hoped that the knowledge gained will provide increased societal understanding of family dynamics as they influence Native American students' academic development.

Confidentiality

All information provided will remain confidential and will only be reported as group data with no identifying information. All data, including questionnaires and tapes/transcriptions from the interviews, will be kept in a locked storage cabinet and only those directly involved with the research will have access to them. After the research is completed, the questionnaires and tapes will be destroyed.

Compensation

There will be no compensation for your participation in this research.

Participation

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

Questions about the Research

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Dr. Aaron Jackson at 340-J MCKB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602, (801) 422-8031.

Questions about your Rights as Research Participants

If you have questions you do not feel comfortable asking the researcher, you may contact Dr. Renae Beckstrand, IRB Chair, 422-3873, 422 SWKT, renae_beckstrand@byu.edu.

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

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Demographic Information Sheet

Name:

Date:

College attending now:

Other colleges attended:

Major:

Gender:

Age:

Years in college:

Years lived on a reservation:

High school(s) attended:

Tribal affiliation(s):

Parents' education

Mother:

Father: