NOT NDN ENOUGH: A STUDY OF THE IMPORTANCE OF INDIGENOUS IDENTITY WITH REGARDS TO NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENT RETENTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

by

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DEDICATION

Firstly, this work is dedicated to my family, without their constant support I would not have been able to finish up this project. They were always willing to help despite my apparent inability to call Home regularly. Secondly, this is dedicated to all of the staff and students both in the Native American studies department and the American Indian/ Alaska Native student center, who were always available to lend an ear to my issues, questions or concerns about the work I was doing. Without them I would have most likely drowned in a sea of imposter syndrome and self- doubt.

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GLOSSARY or NOMENCLATURE (OPTIONAL)

AI/AN- American Indian / Alaska Native

TribalCrit- Abbreviation for Brayboy's Tribal Critical Race Theory (2005)

PWI- Predominantly White Institutions

WINHEC- World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium

MSU- Montana State University

AIRA- American Indigenous Research Association

Home- Capital H, represents where one's family and community are, where you were raised

home- Lowercase h, represents the home that you create away from Home and the community associated with it

FEM- Family Education Model

TCU- Tribal College/ University

IRM- Indigenous Research Methods

AIC- American Indian Center

ABSTRACT

"Not NDN Enough": A Study of the Importance of Traditional Indigenous Identity with Regards to Native American Student Retention in Higher Education

The average college experience is generally more difficult for indigenous students, when compared to their non-indigenous counterparts; not only do students feel they are leaving their homes and communities behind, but their culture and other less tangible aspects of their self and identity as well. Often, these issues of distance from Home and culture lead to problems with academic retention. This becomes more complicated when indigenous cultural identity is introduced, since the concept of identity in this regard cannot be seen in a linear fashion, but on a continuum, taking into account the lived experience of different indigenous peoples of different cultural upbringings and tribal affiliations. Despite these issues, traditional cultural identity can be a boon for indigenous student retention. Research was conducted at a university with a significant native student population, asking indigenous students about their cultural identities, upbringing and experiences in the university system. Out of 15 students surveyed, all said that they believe that elements of their traditional culture impact their persistence in higher education. By looking back at out old ways and traditions we as a people can find strength to move forward in our futures with our traditions in hand.

OVERVIEW

Embarking on the journey that is higher education is not a choice that comes easily to many people. It requires leaving a place where students feel comfortable, even challenging themselves on academic, and at times, epistemological levels. It requires making students not only perform at a higher level, but also challenging themselves to think in new, critical ways that may challenge their pre-existing beliefs. Finding ways to help students succeed in these environments has often been difficult; however, for some minority groups of students this task is much more difficult and presents a plethora of different challenges compared to the students of the cultural majority. What will be evaluated here are methods that could possibly aid in AI/AN student retention, through personal stories and experiences from Native students at Montana State University. This paper will take a look at previously existing theories and research methodologies used for working with Native Student communities at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) , focusing on how having a traditional indigenous identity can help give students not just the motivation to stay in school, but to matriculate as well. A traditional indigenous identity defined as being competent in aspects of their culture, whatever they may be, whether it be physical work like craft making, dancing, singing or more nebulous like participating in ceremony. Before getting started, it is important to note that the terms AI/AN, American Indian, Native American, Native and Indigenous will be used interchangeably, and while they each carry different implications or uses, will all represent the same thing in this work.

Much of this work was conducted with the American Indian/ Alaska Native student center on Montana State University's campus, to determine what aspects of the programming provided by the support center is effective, as well as finding out what can be improved. By engaging with these varied ideas on indigenous student programming, the AI/AN student service center will be able to help the students in the community not only succeed but also grow their indigenous identity.

It is important, when talking about Native Identity, to acknowledge that the whole concept of identity exists on a spectrum (Joseph & Windchief, 2015). This fact is supported through the interviews that I conducted over the course of several weeks with fifteen different Native students on Montana State's campus. Every Native person has a different relationship with their identity, and views it in their own unique way. Some acknowledge that they are urban or non-traditional, and don't harbor any interest in learning more about that aspect of themselves, while others consider themselves to be very traditional due to their participation in powwow or other more modernized aspects of the indigenous experience today. Some do not consider themselves traditional since they have learned many of their traditional ways and do not follow them as far as they feel is necessary to be considered "tradish"[1] . Every Native person varies in their own lived experiences, and deals with them in different ways, so it is folly to assume that all

[1] This is a colloquial term used by some Native people to reference how traditional they are. Sometimes used in teasing, like "Real tradish this one" either to make fun of a lack of traditional practice or a perceived overuse

Native people have the same conceptions of identity; ideas of what counts as being traditional or urban or non-traditional change from person to person and area to area. It is for these reasons that it is critical to state these perspectives from the start and move forward with research acknowledging the uniqueness of everyone's own life experiences.

Having a strong identity, particularly for indigenous people with their traditional identity, can have a serious impact on the retention of indigenous students, since that same identity can serve as a cultural anchor for students who are struggling with finding a place within the institution. Being able to rely on a strong cultural identity, or to participate in activities put on by the student center, can help form more confidence in the student's sense of belonging, and enable them to not have to worry about losing part of who they are to the institution, which as Brayboy states is inherently assimilative in his description of Tribal Critical Race Theory (Brayboy, 2005). When students are more confident in their indigenous identity, they are less likely to either lose parts of themselves to the university. What this means, as described in a theory that is cited in articles on AI/AN student success, shows that many students often feel that in order to succeed in a PWI, they need to leave behind aspects of their culture (Huffman, 2003). It can be difficult for students, when confronted by an institution that does not value the same forms of knowledge and ways of knowing that they value, to continue within that school. Yet when there is an anchor, either a student group, center, or strong identity within themselves, the students can fall back on these core values rather than going back Home, to where these same concepts are often valued. Another aspect that goes hand in hand with this concept is that of community, an inherent part of Native culture, and

therefore an important aspect of any indigenous person's own identity. Without a strongly rooted community, it is impossible to impart to students a feeling of home at the University. Without this sense of home, it becomes more difficult for Native students leaving Home to stay at a distant University, let alone have them engage in identity work for themselves. In some cases, having community is arguably more important than identity, however it is also hard to talk about the two separately as the two are often inextricably intertwined.

Statement of Problem

Despite student retention studies in multiple minority and the majority communities, it becomes difficult to research Native American student attrition rates due to the low enrollment numbers at PWIs; and for this reason, they are therefore often not included in student retention plans. This ongoing issue leads to a continuation of the problem where Native students are considered and perceived as being an “invisible” population (Brayboy, 2004, Cited in Tachine et al., 2016) which leads to support staff receiving very little aid on how to support this student population.

There are quite a few issues that prevent Native students from succeeding, ranging from financial issues to family conflict. At times, even issues with the administration or faculty within specific departments can arise, stemming from possible cultural misunderstandings (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). For example, the death of a family member always warrants that a student to go home, often for extended periods, and since many Native American families are large, this can happen frequently. Without a connection to the family in question, faculty or staff at a University can, and have,

taken issue with students taking large amounts of time away from school for the sake of mourning or losing family members (Heavyrunner & DeCelles, 2002). That said, the specific problems that will be discussed in this work will be that of conflict between the culture of the Native students, and the culture of the university, as well as the impact of identity work done by the students with the goal of matriculating through a PWI.

According to Terry Huffman, "Indeed, no other single factor has been more frequently identified as a contributing reason for poor academic achievement among American Indians than cultural conflict" (Huffman, 2001, p 2). When indigenous students feel as though they do not fit in a campus culture, the desire to go Home skyrockets, since Home is a place where they feel comfortable and safe. This problem hits particularly hard for first year students; 1st year retention rates for Native students at 4 year institutions was 70.5% in 2016, a significantly lower number when compared to rates among White students, sitting at 82.2% and Black students, sitting at 75.1% (Tachine et al, 2016). While financial issues and other major hurdles do exist for Native students, when sitting down and talking to students as was done in Tachine's work, most say that the actual environment of the school and Native community (or lack thereof) were often the reasons for their dropping out.

When this work started, it began with three main questions: whether or not Native students' connections to their traditional and cultural identity could help them stay in predominantly white institutions (PWI), and if so, would students in PWIs partake in community based cultural events that could help them grow this identity outside of their Home community. Finally, what within the AI/AN Student success office works, what

does not, and what could be added. The first question was answered fairly quickly when diving into prior existing work, particularly in the work of Terry Huffman, showing that students who were able to hold onto their culture during a period of transculturation were more likely to graduate (Huffman, 2001). However, the second question was much more difficult to answer. Since the Native student community at Montana State University is diverse in its tribal affiliations, it is difficult to participate in any tribally specific traditional practices. That said, the student center works more in a Pan-Indian sense, considering all the tribal differences but drawing together the similarities that almost all indigenous groups share. In this way, the center is able to work together and help students find their own Native identity in a broad sense, which for many students, who can often come from a fully traditional upbringing, can be a lifeline to staying in school, as well as a lifeline to their identity as a whole. This idea of a Pan-Indian approache in areas with a high tribal cultural diversity is not a completely new concept as seen in a talk presented by Natalie Avalos at the 2018 AIRA conference. In this talk, she discussed the work done with different southwest and Puebloan tribes in Albuquerque (Avalos, 2019). It is important to mention that some view the idea of Pan-Indianism as a fully wrong sentiment. This is because the term itself is mostly used in contexts that discuss the over-generalization of indigenous peoples, like the misconception that all North American tribes utilize the tipi. In Avalos' work, she discusses the reason for using this term in her own context. Since she worked with people from tribes in the southwest region of the United States, she felt there were enough cultural similarities to warrant working to educate people on their cultural basics. While all these tribes are unique, there were

enough similarities in a broader sense that she felt that it was an appropriate action to take. I feel that when given situations like that of MSU as well as other areas with high tribal diversity, and among indigenous people, the term could have a specific new usage to help create unity among all indigenous peoples.

Purpose and Impact of Study

The purpose of this study is twofold, first, to continue the idea that Native students with a strong connection to their traditional and cultural identity, have a higher chance of progressing successfully through a PWI, and successfully graduating. By being able to use this identity, either in the form theological sense or in a more physical sense, like dancing or singing, as an anchor to their cultural ways and community, it enables them to succeed and even grow in predominantly white institutions. Second, is to provide evidence for what students in the Montana State University Native student community would like improved in the student center, and what they like currently and would like to see more of as far as culturally focused programing is concerned. This work was done in coordination with a self-study required for the Native American Studies Department's accreditation with WINHEC, or the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium, where getting the voices of students, both past and present, was incredibly important when assessing both the strengths and weaknesses of both our student center and the programs they are associated with. There were fifteen students interviewed, that spanned eleven different tribes in and around the state of Montana. Each student exists on a different point on continuum of identity, as will be discussed towards the end of this paper (Jospeh & Windchief, 2015).

The goal is that the research conducted for the sake of this thesis paper will be used to help expand the cultural programming available to students through the student center. Since this research began, there has already been an increase in events in crafting, such as beading, as well as bringing back language programs for both Crow and Blackfeet languages. The further significance of this accreditation is related to the MSU Native American Studies Department, as well as the AI/AN SS office. These two departments work in tandem with students, through support in and out o the classroom. Once the department receives this accreditation, the student services and associated programs will not only be held accountable to other indigenous peoples around the world, but will receive support from them as well, and become a part of a larger group of world indigenous schools working towards indigenizing the education system[2]. When the NAS Department receives this accreditation, it will be one of the first non-tribal institutions to be granted it, which does not matter in our traditional ways, but as far as western epistemologies are concerned, can be considered a "big deal" (quotes added). Between the future accreditation as well as the possible effect on the Native student population, one can gather the significance of this research, and realize that what this research is linked to, is exceedingly important.

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[2] The support given by WINHEC is no financial, mainly support through a worldwide network of indigenous educators, to support the fidelity of indigenous programming provided by the University, and make sure that upholds its educational standards.

Limitations

Many of the theories and methods discussed in this paper are of a particular worldview and epistemology, these concepts stemming from the indigenous peoples of not just North America, but also from around the world. Some of these concepts and epistemologies may not be as close to the traditional western values that are held by many members of the academy. However, oftentimes the goals of these indigenous ways of knowing run parallel to those of the western academy. By utilizing our own methodologies and epistemologies, we as indigenous people can create a unique space where Native scholars can work with their own people to make positive changes in our communities. As the author, I ask those people who decide to read this work to be aware and sensitive of the ideas that are presented, as they may be off the beaten path conceptually from what one may be used to reading in these and other academic writings. However, many of these theories engage with core concepts of indigenous personhood (Holm, Pearson, Chavis, 2003) and epistemology, so I request the reader to keep an open mind.

Personal Identity Statement

Before getting further into this work, I am going to take a break from the academics and talk about myself, and why this work is so important to me as both a scholar and as a Native person. Since this work focuses on the importance of identity, and the work that it takes to grow ones indigenous identity, I thought it only appropriate to discuss my own journey, before going into the journeys of the students who were

interviewed. I was born near Chicago, Illinois. For most people that is enough, and no one questions it any further than that, however, anyone that is from a major city like Chicago knows, I am not actually from the city. I am from a small suburb called Hinsdale, which is by no means my favorite place in the world. Not because the town itself is bad, the location was nice, the town was safe, the schools were good and there were plenty of trees. The issue lay in the people living there, who are incredibly, almost unbelievably wealthy and rude, getting new cars almost yearly, and yet never having any care about the community around them. If someone in the neighborhood was struggling, they became a target of ridicule. However, most summers I would go up to Minocqua, Wisconsin, and spend time with my mom's family. Those were the best memories of my childhood, so more often than not when I refer to Home, I refer to Wisconsin, since that is where most of my childhood memories are.

I was very young when my mom told me that I was Native, Sault Ste. Marie band of Chippewa and Huron specifically, and that we were from the Crane clan. Since my family generations back was pushed off the reservation, partially by the choice of a non-Native spouse, the family had rarely looked back, so for the most part, I am culturally coded white from my parents, with Native ancestry. I remember my mom told me that she was going to try and enroll me and my sister, only to find out that the tribe did not want any "Half breed Byrons" to be part of their tribe. This very quickly taught me that, as far as my nation was concerned, I was not Native. So I lived my life that way until I was 25, not knowing my culture, not self-identifying as Native while numerous people around me judged me or mocked me for being so. It was a tricky situation. How do you

respond when someone calls you Sitting Bull as a nickname? When someone asks you to do a rain dance because it was particularly hot that day? When you compare your skin tones and they say “Well, yours looks more red anyway” as everyone laughs. It was difficult to even warrant defending myself when I knew I was not enrolled in the first place. What would I even say? “Sitting Bull was Lakota, not Ojibwe”? I did not want to be heckled even more for taking offense, so I just let it be. School was difficult as well, I spent all of middle school grounded for bad grades, no fault of my parents or the instructors, just my own. I did not understand the material, or how it was being taught, and I hated homework. I failed most standardized tests despite after school programs, tutoring and other efforts tried by both myself and my parents. I was put on a low-level track in High school after yet another failed standardized test. My mom had to fight to keep me out of rudimentary math classes. I was lucky to have the support of my family, a handful of incredibly supportive teachers and a close-knit group of friends, which kept me going until I got into the University of Tulsa. That was when I moved to Oklahoma. It was not a hard move to make. Despite missing my family, I wanted to leave that town. A quick aside, this may sound very sad, but it is important to remember that because of my incredibly loving family I was able to get through this, it is easier to talk about the negative moments than the good, but there were countless great memories as well. However, for the sake of my positionality with this topic, the relevant aspects are more negative than positive.

College was more of the same, except now I lived in Tulsa, Oklahoma, or more specifically, Muskogee Creek country. Not knowing myself, not being confident, and

having other people, particularly strangers, actively assessing me and viewing me as Native. Campus police taking the time to stop me on the street just because I looked slightly different, multiple times. Cops rolling up on me as my girlfriend and I ate tacos in a car at noon on a Wednesday. Yet I also made my first Native friend, which at the time did not seem important, but looking back he provided great support to me when things were not going my way, I am sure more than even he realized. Unfortunately, he ended up dropping out a couple years later. After graduation I worked for a couple years in education, in an AmeriCorps program to help me pay for graduate school. Soon after, I was on my way to Bozeman, Montana, for a master's degree in Native American Studies. I started my time in Bozeman with one rule: That I would not tell anyone that I was Native American or even had ancestry. My blood quantum is only ⅛ at most (not like I knew what that was at the time) and I was not raised Native. My skin is not dark, neither is my mom's or my sister's, for all intents and purposes I was not Native enough to even talk about it. However, after my first Federal Indian Law class, I remember wanting to introduce myself to another guy who had similar research interests that I did. I will never forget him, because he turned around, saw me, gave me a big smile, shot out his hand to shake mine and started talking to me in Crow. I was shocked, I did not know how to react. He noticed I did not know what he was saying and asked, "What tribe are you from?" I stammered out something along the lines of "I am a little bit Ojibwe on my mom's side but….." he cut me off and we talked more about language revitalization for the next few minutes. This continued to happen through this day, and the rest of the semester, to the point where my friends began getting frustrated at me for doubting my

own indigenous identity. I went home and talked with my family about it that winter, and was wondering if it was ok, but with the support of my whole family, I proceeded not only to pursue my Master's degree, but my identity as an Anishinaabeg man. It was amazing to find the culture in my family as we talked about it more, after telling my mom the Anishinaabeg creation story, she immediately said "Skywoman? I know Skywoman from the Night-night stories grandpa told me!" Which was one of the coolest moments in my opinion, of culture leaking through despite all the years of assimilation.

This brings us to the present, with this paper focusing on the importance of Native identity in higher education and how it can be used to help retention for Native students. After reading my backstory it is no surprise that this is very important to me, after being lost and confused for so long, I finally have an identity to work on, and grow slowly but surely. I finally have a community, and finally fit in with other people, for the first time in my life. This research is so important to me because I want to give back to my community after everything they have done for me in the last few years, helping me grow this identity as an Anishinaabeg man and being kind and welcoming me with open arms. Through this research, which I am doing as part of our self-study for the WINHEC accreditation (as mentioned above), I am hoping to help get this accreditation which would hold our university and department responsible for having cultural and language programming for students to assist in growing their identity and keep the intertribal student community alive for years to come.

"I don't know a single Native person who does not have some kind of identity issue" was a profound quote from one of my interviewees. I hope that this research,

alongside the WINHEC accreditation, will help students either grow or deal with this issue as a community. By working with the student community and student services, I hope that in some way, all of this work will help our students. Even if it were just one student who felt more confident about themselves after reading this.

WINHEC

WINHEC, or World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium, is a group of professionals and institutions from all forms of education, from Elementary to postgraduate levels of higher education, who work to provide standards set *by* worldwide indigenous communities *for* worldwide indigenous communities (WINHEC Accrediting Authority, 2018). These "standards" (quote added for lack of a better word) revolve around indigenous culture and language within any institution that is reviewed and accredited by the accrediting body, as well as full representation, participation and reciprocation from the indigenous communities in that area, no matter how many there may be. Getting WINHEC accreditation, in short, holds the institutions in question accountable to a very high standard of indigenous education and representation, and while not providing any immediate monetary gain, it adds to the overall fidelity and quality of the indigenous studies programs, as well as the programs offered by the student services facilities (WINHEC Accrediting Authority, 2018). The specific standards that the institutions are held to are determined by the indigenous communities with which the specific institution works with.

One of the main reasons this research was conducted, was for the sake of both the eligibility application as well as the departmental self-study that was conducted for the

WINHEC accreditation for the Native American studies department at Montana State University. The self-study is conducted by the institution undergoing accreditation, and is required to get input from students, faculty, and indigenous elders in the community it represents about the goals and ways that the institution helps indigenous students and propagates indigenous epistemologies (WINHEC Accrediting Authority, 2018). While there were also other goals that fell in line with the work that was conducted, like exploring how the student center can be improved as well as the impact of traditional identity on the success of Native students in higher education, it was also to evaluate students' opinions of the student center, and in doing so provide data for a self-study on both the department and the student center. This work has both its personal and community purposes, it provided me with a reason to continue my work as well, having struggled for many months trying to find motivation to continue. It also will provide the student community that has given me so much support through the years, with direction and suggestion on what aspects of the student center work, and which ones need improvement.

LITERATURE REVIEW: HISTORY OF INDIGENOUS AND FORCED PEDAGOGIES

Theories surrounding indigenous education as well as retention of specifically indigenous students in a higher education context have a complicated history. However, rather than starting with some of the first references to retention tactics used by the United States government or the academy, I will start with a discussion of traditional education practices used by my people, the Anishnaabeg, as told by Basil Johnson, then moving onto to an academically traditional, more chronological approach on the following theories. This review will by no means be able to cover every retention theory or researcher in the field, however I will attempt to cover the specific theories in use in this work, as well as the concepts that led to the creation of said theories to the best of my abilities.

In the traditional way, according to Basil Johnson, community and family played a huge part in the upbringing and education of any child. Initially, the grandparents were the people in charge of the first steps in the education process, teaching the children the basics of how to get by in the world. Anything from language to socio-cultural norms within society were all gained through this interaction with family, under the guidance of the elders in the family. This gave the elder generation a chance to impart their knowledge and wisdom to the children, while at the same time giving them a fresh perspective on life through the eyes of a child (Johnson,1990).

As children grew and changed over time, so did the pedagogical approach to their education. Once the child was able to go out on their own, they began to shadow other

members of the tribe, as they went on to do their daily work. For the young boys, they learned how to spearfish, hunt and harvest wild rice, while the young girls learned to cook, weave, sew and bead. Giving each child the ability to do the tasks that would be expected of them in the future, in order to contribute to the community (Johnson,1990).

This process continued for years, until they were competent in these specific tasks, or until they reached their teenage/young adult years. At this point, again the pedagogical approach to education changed. Each child was, at this point, then tasked to go seek out their education for themselves. A smart move in a number of ways, allowing the child to find something they were passionate about on their own, giving them the chance to become an expert in one particular field and helping the community through that, as well as giving the children the freedom that all teens crave once they reach this particular point in their lives. This was by no means an accident, nor was it a terminal step in their education. In the traditional way, this step lasted for the rest of their lives, allowing people to continue to seek out knowledge and educate themselves in ways that interested them, in short, giving them the freedom to learn what they want, when they want it (Johnson,1990). A far cry from the so-called well-rounded education models that we see today in most educational settings.

Unfortunately, these ways changed once laws such as the General Allotment act among others were enacted. These policies changed the day to day lives of indigenous people, as well as changing their education systems in favor of western structured academic systems of education. Much of this was through use of treaties, since most

treaties negotiated with the tribes included clauses about education. The commerce clause was impactful as well:

> The treaty and commerce clauses overrode what otherwise would have been an impermissible entanglement between church and state as government funds were used to build churches, schools, housing and grants of land to sectarian missions. Together the treat and commerce clauses produced a third plenary power over Indian affairs (Wright et al.,1998, pp 8).

By taking advantage of the commerce clause, which gave congress the power to regulate commerce with native tribes, the education systems that were funded through the treaties were done with assimilationist motives. This trend was also seen with the Dawes Act. Through the taking of surplus land, the government was able to sell reservation land to non-natives, which then required the government make school districts within reservations that would educate the non-native children (Wright et al., 1998). Through this, the assimilation of tribes through education continued. Whether it was through localized public schools on the reservation, or students fully removed to boarding schools like Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, the content that was taught was not the culture and history of the students in question, and the cultural of many Native American children was quickly stripped away by these intentionally assimilationist policies. By engaging Native students with content that is exclusively part of the cultural majority, and punishing any usage of their cultural ways, it was easy to rip the traditions and language away from these students.

That said, there were attempts made by tribes before the Dawes Act, that attempted to create their own tribal schools, trying to avoid assimilation through education. The Cherokee created a bi-lingual school that focused on teaching American and Cherokee history and culture in both the English and Cherokee languages, (Huff,

1997) However this system quickly dissolved once the Cherokee were removed to Indian Country in Oklahoma. Many voices in the government viewed the idea of "Cultural Pluralism" as a threat to nationhood. Many opponents of this concept often tried to compare European immigrants, who in many cases welcomed becoming American and the assimilation of their culture with relatively open arms, to how Native American people should act, calling the immigrants in question successes and Native people who were well versed in their own cultures as failures (Huff, 1997). The obvious difference being, immigrants who came to the United States to start new lives, compared to indigenous people who were essentially invaded and had their lives and cultures supplanted, in similar ways to other indigenous people the world over. Though aspects of the colonial experience may differ slightly between groups, they are all played to the same tune, assimilationist educational policy, religious suppression and supplantation, and land grabbing.

Now, to some readers this may all seem to be irrelevant to a literature review, as much of this is not technically theory as much as it is history. That said, it is critical for the reader to understand the background of these theories, lest they think them irrelevant or unreasonable. It is important to know that the assimilation of Native people through education started at the beginning of the relationship between the government and Native peoples, and improvements only started to be discussed around 1928, when the Meriam report, also known as "The Problem of Indian Administration" was released. This report called out many issues with the previous theories and policies regarding Native people, one of them being the use and application of Indian education through boarding and local

schools. Even as early as 1928, the document states: “It is true in all education, but especially in the education of people situated as are American Indians, that methods must be adapted to individual abilities, interests and needs” (Meriam, 1928, p 346). In many of these schools, the students were taught a pre-assigned curriculum that was meant to create more workers to join the American workforce. Work such as shoe cobbling, iron work and welding were taught to men, while women learned how to sew on a machine along with other homemaking tasks. No interest was taken in the actual desires of the students in question, just the desire to make them assimilate to mainstream American culture and show that they can in fact be civilized. Unlike, as mentioned before, the traditional Anishinaabeg pedagogy where the children being educated had a say in what they were learning.

The 1928 Meriam report also mentioned the importance of family and having Native students be in close proximity with their families, a full turn away from the previous policy of trying to remove the children from the home and community entirely.

> However important may be the contribution of school,’ says Dean James E. Russell, ‘the atmosphere and conditions of the home are, especially in the early days of the child’s life, the primary determinant in the development of the child, and, since it is the parents who determine these conditions and create that atmosphere, it is they who are of necessity the most important educational factors in the lives of their children (Meriam, 1928, p 349).

One of the major points taken from the research conducted here, is that for many indigenous people, this focus on the family and community is paramount, which is something that even this report commented on as being critical for their education and development. The ability to center oneself in one’s community, and within the family, can serve as a serious boon to a student’s education. Even if that family is one that is

outside a student's original community, or Home, as will be brought up in full in the next few sections in reference to the *Nahongvita* model discussed by Joseph and Windchief (2015).

It truly is fascinating to discuss Native student success in line with the Meriam report. The number of both progressive and, at times, offensive topics that are brought up as changes or critiques made on the Dawes Act, are staggering. Aside from what was already discussed, that being, individual interest and achievement, as well as a focus on community, there was even a level of identity and tribally specific recognition that was mentioned. "Indian tribes and individual Indians within the tribes vary so much that a standard content and method of education, no matter how carefully they might be prepared, would be worse than futile" (Mariam, 1928, p 346).While to a certain degree this is true, in that every tribe and tribal individual are unique and have their own identity and culture, through the use of indigenous pedagogy centered around indigenous epistemologies, knowledge can be conveyed in a way that suits indigenous peoples and respects their tribal diversity and various knowledges. The following section will outline a number of these methods and theories behind student retention and education that stem from this concept.

Analysis of Indigenous Retention and Education Models

The following section will cover educational retention models, with a focus on models that utilized indigenous epistemologies for their construction. While there will be some general models discussed as well, the purpose is to show examples as to how retention models based in indigenous though differ from those based in other academic

traditions. While this will cover multiple concepts, I will specifically be covering ones that are relevant to community building, indigenous student retention in higher education and cultural concepts.

The first theory that will be discussed is Tinto's theory of Student Departure. This theory, first having been developed in 1975, and later re-worked in 1993, has been heavily critiqued, commented on and written about since its conception. This theory talks about the needs that are put on the student who attends college once they leave their home. According to this theory, there is a need for the student in question to "break away" (Tinto, 1993) from all past connections and traditions for said student to achieve in higher education. Through the act of breaking away from these past connections, the student is then able to fully acculturate and transition to the culture and lifestyles of the university setting. By doing this, and fully accepting the college lifestyle, the student can then prosper in the college environment and begin to achieve academically speaking. This model can be seen below:

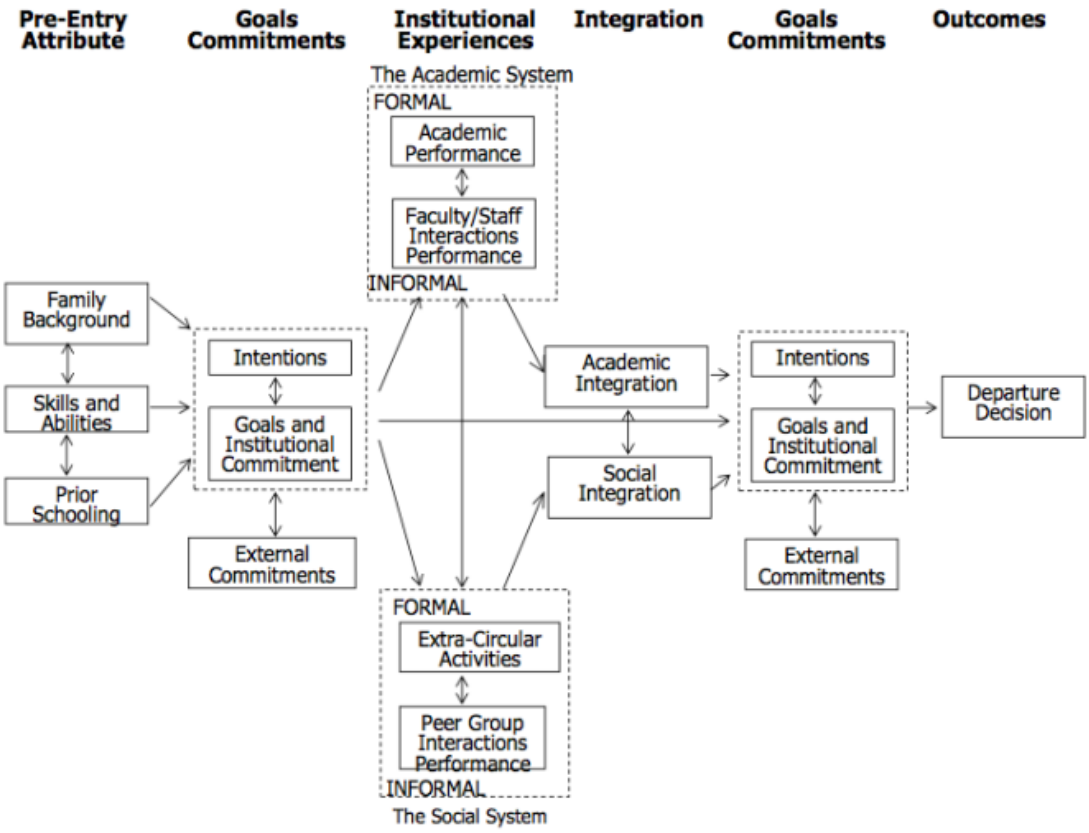


Figure 1- Tinto's Theory of Student Departure

This 1993 version of his model includes other aspects of social integration compared to the model that preceded it. This model is woefully lacking when discussing the retention of students from minority groups whose cultural background is not that of the mainstream culture of the university. While assimilation was not the intent of Tinto in making this model, it ends up being construed as such when viewed from the perspective of minority students, since many do not come from the same cultural background as many students going to the university. "The model was intended to describe developmental progression within a culture rather than assimilation from one culture to

another" (Guiffrida, 2006, p 450). Since students of the majority culture were raised with the same culture that created the institution, it can be a steppingstone in life through their eyes. However, when viewed from the perspective of many students from a different cultural background, the act of breaking away from tradition and culture can easily be suggesting assimilation. While the model itself brings up many important aspects supporting student retention, the assimilative nature of it, although unintentional, renders it not particularly helpful when working on student retention that focuses on cultural resilience and strength. These issues are also seen in other theories were proposed around the same time as Tinto's first model of student departure. Both Astin's "Theory of Involvement" as well as Pascarella's "General Model for Assessing Change" (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008), cover elements of student preparedness, institutional bodies that support students, and how they work together to create a student who can matriculate. However, they are problematic in that they do nothing to cover ideas about cultural dissonance or clashing within minority student communities, let alone specifically Native American student communities (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008).

The next major model to be discussed is referred to as the "Peoplehood Matrix" (Holm et al., 2003). This model exists as a way for indigenous people to express their sovereignty in the academy as well as in many other fields. The concepts behind the model are based off of previous work done by anthropologist Robert K Thomas, who based his own work off of that of Edward H Spicer and his concepts of enduring peoples (Holm, Pearson, Chavis, 2003). Thomas made frequent note of the point that Spicer made, that these enduring peoples, then becoming human enclaves stemming from

colonization, each were often identified as having distinct languages, religions and territories that the colonizers in question attempted to destroy or take for their own (Spicer, 1980). What Holm, Pearson and Chavis try to do is create a new model, with the addition of another point of Spicer's, sacred history.

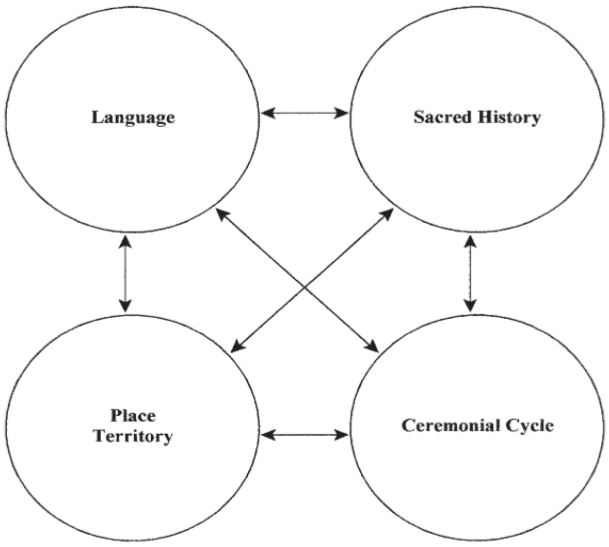


Figure 2: The Peoplehood Matrix

This model tries to be universal in its coverage of ideas and concepts that are crucially important to all Native American tribes, as well as all indigenous people from around the world (Holm et al., 2003). Breaking it down piece by piece, each of these parts is interconnected to the others and are integral to indigenous epistemologies and cultures. Language is a significant aspect of Native identity; in that it is the lens through which we see the world. In connection to the other concepts, it is important to know the names of the land and places, in that indigenous language in order to fully understand their importance. This is mirrored with sacred history and the ceremonial cycle, in order to

fully understand these concepts, it is necessary to know them in one's own Native language. Even when looking at sacred history; in order to fully understand the history, you need to know land and ceremony, thus further showing the interconnected nature of all these concepts. The goal of this work is for people in academia to be able use this model as a core assumption when working in Native American studies or other disciplines.

The use of this model in education can be easily argued as well. Particularly when one is discussing what is important to Native students, and what is needed for student wellbeing. While this model is made to discuss core assumptions when dealing with Native American issues in academia, it could also be used as a measure for what Native students in higher education need in order to either feel at Home, or continue identity growth. Having access or time to participate in one's ceremonial cycle could be a determining factor in a student's choice to leave university. While most students leave their traditional homelands to pursue education, knowledge of both their Homes (capital H specific, signifying their traditional home) as well as the land around their new home (lower case h signifying their new, student home and community) can help deter feelings of homesickness, since knowing and becoming familiar with this new land can be just as rewarding (Joseph & Windchief, 2015). Even learning about their own people's history, respectfully and appropriately can help a student create a healthy cultural identity. Every aspect of this model can be used in a way that makes logical sense when applied to student retention, thus proving Thomas's goals of this model being useful in many academic contexts.

The Family Education Model (FEM), formulated by Iris Heavyrunner and Richard DeCelles is another example of indigenous epistemologies coming together to form a model that focuses on Native student success in a higher education setting. In this case the focus is on the issues of student success at TCUs (tribal colleges and universities). The assumptions that preceded the creation of this theory were in short: a) that many student families need the college to help act as a liaison with social services during a crisis, b) tribal colleges must "seek to enlist, develop and structure the ability of family members to support student efforts" and c) that TCUs must engage family members in the life of the college community by involving them and enlisting their help in social and cultural activities (Heavyrunner & DeCelles, 2002, p 30). According to this model, there needs to be a connection between a student's extended family and the college. Focusing on these assumptions, multiple programs were developed that worked to help a student's sense of belonging in these environments. Since students often come from very close knit families, the inclusion of extended family in social and cultural events can help the entire family feel at ease not only within the college, but also help alleviate ill feelings due to the student leaving home for school in the first place (Heavyrunner & DeCelles, 2002).

Yet another powerful aspect of this model is the use of family support programs, rather than family service programs that are much more passive. The goal is to create relationships between members of the family and the college, through programs that support community building, building of cultural, racial, and linguistic identities and family growth and development just to name a few. The goals in this model are achieved

in part by a position called a “family specialist”, who works as a caseworker with the specific families:

> In the tribal College setting, the family education specialist builds on the cultural resilience of individuals, families and tribes. These strengths, deeply embedded in the culture’s value system, include spirituality, bilingualism, biculturalism, kinship and a sense of belonging to the community. The cultural values shape the cultural identity and self identity (Heavyrunner & DeCelles, 2002, p 32).

This position is clearly a helpful one that can make some serious changes while working with these families, from family dynamics down to cultural and racial identity. All these points are quite important when talking about student retention in higher education.

Many colleges view students with poor retention as students who have failed due to the lack of their individual commitment or inability, however according to this model as well as others, it is due to a lack of connection to community and family. This model works to show that through the connection between the institution and extended families or communities, the issue of retention with indigenous students can be dealt with more successfully. As an interviewee in their work said, “We don’t do these things for Indian people for ourselves, we do them for the sake of our children to make this a better place for them, especially for those who have yet to come” (Heavyrunner & DeCelles, 2002).

Another theory, and one that is used somewhat in this research, is called “Biskaabiiyang” by Leanne Simpson, an Anishinaabeg scholar. This idea is an Ojibwe word that means “to look back” (Simpson, 2011). The idea is to always be looking back at how our ancestors did things, and how they did their own work. The reason that it is only used somewhat is because it is a specifically Anishinaabeg concept, that is hard to use in other, intertribal, situations. Though, since the student population of this university

is very tribally diverse, it felt appropriate to use certain aspects of it while looking at the intertribal concepts that cross between multiple tribes rather than ones that are specific to the Anishinaabeg people.

This concept can be viewed as being like decolonizing, but on a more personal level. Rather than looking at the institution the way Linda Tuhiwai Smith looks at it her book "Decolonizing Methodologies" which is a look at the concept of institutional based research and its roots in colonial, imperialist and assimilationist thought that still prevails today (Smith, 2012), this concept talks about acknowledging all the colonial impacts in one's own personal life and in their community. The goal is the "attempt to rid themselves of psychological damage they carry from this process, and return to their ancestral traditions" (Simpson, 2011, p 50). The important distinction to make when talking about this topic, however, is the overall intent and what is meant when Simpson talks about looking back and returning to old ways. The intent is not to literally return to the past, or to dwell on the past in an unhealthy way, but is closer to an attempt to re-create the flourishing conditions, culturally and politically speaking, of the past to support the well-being of citizens of these tribal nations today. To mentally dissolve the rigid colonial aspects of life today and by trying to embrace life in the same fluid way that our ancestors once did. That said, as will be discussed in the section on used theories and methods throughout this work, this theory was used more conceptually as a goal for research and future work, since as Simpson states—"I have learned that unless concepts have a local meaning, it is difficult for them to have local resonance" (Simpson, 2011, p 51). In order to avoid this issue, only certain aspects are used since this theory does not

have much local resonance, coming from Anishnaabeg country rather than the Great Plains area.

Theories Used

Having gone over the progression of retention based theories for students as well as growth and success models for indigenous students specifically, it is time to move on to the theories that were used in the research and development of this specific topic of study. While some of the previous theories that were just discussed were also used, they were used to a lesser degree than these in this section. Starting with the theory that was utilized the most throughout this work, then moving through the rest, will be adressed

Huffman's Transculturation Hypothesis

Terry Huffman's Transculturation Hypothesis is the most frequently utilized theory in this work. Huffman conducted research with students from schools in South Dakota that focused on the student's identities, and how well they were able to transculturate with the culture of the University. In order to avoid the process of estrangement from a university system, Huffman suggests that the students in question use their cultural upbringing as an anchor, to keep themselves firmly rooted in their traditions, so they do not fear any form of assimilation from the school.

Looking deeper into the models, you can glean a better understanding of Huffman's overall concepts and goals. He starts by talking about the process of Estrangement, which happens when students do not successfully cross the transculturation threshold, as he puts it. This model would be familiar to many Native

students, the process of starting out with a feeling of initial alienation, with little or no way to relate to the school or the students around oneself. The second stage being disillusionment, having the general perception of college as an agent of assimilation, followed by the third stage, the emotional rejection of this perceived assimilation and continued feelings of alienation. The final stage of this process, as one would expect, is Disengagement, a physical withdrawal from the school itself (Huffman, 2001).

The second model, that of the Process of Transculturation, starts in the same place as the estrangement model, with alienation. However, the difference is immediately noticeable, since in this first stage is when a student attains and surpasses the Transculturation threshold. Huffman states that this boundary is a difficult one to reach, as is mentioned by students who he interviewed, that the struggle continues until one reaches the second stage, that being self-discovery. One major factor that is attributed to an increase in the likelihood of making it to this second stage is one's physical presence on campus, however this can be a difficult goal to achieve given the prices of on campus housing at many universities. This second stage represents the beginning stages of creating that culture anchor. From this self-discovery, the student finds new personal strength emanating from their Native cultural heritage, which leads to stage three, realignment. During this stage, the student is supposed to learn how to navigate and relate to both their Native heritage as well as the mainstream culture. Using their traditionalism as the anchor, they are lead to the final stage, that being participation, the use of their indigenous culture and heritage as a source of strength (Huffman, 2001).

The way that this work is utilized throughout my research is by showing the importance of having a cultural identity and being able to use it as a means of retention for students in higher education. Huffman's research is the only work that I could find that links Native student success to identity, while also getting direct quotes and data from the students themselves. Huffman kept up with the students he interviewed, so the data is clear on which ones were able to finish their degree, and which ones were not able to finish. He does well at expressing the students voices, but it is clear that he comes from an educational background, not a background in Native American or Indigenous studies, which leads to some disagreements regarding some theoretical perspectives that will be discussed later in the work.

"The idea that American Indians must undergo a radical form of assimilation in order to achieve in higher education can be utterly dismissed by the findings of this study" (Huffman, 2001, p 16). A quote I find telling, since he was able to prove a connection between culture and student success, especially when one looks back to the literature review of this work and sees the assimilative nature of the previous educational theories associated with Native students throughout history.

Brayboy's Tribal Critical Race Theory

Brian Brayboy's Tribal Critical Race Theory, or TribalCrit, arises from a need within the indigenous community's position in the academy and the government. Evolving out of Critical Race Theory, which emerged in the 1970's as a response to Critical Legal Studies, TribalCrit is rooted in indigenous, geographically located epistemologies. The theory uses commonalities found between these different indigenous

epistemologies, while acknowledging them as being unique ways of knowing, being and doing that come specifically from the land which these tribal entities call home. This theory proved useful when discussing the overall theory of this project, as well as with discussing the intertribal nature of the student center. Of the major tenets that are brought up in Brayboy's theory, three of them are utilized frequently.

One of the most utilized is his fourth tenet, stating "Indigenous peoples have a desire to obtain and forge tribal sovereignty, tribal autonomy, self-determination and self-identification" (Brayboy, 2005, p 429). The last line of this tenet is what was used the most, starting the discussion on self-identity, what is a Native person, and what composes their identity. Due to issues from both outside and inside Native communities, many indigenous people have problems concerning their own identity. Having to deal with preexisting expectations of what "Native-ness" (quotes added) means in a country where settler colonialism runs rampant, can be exceedingly difficult when even members of your own community are influenced by what the majority considers to be Native; whether it be through clothing, jewelry, speech, upbringing, skin color, hair length or even ancestry. It is for this reason that this tenet is so useful in this work, which discusses the differences that exist within the continuum of Native identity (Joseph & Windchief, 2015). It is important that indigenous people have the ability to self-identify, while at the same time remaining vigilant against issues such as ethnic fraud.

Secondly, is the sixth tenet: "Governmental policies and education policies toward indigenous peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation" (Brayboy, 2005, p 429). As is discussed in sections throughout this work,

the education system, particularly the higher education system, has foundations in assimilationist policies. For any college system, part of the culture involves assimilating to the culture of that college, as is discussed with Tinto in the literature review section of this paper. While this was not a major point of the research that I was conducting directly, it did come up as an issue with one of the interviewees, John Doe, and his discussion of his experience in the STEM fields. However, though it can be hidden, it can still be found in the day to day around the university. The difficulty of fitting in at an institution of higher education is in part due to the assimilationist policies that the institutions are built on, from not allowing smudging on campus in most buildings to not taking into account Native kinship systems when approving family based housing requests.

One can easily include the concepts of "Coming to a University vs Going to a University", as stated in Kirkness and Barnhardts writings, which discusses the different perspectives shared between the University and Student when someone attends college. The University views it as the student "coming" to the university, with the implication of long standing, deep seated values, practices, and policies. With these concepts comes the implication that they would have to adapt to these values and practices. Where on the other hand, you have students who are leaving home, going to a new location, and already have to adapt to a new home location, who don't intend or expect they will have to replace their preexisting cultural values with those of the college (Kirkness et al, 1991). While much of it is not intentional, it remains as a major aspect of western institutions and a hurdle to Native student success.

The third and final tenet that is utilized is number eight: “Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being” (Brayboy, 2005, p 430). While stories are the main and only form of original data being obtained for the sake of this research, it makes sense that this tenet would be a foundation of the work itself. Without the voices and stories of actual students and their experiences, then there would be no way to create meaningful change from within the institution. It is easy to assume, from an administrative standpoint, what would have a positive impact on student retention. However, as is shown in Guillory and Wolverton’s article about student persistence, wherein both sides are interviewed and compared, it is clear that there are obvious splits between what the other finds important. Where the administration views their financial support and academic program options as the major reasons for student persistence, the Native students mention family support, wanting to give back to their community, and on-campus social support as their major reasons for staying in the institution in question (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). Without the students' actual voices and personal stories being considered data, the chances are slim that the correct changes will be implemented, considering how different the views are between students and administration. In this same article, there was little to no discussion about the importance of family as being any aspect of student persistence or departure as considered by the administrative faculty, which while it is discussed in DeCelles and HeavyRunner’s Family Education Model (FEM), is rarely discussed outside of indigenous academia.

Simpson's Biskaabiiyang:

A model and concept that was developed by elders at the Seventh Generation Institute, that means "To look back" in Anishinaabemowin, or the Ojibwe language. In this same context it means "returning to ourselves" (Simpson, 2011, p 49), and overall is a theory that I used in this work, to a small degree, since it is very Anishinaabeg specific, and we are not in Anishinaabeg territory. That said, I found it important to include since it was, at every step of this work, at the forefront of my thinking process. The term itself is used in an academic context to represent another word for Decolonization, however, in a more positive sense; less of a "let's burn it all down" decolonization, and more of a "build it back up" form of indigenization (quotes added). The idea focusing on picking back up the traditions and ways that were dropped, so we can make them a part of the future. In a way, Anishinaabeg scholars use it to gauge their own assimilated beliefs and in what ways we all participate in the settler colonial mentality, whether it be intentional or unintentional, and in the end becomes part of one's everyday thought processes. To quote Leanne Simpson on her thoughts on what *Biskaabiiyang* means today,

> *Biskaabiiyang* does not literally mean returning to the past, but rather re-creating the cultural and political flourishment of the past to support the well-being of contemporary citizens. It means reclaiming the fluidity of our traditions, not the rigidity of colonization; it means encouraging the self determination of individuals within our national and community based contexts; and it means re-creating an artistic and intellectual renaissance within a larger political and cultural resurgence (Simpson, 2011).

With these definitions in mind, I tried to utilize this theory throughout the work that was being done within this project, and depict the importance of cultural programming, as well as the reasons for doing it in the first place. The goal of the project is to bring that

cultural flourishing aspect into the student center for the sake of the students, so that they may grow their indigenous identity if they so choose.

Kovatch's Indigenous Methodologies:

While the name of the text itself discusses methodologies, which will in part be discussed in this section, I will be starting by describing some theoretical concepts that I utilized from this work. First being, Kovatch's discussion of issues within indigenous methodologies. She discusses the difficulty of working within tribally specific indigenous paradigms, which is why this is following the section on *Biskaabiiyang.* She mentions how each methodology comes from a different epistemological premise combined with different methods and protocols as well, which makes it difficult if you try to use an Ojibwe method, in a Crow, Blackfeet or Cheyenne context (Kovach, 2010). Issues abound when talking about Pan-Indianism in many Native American studies classes. The inherently problematic nature of trying to lump tribes together, even if they are within a proximity, leads to almost hellish amounts of stereotyping and cultural assumptions. That said, what the AIC is trying to do, working with more than twelve separate tribal cultures in one space, could be considered a pan-Indigenous approach to some, however there are two distinct differences. It is as Kovach says,

> The unique aspects of our tribal cultures are held in esteem because they emerge from those ancestoral interrelationships found in place. Our tribal affiliations must be acknowledged - it is about identity and respect (Kovach, 2009, p 37).

The difference between a positive conception of Pan-Indianism and a negative conception of it are the two major differences of Identity and Respect, those are the two major differences. While some try to clump tribal entities together in order to eliminate

confusion, the student center here embraces the unique culture of each group and brings them into the fold with all the rest. “As indigenous people, we understand each other because we share a worldview that holds common, enduring beliefs about the world” (Little Bear, Cited in Kovach, 2009, p 37). There is a degree to which all tribes have certain similarities, but because there are similarities does not mean that we should forget our own tribal identities, and how one should go about working in an inter-tribal community. Even if one is coming from a different tribally specific epistemology, mentioning where exactly you are coming from, like in Kovach’s example a Plains Cree perspective, can help other people contextualize that knowledge with their own specific knowledge.

Moving to Kovach’s described methodologies, the main theme here is the overall usage of indigenous methodologies, and the relationship between methodology and conceptual framework. When people, particularly non-Native people, use indigenous methods, they can usually do good work with it. However, the issues come out when you discuss the theoretical framework behind what they are doing and why. It is not hard to utilize the actual methods used by indigenous people and scholars, like talking circles or the ethical guidelines discussed in previous sections, however these are just the methods. Without the proper epistemic positioning and in the operation, there is a flaw in the understanding of the methods at their most basic level, “The difficulty is that Indigenous epistemologies are not often explicitly acknowledged where indigenous methods are at work in research” (Kovach, 2009, p 49) Due to this, I found it critical to spell out specifically, in what ways I am using these indigenous epistemologies alongside the

indigenous methods that are being used as well. For example, checking in with interviewees once the writing was finished, as well as respecting them and their voice every step of the way, are aspects of indigenous methods that are not always followed if the researcher does not have an understanding of the epistemologies that created the method in the first place.

Joseph and Windchiefs *Nahongvita* Model:

The model discussed by Windchief and Joseph, called the *Nahongvita* model, in reference to the Hopi word which means to “make an effort” or “exert oneself” (Joseph & Windchief, 2015, p 80). The model itself depicts four major components, being: Home, home, History and Community. As the reader can probably assume, these components are very closely tied to one another, as they are also tied closely with the other major theories that I both use and have mentioned throughout this paper. History, being the history of a person's own community, culture, and land, as well as community, being the importance of the connection to community that many Native students have and their original Home; are both very important components to this model. However, these concepts have already been covered in multiple sections in this paper so far. Still, it cannot be overstated how critical these other two components are to student success, despite passing over it in this section. That said, the components that were most utilized through this project were the ideas of Home versus home, noting the capital and lowercase letter H in both of those words.

For the first Home, that being the uppercase H, is in reference to a student’s place of upbringing both in a literal and cultural sense. As is stated by Joseph and Windchief,

“Home is defined as the environment that provides the cultural resources through which youth acquire and develop roles, responsibilities, and ways of knowing, and that contributes to a strong sense of belonging to community” (Joseph & Windchief, 2017, p 81). A student's Home is where their community is, where they have lived, where they know the land and where they go to ceremony, if they go to ceremony. The reason for the distinction is that this Home can never be replaced, this is where students go to get re-centered by their family, community and culture, so in no way should any group or institution try to replace this Home with a home of their own creation.

The idea of having a home away from Home is still relevant to this conversation if there is no attempt to remove a student from their original Home. Lowercase h home is “defined as the secondary environment providing cultural resources that are not inherent to capital- H Home” (Joseph & Windchief, 2017, p 82). This space is generally created when students go to attend a university, creating a secondary space for Native students to practice and recharge in their cultural ways. This idea of home is something that is created by the students themselves, by engaging with other students in social contexts and creating relationships based on common experiences. By having a physical location for these connections to take place, students can create these relationships without having to worry about the culture of the students and University around them.

This theory has clear utility when discussing the changes that students wanted to see in the student center, particularly talking about the idea of “placelessness” that is brought up in their work (Joseph & Windchief, p 82). This was one of the major issues that was found when analyzing data that was obtained through the interviews conducted

here. Students who did not have a community to go to during their previous stints in PWIs, usually turned to partying as a replacement for that place to be, and often return to their Home community as a result. It is for that reason there are so many notions taken in both the final conclusions and the Student Wellbeing model, that will be discussed later, from these concepts of Home and home. By trying to model the future student center off of the positive aspects of home as described by Joseph and Windchief, there is a chance that the center will be able to embody a true home feeling, thus removing this feeling of "placelessness" that is discussed here.

The concepts presented in this work were a large part of the thought process when discussing improvements that could be made on the student center, trying to see what would be best suited to fulfill the requirements stipulated here. What type of space and programs would be best to help students feel at home in a cultural and community based sense, while at the same time not trying to take away from the importance of their actual Home.

Methodologies Used

While conducting this research, I was confronted with issues regarding how I would conduct the research that I wished to do with the student community at Montana State. I knew that I wanted to interview members of the student community, but I also wanted to recognize the issues that come hand in hand when requesting to do research within indigenous communities, even as a member of the community in question. Some of these issues include those discussed in *Decolonizing Methodologies*, which talks about the inherent imperialist nature of research done on indigenous peoples. For many

indigenous people around the world, research is a dirty word, and I did not want to continue this trend of negative research, particularly in my own community (Smith, 2015). In order to do this, I wanted to utilize a methodology that took these issues into account.

Kirkness and Barnhardt's 4 R's

The concept of the 4 R's is something that is utilized through almost every aspect of my interview process during this project. The 4 R's, according to Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991), are Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity and Responsibility. Though, one could very easily add Relationship as the secret, 5th R, but the number four is a tad bit more sacred. Each of these are inextricably intertwined with the other, but also are exceedingly important individually. With Respect in mind, when doing story based research, one should always be respectful not only towards the people but also towards the stories that they are choosing to share with you. If that respect fades, that is when the connection between the researcher and the interviewee begins to dissolve. With Relevance, the researcher needs to make the topic relevant not only to the person being worked with, but with their community as well. In the case of this research project, the topic was relevant for these students since the goal was to ask about their experience as Native students at this institution and have them help provide ways to improve the current system. Since much of the Native community was involved in not just this research, but on the WINHEC work, it makes the relevance aspect clear. When talking about reciprocity, you need to understand the western academic tradition of knowledge dissemination.

> One of the most frustrating aspects of the university experience for First Nations students is the role dichotomy between the producers and consumers of knowledge in university settings. The conventional institutionalized roles of a University faculty member as the creator and dispenser of knowledge and expertise and the student as the passive recipient of that knowledge and experience have a tendency to interfere with the establishment of kinds of personalized 'human' relationships to which First Nations students are most likely to respond (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991, p 9).

The reciprocal nature of knowledge sharing in an indigenous context is therefore paramount when conducting any sort of interview, since the existing establishment does not value students as knowledge holders. By accepting the knowledge that students hold about their own school experiences as a form of academic expertise, one can break this dichotomy and open up new doors for understanding indigenous student experience in a predominantly white institution, which was a major aspect of this project. Another form of reciprocation in research is the cross sharing of stories, by sharing my own academic experiences and struggles with students who I am conversing with, it not only shows engagement and reciprocity with the stories, but also creates a rapport; showing that I am not only interested in their stories, but have had some trials of my own. The final "R", that being responsibility, is like relevance in that there are two major facets in conducting responsible research. In this section, I take a step away from Kirkness and Barnhardt's original meaning for responsibility in their article that coined the concept (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). The first being a responsibility to the stories that are being told to me as the research is being conducted; by having these stories told to me and by being given permission to use them, it is up to myself, the researcher, to make sure I use them well and with respect. This was one major reason I did not use an audio recording device, so that I could make active choices as to what aspects of the stories to include, since due to

the conversational nature of the interviews, there was often a lot of personal, or cultural information that would not have been appropriate to use in this research. The second aspect is responsibility to the students' voices, being that I am writing down their own personal experiences (summarized of course), I wanted to make sure that they were done correctly, so after that section of the thesis was finished, I emailed all of the students so that they could go over what I wrote, and have to chance to change it if they saw fit. This was a move away from the original premise, to a more student based research methodology, since the original ideas behind Responsibility in Kirkness and Barnhart's article was on the responsibility that the institution had to indigenous students to provide education and programs that were relevant to their lives and interests.

Wilson's *Research is Ceremony*:

In Shawn Wilson's groundbreaking work, *Research is Ceremony*, Wilson discusses the creation of his indigenous research paradigm, what others would later call "Indigenous Research Methods", or IRM. His text discusses what exactly comprises this indigenous research paradigm, in the form of multiple conversations with his friends, family and colleagues, displaying the results through story as well as his methodologies. In short, he described part of the goal of his text to transmit and clarify indigenous ways of doing and being in the way that people do research (Wilson, 2008). In this paradigm, and through these conversational interviews he had, which heavily utilized storytelling as a means of conveyance for the information presented, there are a few concepts that held stronger than others. One being the idea of research *with* Native peoples rather than *on* or *about* them, the concept that the community in question is responsible for what research

will be conducted, and the researcher is responsible for conducting it in a culturally respectful and appropriate way. Providing their expertise, was also giving space for the community to have agency as well. While the researcher is accountable to the community, the community has the final say on whether the research is conducted, and in what manner. There must be a convergence of interests for genuinely good research to take place according to this paradigm.

Another major facet of this theory is that of relationship building, similar as will be talked about in the following section on Storywork theory. By creating relationships both with interviewees and the communities, the information gathered will be more powerful, despite the interviewer possibly being an outsider from the community. That said, Wilson emphasizes that one must keep their own biases in check, since that can be one of the more damaging things that a researcher can impose on a community that they are doing research with. It is in this way that I utilized his concepts of IRM, through his relationship building conversational interviews, as well as his concepts of knowledge ownership when it comes to both story knowledge and the specific knowledge that people impart to the researcher. In this work, I am not utilizing any sensitive tribal knowledge that was shared with me in the interviews for this research project, which Wilson discusses passionately on the issues of individual ownership of tribal knowledge, which is held by the collective not the individual and should be held with respect (Wilson, 2008). I hold similar views to the stories that have been shared with me, making sure that they are not used by other people, and not owned by anyone other than the person or that person's family who knows the story. The story based focus with relation to the

dissemination of knowledge, as well as the focus on community need and respect that were discussed in this book were very influential to my work while I was conducting my research, which was influenced even further by this following work that will be discussed.

Archibalds *Indigenous Storywork*

For this work, it was difficult to separate between theory and methodology since both were used throughout this work. To start, the theory will be discussed somewhat, with the concepts of different types of story. Archibald discusses two specifically different types of story that exist when one talks about Storywork, those two types being the Sto:lo concepts of Sxwoxwiyam and Squelqwel (Archibald, 2008). The first word, Sxwoxwiyam, represents stories that are more myth-like, and speak to times from the distant past. Some examples of these stories could be creation stories, and some trickster stories. In short, this word represents what some consider to be traditional stories, whereas Squelqwel stories represent more common, everyday life experiences, which oftentimes can also have educational impact, since sharing lived experiences can be very enlightening. While this concept comes from the Sto:lo community specifically, it is one that is shared by other indigenous communities in North America as well, particularly in Anishnaabeg communities, as is shared by Leanne Simpson in her book *Dancing on our Turtles Back*, and was previously discussed in the theoretical section on *Biskaabiiyang*. The work presented in this paper focuses on the usage of specifically Squelqwel stories as told by students and alumni from Montana State, as a means of conveying information about their own lived experiences, with the hopes that their stories will be heard by others

who wish to do work with indigenous communities, since students are the true experts when it comes to the discussion of Native student experiences in higher education.

The methodology of Storywork as discussed by Archibald is focused very much around similar concepts as the ones discussed in Kirkness and Barnhart's articles on the 4 R's, while also being very specific on how to deal with stories and work with the people who are telling them. While Archibald's text mainly elaborates on how to do Storywork research with elders in the community, I felt as though there was a significant amount of crossover with the student communities as well, since students are the experts of their own higher education experiences.

Going into the specifics of Storywork methodology within my qualitative interviews, I used many of the same research methods that are discussed in her text, "Indigenous Storywork". The first of these methods in her toolkit being the usage of "Reflexive Interviews" (Hammersly & Atkinson, cited in Archibald,2008), which focuses on the use of broad topics rather than having a specific list of questions. While there were questions written for the sake of the IRB consent needed for this research, they were only guidelines for the sake of these broader topics. These interviews also engaged in the idea of "research as conversation" (Archibald, 2008), which engages with the interviewee on a much more informal level and comes when researcher and interviewee are familiar with each other and interact on a regular basis. I was lucky enough as the researcher to know a few of the students well, having been a part of the community myself for years. This familiarity made the interviews enjoyable for everyone involved. It was also important, when using these story-based theories, to let the stories do the talking, and just listen.

While I would very occasionally steer a conversation at the beginning of the interview, I hardly ever had someone change topics. As Archibald puts it, "....some may seem to get off topic, but I've learned there is usually a reason for the stories they share" (Archibald, 2008, p 44) in reference to elders who she talks to. While I did not talk much with elders for this topic, I found that none of my interviewees told stories for absolutely no reason, and if there were any that were not quite on topic, they always ended up in a place that was exactly where they needed to be. By keeping a two-hour block open for each interview, it enabled us to have good conversations, stay familiar, and even give me a chance to reciprocate with my own experiences as a student throughout my educational career. Without that, the interviewees' stories would have been in a vacuum, isolated. Being able to reciprocate with my own stories created a more comfortable atmosphere and gave me more honest stories of the other students' experiences as well. Using Archibald's Storywork methodology and methods, she discusses when doing her own interviews, I found that all my interviews became much more intimate, personal, and reciprocal, than interviews I have conducted using other methods. This, in my own opinion, was a critical success, since what was needed, for the sake of this project were real stories of real students who were comfortable telling it how it is. What they liked and what they think needed improvement. After almost every interview, and sometimes during, the student would stop and mention how this did not at all feel like an interview, and would laugh and continue on whatever they were doing, which I took as a grand compliment for a researcher using Storywork theories and methods.

CRITIQUE ON TRANSCULTURATION HYPOTHESIS

While I use Huffman's Transculturation Hypothesis theory, I do not fully agree with every aspect of this idea. While I appreciate any academic or theory that puts the cultural wellbeing of Native students in the forefront, it is my duty as a fellow scholar in a similar field to provide a loving critique of this work, in an effort to improve theories relevant to the importance of cultural identity in higher education. In this critique, I will mention four specific areas wherein my specific concerns reside: Firstly, the use of the specific word "Transculturation" as an appropriate term within the field of indigenous studies or education relating specifically to the retention of Native students. Secondly, the lack of acknowledgment towards the inherent nature of a university setting as being assimilative. Thirdly, the concept of individual students reaching their "Transculturation Threshold" as individuals rather than with the help of the Native student community. Lastly, the way that Huffman separates different groups of Native students by their identity, in this author's opinion, glosses over the concept of indigenous identity being more of a continuum (Joseph & Windchief,, 2015) rather than something one can break down into four separate groups. By going over each of these major topics, I hope to respectfully show how a few gaps exist within this theory of the Transculturation Hypothesis.

Critique One

Transculturation as a word, was coined by Fernando Ortiz, a Cuban scholar who created this term to describe the cultural upheaval that occurred to the indigenous Taino

peoples who inhabited the island before the Spanish colonized Cuba. This neologism at the time was coined in order to create a word that more aptly covered the process of a "transition from one culture to another, and its manifold of social repercussions" (Ortiz, 1948, p 98). When reading the words of Fernando Ortiz himself, it is very difficult to separate this term from concepts of acculturation and assimilation as a whole, making it an inappropriate choice for a term used with the intent of helping create a cultural basis for indigenous student retention. While talking about the various cultures that had either lived or landed on the shores of Cuba, he referred to their transculturation process and their experiences as: "All of them snatched from their original social groups, their own cultures destroyed and crushed under the weight of the cultures in existence here, like sugar cane ground in the rollers of the mill" (Ortiz, 1948, p 98). The "Cultures in existence" being referenced here is the European cultural influence that overwhelmingly consumed much of Cuba as it became a central hub for Spanish colonization on the continent.

Granted, this is not to say that the Taino people were the first to be Transculturated, according to Ortiz. First came the culture of the Ciboney people, who were later transculturated by the Taino people, who brought with them agriculture and systems of government that were foreign to the Ciboney people. The Ciboney then either fled or became the serfs, or *naborias* (Ortiz, 1948, p 99) for the Taino people. Once the European settlers came, the same upheaval that occurred to the Ciboney peoples occurred once more, but with much more force as the Taino, what could be perceived by them as a tsunami of culture washed over the island. In a short period of time, hundreds of years'

worth of cultural and technological development swept across Cuba. The result being much less than perfect, as Ortiz describes it:

> They were two worlds that discovered each other and collided head on. The impact of the two was terrible. One of them perished, as though struck by lightning. It was transculturation that failed as far as the Natives were concerned, and was profound and cruel to the new arrivals (Ortiz, 1948, p 100).

Transculturation is not something that was new to Cuba, nor is it new to the United States, when Ortiz talked about transculturation it was clear, even in his definition of "transition from one culture to another" (Ortiz, 1948, p 98), that this term refers more to assimilation that cultural continuity, according to this original idea of the word itself, transculturating to a university would be transitioning to the culture of the University. However, this is not the only argument about this word, Mark Millington, a scholar from the University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom, argues that the term itself is overused, and is more often used inappropriately than not. In his work, Millington defines transculturation as "a description of a process of mixing" While not quite the same as Ortiz, he goes on to ask that when this transcultural mixing happens, "Are the diverse elements that have come together still identifiable as such or have they blended or fused into a completely new identity?" (Millington, 2007, p 262). In this question, there is this idea of either assimilation or a form of cultural syncretism being proposed. Which, while being a step in the right direction from acculturation still is not close to a concept like cultural continuity. Even scholars like Alberto Moreiras argue both Ortiz's and Angel Rama's discussions on transculturation as "Successful transculturation is about assimilation to modernisation as unavoidable reality, as world destiny" (Moreiras, 2001, p 188). Again, another scholar that views the ideas of transculturation as a means of

assimilation, as an inevitable shift to the euro-centric status quo that has been pushed on indigenous peoples since the beginnings of colonization.

While it is difficult to argue the use of a specific word over another, with both the historical background of this word, as well as the overuse of it in academia as Millington argues in his paper, the use of this term is quite inappropriate given the context for its use. That said, any name or term given to a theory is not more important than the theory itself, so despite some of these initial critiques sounding very shallow, it is important to start with the idea and background of the term itself before diving deeper into the theory in question.

Critique Two

The second critique of the theory is on Huffman's lack of discussion on the idea that assimilation is inherent to the university setting. Whether it be assimilation to the majority culture as a minority student, or as a non-indigenous student needing to assimilate to the culture of the college itself, higher education is a very assimilative experience, and Huffman does not often discuss this fact. He discusses these concepts of assimilation as positive aspects of students reaching their transculturation threshold: "As a general pattern they evaluated their repertoire of values, attitudes, and goals and measured those against those institutionalized in the higher education system" (Huffman, 2001). While it may not have been intended, the re-evaluation of one's values and attitudes with the intent to change them in exchange for those same values and goals that the system wants is what institutional assimilation is in part. Huffman does note at the end of the section that it is important to acknowledge that the realignment phase does not

mean assimilation, rather a change made to exist and flourish within the college environment, but wouldn't an overall shift in goals and values count as assimilation in some sense? Whether intended, the shift still happened, despite what one would like to call it.

Assimilation to the majority culture was a concern that the interviewees in Huffman's study voiced and is one of the main reasons why this study was conducted. While Huffman did a fantastic job analyzing the data and showing the voices and stories of the students in question, what he never covered was that these students being afraid of being assimilated was a valid concern. Particularly when discussing the "estranged" student population that either dropped out or transferred to a different university. In one particular case, an interviewee of Huffman said "It is important to me to keep my Indian values and more or less put up with the non-Indian values because it is not for the non-Indian society that I am trying to get a degree, you understand?" (Huffman, 2001, p 9). A quote like this makes perfect sense, yet Huffman prefaced this quote by saying the interviewee displayed frustration with "what she perceived to be in the assimilationist mission of the university" (Huffman, 2001, p 9). There was no validation of what this student's concerns were, making it seem as though the student was acting irrationally. Yet, the reason why this student, and others, did not transculturate, was due to this concern of assimilation and losing their traditional ways. This is an incredibly valid fear, which has documented historical precedent going hundreds of years back, and most of what is said is that they were unable to transculturate in time. Such an unfortunate circumstance, which surely had more than one cause, but hypothetically speaking, what if

all the student needed was a sense of validation? Knowing that what they are feeling is valid and that the concern they have for their culture, values and goals are warranted? Clearly this is just speculation, but certainly also within the realm of possibility.

The ability to fight these forces of institutional assimilation seem to be understated as well. In his section of *Participation,* in reference to certain students who had "Largely overcome the alienation of their early college experience" (Huffman, 2001, p 14), it is hard to believe that this kind of alienation is something that can ever truly be dealt with or overcome in just a period of a few years. This is coming from my own personal experience; however this issue is one that takes years to deal with, and constant effort, rather than a one-time event th.at can then be dealt with accordingly Joseph and Windchief discuss a concept of their model called *Nahongvita,* mention that one of the ideas behind this model is that "...[it] is not static, rather, it is an evolving process requiring constant commitment" (Joseph & Windchief, 2017, p 92). This idea of constant commitment is one that must also be shared with this process of overcoming alienation. Indeed, it is not as if the stressors and initial causes of this alienation will fade with time. All these factors exist and will continue to exist. The only factors that change are the student's ability to cope and continue to succeed in the academy: abilities that require constant work and commitment.

This idea institutional assimilation within the academy is not a novel concept. Brian Brayboy's concept of Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) is one that discusses and covers the idea of assimilative issues for indigenous students in higher education. His sixth tenet of TribalCrit states that it "recognizes that governmental policies and

educational policies towards indigenous people have, historically, been oriented towards the problematic goal of assimilation" (Brayboy, 2005, p 429). While there is scholastic precedent for this topic, it is also important to mention that in the present day, while these issues are still valid and assimilation does happen to students, it is no longer an intentional or stated goal of western institutions of higher education. As Brayboy states: "....education for American Indians is not always rooted in the goal of assimilation, although some assimilation seems to be an inevitable outcome.." (Brayboy, 2005, p 429). Even Linda Smith, author of the book *Decolonizing Methodologies,* discusses education as one of the major means with which colonial powers imposed their concepts of knowledge and intelligence on indigenous peoples, staying many accounts around various indigenous nations now attest to the critical role that schools had with regard to assimilating Native peoples (Smith, 2012). While in many cases, institutional assimilation is not done intentionally by an institution, the voices of students should not be ignored when they are concerned about assimilative forces in their department or institution, it is a real concern that should be acknowledged and validated and not considered a perceived reality, since that is disrespecting the students voice.

Critique Three

Moving to the third major critique of this theory; throughout the description of both the student population and the theory, Huffman rarely refers to the community. When discussing the efforts of individual students working on their indigenous identity and having their moments of self-discovery, the focus is on the individual, which is very much against many indigenous epistemologies. The students themselves even reference

this difference in the quotes used throughout Huffman's work. When sharing the story of one particular student from the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, the student shares an issue that they had been having: "The emphasis is placed on self, and trying to fend for yourself and I think that there are a lot of handicaps like that…" (Huffman, 2001, p 8). The student expresses the fact that the new cultural changes they are experiencing are difficult, one of these being the shift to an individualistic approach to education. This could be part of transculturation, changing your own views and norms in order to succeed in higher education as an individual, but when there are so many Native students on a campus, why must they do it alone?

One other factor that Huffman mentions influences the retention of the transculturated students is the amount of time that they spent on campus. This, alongside the section titled *Participation*, are two major references to time spent with their community as reasons for the retention of Native students. However, this is also difficult when Native students are more likely to go back home throughout the semester to visit family, as I can have attest to having seen both as an instructor and a member of the student community. While this is no fault of the theory itself, it is a difficult proposition when faced with loneliness, or in some cases, an inability to find affordable housing either on or near the campus. In order to afford the costs of education, students need to move off campus, which makes the community aspect much more difficult to manage.

The final critique on Huffman's use of the transculturation hypothesis falls on his discussion of indigenous identity. Being that this concept is the focus for the research that was conducted on campus with the student community here at Montana State University,

there are a few points that need to be mentioned. Huffman is less interested in the complexity of Native identity, more so discussing the cultural masks that he describes students make to display their indigenous identity. The four types of masks that he discusses are: *Transculturated, Assimilated, Marginal* (or marginally assimilated) and *Estranged* (Huffman, 2001), which are groups that were later used to classify the students identities based on that data they provided to him through interviews. The question in my mind is whether the students themselves self-identified as *Assimilated* or *estranged* in their cultural identity, or if this was an identifier that was solely put upon them by the researcher. Throughout the identity work that has been done here on campus, many of the indigenous student's own identities were uniquely complicated. For example, some of the students interviewed for the sake of this research identified themselves as being very traditional, to them traditional meaning doing the powwow circuit and knowing how to bead. In some ways this is a degree of tradition, but other people who were raised in a culturally traditional and a theologically traditional way, are different. As Joseph and Windchief describe it, Native identity is more on a continuum (Joseph & Windchief, 2015), than something that can be broken down into a specified number of sections. There are Native people who have different levels of identity in every possible capacity, Natives who are not enrolled and practice traditions, Natives who have too many tribal affiliations and don't know where to start or cannot even be enrolled, even Natives who are adopted out or adopted in and don't know their culture. Natives who do not look Native, some who do, Natives who practice their traditions, some who do not, Natives who practice their traditions without knowing it. This list and the infinite series of

permutations that can be made of this show that it is more complicated than just a simple list of four cultural masks. Yet, I can understand Huffman's need to break it down to a simpler level, for the sake of his own research and gathering his data.

Despite all of these critiques, it must be said that Huffman's work in this article is fantastic and groundbreaking, it is the closest example of the work that was being planned in this research that could be found, so this paper relies heavily on his sources and the work that he did with his students throughout his research journey. The reason why there is such an in depth, critical evaluation of this work is since I became incredibly intimate with the details. It is only proper that when one is using a source in such detail, that any possible flaws or issues within the theory be raised so that a level of impartiality is kept. Despite not fully seeing eye-to-eye with Huffman, I am grateful for the work that was done in his community with those students, and it provided a great first step for any scholars who are interested in doing identity and retention based work in higher education.

THE INTERVIEWS

Interview Background

As discussed in the methodology section, these interviews were conducted using a Storywork model, in order to ensure maximum comfort of the people being interviewed. In order to make sure my interviewees were comfortable, the only means of recording was note taking, as many of the people being interviewed were in their freshman year in college. In order to get the truthful stories, and create a comfortable interviewing environment, it was necessary to only take notes with a pen and notebook. Each interview was conducted over a meal and took between an hour and a half to two hours per interview. While this method was successful, it is important to note that due to the lack of recorded information, the re-telling of their stories was more difficult than it might have been. The locations for the interviews themselves varied, a little less than half of them took place in a pizzeria, in the same booth, under the gaze of a photograph of John Wayne. At first, I thought about changing the booth, but after some time I decided that it was best to have the interviews conducted in that booth. To me, it represented all the years of forced assimilation and education policies geared towards youth and boarding schools' years of Richard Pratts goal of "killing the Indian and saving the man" based policies. In my mind, it was an act of resistance in itself to hold these interviews under the leering gaze of someone who was so hateful towards Native people in the past, which gave me confidence to continue this work in a good way.

What follows are the stories of the 15 students who were interviewed for their opinions on multiple topics: whether they participated in any of the indigenous students

groups, and if so, which ones; what they enjoyed and liked about the American Indian/ Alaska Native student success center (AIC); what they thought could be improved about the AIC; any culturally specific programs they wanted added or taken from the regular workings of the student center; and topics about their identity as Native students[3]. The specific questions themselves can be found in the appendix section at the end of this work. Additionally, the names of each of these students has been replaced with pseudonym of their choosing, to both allow for increased anonymity as well as some fun name choices.

Sharon:

Sharon was my first interviewee, and close friend, a proud enrolled member of a tribe in Montana, and mother to one son. She was at the time a junior with a major in the Business College, while also participating heavily in some of the indigenous focused clubs and student groups on campus. When I asked her about her story, and how she ended up at MSU, she told me that it had been a struggle to get to the point that she was at today. Having grown up in western Montana, after graduating high school, she attended a local tribal college, where she ended up partying her way out of school. After which, she then attended a different tribal college, and did the same, followed by a stint at University at Montana that ended up the same way as the previous attempts. When asked

[3] While identity is one of the main focuses of this work, the actual tribal affiliation and aspects of the student's identity has been removed for the sake of maintaining anonymity

why she thought this had happened, she responded that she had not grown up with a strong traditional identity, and that she had tried to find her identity in drugs and alcohol. “Without your identity, you feel lost” a powerful concept that she shared with me, when she was discussing the reason for struggling through previous schools before ending up at Montana State. Once she got to Montana State, she started to participate in extracurricular activities and groups that helped put her on the right path, towards focusing on school as well as exploring her indigenous identity. When asked about her participation or want for more culturally specific programming, she added that she was interested in more specific cultural programming, mentioning language classes as well as opportunities to learn how to bead and braid sweetgrass. When asked how the AIC could improve, her main comments again were in reference to cultural events and trying to get more students involved in learning about their culture through the student center. In Sharon’s mind, identity work is one of the most important Native students can do, despite it being exceedingly difficult, she described it as being very worthwhile. Sharon described herself as being happier than she had ever been before, but, “identity work brings up really deep wounds” and can be painful difficult work, but beneficial in the long run. “I will never stop school, no matter how much shit I go through!”, a great statement to end a great interview.

Esmerelda:

At the time of the interview, Esmerelda was a freshman whose major was undeclared, but leaning towards a degree in Education. Born in eastern Montana, she is an enrolled member of a tribe located in Montana, who later moved to a nearby

reservation after spending some years growing up in eastern Montana. When asked about her experience at Montana State, she responded by talking about how at first, school seemed to be easy, but as the year progressed it got much harder. As with most of my interviewees, I brought up a specific quote that Sharon, a previous interviewee, had mentioned to me, that being: “I don’t know a single Native person who does not have some sort of identity problem”, as my way of bringing up issues with identity, and asking what she thought about that quote in general. Esmerelda, after hearing the quote, was very much in agreement with the sentiment expressed in it. She spoke about how she considers herself to be somewhat traditional, having been raised around a reservation and being taken to powwows as well as other traditional events, however she also expressed some concern with her own identity, particularly with respect to her non-Native friends. While she expressed that both her identity as a Native woman and her home and family are anchor points that keep her grounded, she at times felt assimilated when hanging out with her friends who are non-Native. “There just always seems to be a gap between Natives and non-Natives when talking about Indian country. We see other Natives succeeding and doing well, but they always see poverty and terrible things.” Esmerelda’s friends, while being supportive of certain aspects of herself, were never particularly supportive of her identity as a Native woman, which can be difficult when one is already at a Predominantly White Institution. She even mentioned that some of her friends do not even know that she is Native, let alone what tribe she is from. She stated that she was not upset at her friends, just that it was hard when it seemed that her friends never cared about that aspect of her life. With respect to the Student center, she said she did go from

time to time, specifically participating in the Native Nations group and occasionally going to the American Indian Council meetings. As for ways that it could improve, she said specifically that she would be interested in programs that would bring people in to teach students how to make regalia, or how to dance. Overall, Esmerelda's opinions on the student center were incredibly positive, just hoping that there would be an addition to the cultural programming that was available for students who were interested.

Ruth:

A student in the Arts and Sciences College, and MSU graduate from a reservation border town in eastern Montana, Ruth originally wanted to study Anthropology, but like many Native students who try to pursue that discipline, she did not completely agree with the curriculum, so she changed majors. When asked how her experience at Montana State went, she mentioned that she never really had any negative experience with the school or staff but experienced several microaggressions from other students during her time in school. She said that it was by no means a wholly negative experience, but, in her words, she "Kept her head down" for most of her time in school. One interesting point she brought up was that she had only dealt with racism once she came here to Bozeman. While she did get a certain amount of bullying for being light skinned and Native at home, her first time dealing with overt racism happened when she moved to Bozeman for school. When I asked about identity, she mentioned that she believed very strongly in the work that I was doing around identity in school. Saying that identity is a huge factor when discussing retention for Native students, and that she also wanted to grow her own Native identity. Identity is a point for Ruth, for many reasons. One being that her blood

quantum is ⅛, which means she cannot enroll in her tribe, which for many Native people can be a serious strain on their opinion of themselves as a Native person. The other major reason being the fact that her grandfather is very traditional, and after living his life, has decided that he does not want anyone in his family to be traditional. This is an issue that goes back to the boarding school era and is fairly commonplace. Yet, it is problematic when their children do want to explore their indigenous identities and are confronted with these remnants of past policy. Her and her family are all interested in learning more about their traditional ways but are hesitant to do so since her grandfather is so adamantly opposed. Finally, on this point, she did express some amount of regret, just saying that it is hard to want to do this against her grandfather's wishes, especially since he knows so much about their traditional ways, she wants to learn from him but knows that she cannot. When asked about the student center, she mentioned that she would have really liked to have access to classes or clubs associated with Native language, as well as craft making classes like bead working. However, one negative comment she had about the student center was that it was at times very cliquish and unwelcoming when she would come in, but she still did come in to spend time there semi-regularly.

Gabrielle**:**

Gabrielle was a sophomore at the time of the interview and is majoring in Education. Her story is a unique one, as far as the rest of the interviewees are concerned, however not a unique story in the grand scheme of Native experiences. Gabrielle was adopted by a non-Native family but has Native ancestry. She does not know anything about her roots, but feels comfortable in the student center, and is happy that she is

getting the opportunity to learn more about a culture that she did not grow up around. While she is interested in the opportunities offered by the student center, she would really like to learn how to dance, and eventually dance at the powwow. While she does not have any critiques of the student center, but she does hope to see more culturally based programming offered so that she can continue learning.

Gertrude:

A Master's student in the College of Arts and Sciences at Montana State University, Gertrude is an enrolled member of a tribe in the eastern United States and has had her own fair share of both positive and negative experiences regarding education. As a child growing up in North Carolina, Gertrude had multiple negative experiences regarding her race, due to her lighter complexion from other Natives, but also from being too dark for some non-Native families. It goes back to the fact that people often do not understand multi-ethnic people. Being kicked out of her friend's pool because the friend's father did not think she belonged there, among other things, can be a very traumatizing moment for someone. Moving on to her experience as an undergraduate at a different state university, Gertrude struggled at the beginning, and almost dropped out. Fortunately, the school had an exchange program that connected Native students with Native families and allowed them to stay off campus with these families. Gertrude said that the real reason why this was an effective method for retention was "Keeping the normalcy of life, like arguing over who used the bathroom and when, and who got to sleep on the floor or on the bed". Keeping that normalcy, that sense of family and community was paramount when talking about what can keep students in higher

education. In line with her experience with the community, her opinion on identity as an important aspect of Native retention leans more on the community aspect. While putting a heavy emphasis on community and family is one aspect of Native culture, and in part, identity, Gertrude said that a healthy community, or at least access to a healthy community is more important than identity growth, though identity is still an important factor. She described the campus community, and many other Native communities around the country as being "Sadly Assimilated". As for her opinions on the student center, she does go down to access the facilities that are available but does not stay often. Many of her opinions on these points comes from her work with at risk Native teens who try to commit suicide. "How can we tell them not to commit suicide if the system is not changing?", Gertrude's comment on this point is very powerful, since she mentioned that Natives teens, both traditional and non-traditional deal with these issues, so the issue in some cases can surpass identity to a degree, and has to be addressed by the institutions that are in many cases causing these problems. Regardless of the cause, Gertrude stands by her work with these teens, and says that she tells them "I'm here with you, standing with you" dealing with these same issues every day, both in the institution and in the community.

Mikey:

An enrolled member of a South Dakotan tribe, Mikey is a student at Montana State University who also has an intersectional identity, that being both indigenous and queer. One of his goals for his time here at MSU is to be an advocate for gender non-binary Native students and support them within the institution. When asked about his

identity as a Native person, he told me that he was raised traditionally at first, attending ceremony and participating in other elements of his culture, however he fell out of it as time went on. He then mentioned that he was very interested in discovering more about his Native identity, and he is hoping that there will be more culturally based programming provided by the student center in the near future. One specific thing he mentioned was that he would like it if there were student center led sweats, which to many students could be incredibly helpful if they are not close to their families or community to make it easy to have a sweat. When asked about his overall experience with the university and the student services, he said that his time has been great so far. By connecting with other Native students, he has been able to reclaim more of his identity as a Native person while here at the university. He is also a strong proponent of a more Pan-Indian approach to working with the student center since there is so much tribal diversity within the university. Of course, Mikey's reference to Pan-Indianism in this context is not one that is assuming all tribes as being the same, but more so pulling aspects of indigenous North American culture that hold true across tribal lines and focusing on it, like smudging, and other aspects of culture. Mikey did have a few comments to add as far as the success of the student center is concerned. One being that at first, he did not consider the student center to be very welcoming. He, like many students interviewed in this work, did not feel "Native enough" to go to the student center and spend time or work. However, over time he made friends and felt more comfortable with the center, which is also a common shared sentiment among the students. He also feels that all of the

Native programs on campus would benefit if they met with each other more often and helped support each other and the work that they are all doing that semester or year.

Georgeanne:

A student who was studies in the College of Letters and Sciences at the time of the interview, Georgeanne is an enrolled member of a Montana Tribe who at the time was also working towards joining the Marine Corps. Raised by a "somewhat" traditional family, she learned parts of her culture, but as is often the case, not enough to feel truly comfortable with her identity as a Native woman at first. Georgeanne started her educational career at a tribal language immersion school, which she remembers fondly, however once she finished her time there, things became more difficult. She had to transfer between schools frequently, all the time being bullied by whoever was around for a multitude of reasons. In some cases it was that she was too dark skinned, in other cases it was because she was not from the "rez" or that she talked "too white", as she bounced around schools in and around eastern Montana, both in urban and reservation communities. College too, was a struggle for Georgeanne, but in a different way at first. She dealt with the inability to find a place to live while she attended the university. She also mentioned that she had experienced microaggressions and felt as though the university was trying to assimilate her into the majority culture at times. One story she shared was in a world music class, where the instructor mentioned that there was no music that came originally from the Americas, either forgetting or simply ignorant of the rich and varied musical traditions of the indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere, from the Arctic to the tip of South America. Incidents like these can be very isolating, so

it is no wonder that she felt unwelcome and as though people were trying to change her. Brayboy's tenet of Tribal Critical Race theory on the point that education is "inherently assimilative" is apropos (Brayboy, 2005). Aside from these issues, she continues to strive towards her degree, in part thanks to the connection with her father, and with her family name. "Whenever I want to give up, I think of my name, and of my ancestors, and it makes me strong again. It keeps me going". Raised in a traditional setting, Georgeanne does believe issues with identity are common among Native people. As many of the interviewees have stated previously, she did not initially feel comfortable in the Student center at first, with feelings of "not being Native enough" to spend time in the center, despite even having spent her early years in an immersion school. To her, the connection between culture, identity and student success is clear, stating that in order to get back to a healthy place, we need to go back to our old ways. While spending a fair amount of her time in the American Indian Student center to study and socialize, she has also noticed small issues within the community of Native students. Georgeanne, as well as many other members of a specific Montana tribe, have said that they at times feel marginalized within the Native community, often becoming the butt of jokes and taking more heat from other tribes more frequently. Given the intertribal nature of our Native student community here, and the fact that old tribal rivalries do sometimes reach the surface, I am sure it is not much of a surprise to many. However, since at times, relationships can get more heated than they should, it is important to address this whenever the opportunity arises. Despite these issues, she continues to frequent the student center, and feels that the addition of more cultural programming would benefit the whole community.

Bertha:

Born on a reservation in Wyoming, Bertha was a master's student at Montana State University who has since graduated from that same university. Her father is from one tribe in Wyoming, and her mother is a different tribal affiliation, and Bertha herself is enrolled with her father's tribe, though she has expressed interest in enrolling in her mother's nation since she was raised by her grandparents on her mother's side. She knows more about her mother's side than her father's side, since her grandparents were traditional, she was also raised in a traditional way. When asked about her experience in education, she said that at first, education was something that came easy to her. She was the smartest kid in class, and enjoyed school very much, always getting good grades and being placed in advanced classes. However, when she went to college things changed, with her dad getting sick among other family issues, causing her to struggle more during her time in college. While working on her degrees, she mentioned that she did in fact have to deal with certain elements of assimilation happening on campus. Bertha is working on a degree in medicine, and is hoping to find a career within that same field, and she mentioned that it is very difficult to find other Natives in the field, and in that way, it can be very difficult to fit in and find people who have similar issues or concerns. Bertha mentioned that she had attempted to make a group for just Native students in her field but was met with resistance from other students who viewed it as being very exclusionary and racist. This is a very problematic issue, when Native peoples are already a minority in education, running into issues from other departments who refuse to offer r support specific help. When asked about issues with retention, and ways it can be prevented, while she agreed in part with identity being an issue, her focus was mainly on

community and having a connection with Home. “Family and home re-charge you whenever you get a chance to go back, since all of that time that you spend at school can be very draining”. Maybe Native students return home often, to get this chance to recharge that Bertha discusses here, which is why one of the major goals and pushes for the student center is to try and make it a home away from Home (capital H intended). When talking about the student center as well, Bertha mentioned that she does participate in many of the events but thinks that there are ways for it to be improved. One of the unique ones she mentioned was to host a retreat for all of the students from the center at the beginning of every year, with the hopes of reminding them what the center is, what its purpose is, and why it is so important. This camp would be helpful since many students come to the student center and do not immediately consider it to be very welcoming. As has been expressed previously, some students walk in and do not feel “Native” enough to spend time in the center. With this retreat, the hope would be to instill that feeling in the regular students, so they can help everyone else feel welcome as well.

Gwendolyn:

An enrolled member of a tribe in Montana, Gwendolyn was a freshman whose major was undecided at the time of the interview. When asked about her educational history, she kept it fairly short and sweet, saying that she was basically a troublemaker, consistently getting into fights with others and always having issues with people around her through the years. Upon reaching college, she decided that she needed to make a change, so she is currently much less aggressive and inflammatory than before; that said, she remains an incredibly strong and opinionated woman regardless, and is not afraid to

show it “At the beginning of class I make it very clear that I don’t put up with a lot” with regard to disrespect to her people or other Native people during class. When posed some of the interview questions, Gwendolyn agrees with the idea that many Native people do have issues related to their identity. She even mentioned that she, like many others, at first felt very out of place going into the student center. Despite this, she continued to return to the student center, and even became the social chair for the student council, but still has some clear critiques of things around the center. She stated that the students that frequent the center can be very “clique-y” at times, and occasionally it goes down tribal lines. Gwendolyn, like some of the other students from her tribe who were interviewed, express issues with these students getting a harder time from other Native students, due to their tribe. All these negative critiques aside, she also mentioned ways in which she feels the student center can improve itself. One of her main points was related to cultural programming that she feels the center needs, specifically regalia making classes and traditional dancing classes. For her, growing her traditional identity, knowing her family name, and knowing herself in a traditional sense were the major aspects that helped her change her life for the better. In her opinion, cultural growth is a big factor for student growth and welfare, and by adding these optional cultural programming classes for the student community, she feels it would benefit the community. In particular, she felt the dancing aspect was critical, having known multiple Native students at the university who picked up dancing again after a break, and it had made a marked improvement on the mental health and overall success of students. She also mentioned that, as a tactic to help the student center be more welcoming, there should be a welcoming group of students

whose job it was to take the new students or new visitors under their wing and be friendly towards them so they do not feel hazed out. With the addition of welcome groups, maybe future Native students coming to the center will be spared the feeling of "not being Native enough" to be in the student center.

Nicole:

Nicole, an enrolled member of a tribe in Montana, was a freshman student at Montana State at the time of the interview. Since she was a child, she has had to deal with a learning disability that made it difficult to get through school. After high school, she went on to attend a tribal college at a nearby reservation, where she had her first college experiences, and enjoyed it quite a bit. She mentioned specifically that though she enjoyed being around MSU, she noticed a change in the community between there and the tribal college she attended. That was where the Student center came into play. As has been the experience of many other students, she felt, at first, as though she was not Native enough to go to the student center or attend any of the general American Indian Council meetings. After spending time at the center, she slowly warmed up to the place and the people to the point where she started to attend more council meetings. She also started receiving help from the staff there with her disability, as well as with other previously existing mental health issues. For Nicole, her family is crucial to her success in school, if it were not for her niece, Nicole said she would probably not still be in school to this day. When asked about indigenous identity, she said that she agrees with the idea that most Native people probably have some kind of identity issue. Even though she was raised with some of her traditional culture, she is a strong advocate for additional

cultural programming and events hosted by the American Indian Student center. Without the support shown to her by the AIC, and the community around it, it is certain that Nicole would be having a more difficult time as a student at this institution.

Victor:

Victor is an enrolled member of a tribe in Washington, and is a Montana State University Alumnus who spoke to me about his experiences, both as a student at the university, as well as his job and life after graduation, holding a position that works with and helps Native students succeed at the university level. Victor was raised traditionally on his home reservation, learning his language as well as ceremony and other traditional ways. However, due to traumatic experiences he had in his hometown as a child and young adult, he has little connection with his family today. Being the odd man out in his youth, and a frequent target for bullying, when he moved to Bozeman to work on his degree, he had a difficult time adjusting to the community there. When he arrived in Bozeman, Victor had almost nothing with him, but thanks to the American Indian / Alaska Native student services office as well as the student community, he was able to stay in school and work through it. Saying that, even though he struggled through aspects of the social and academic parts of the college experience, the student center helped him find his center, so he could continue to succeed. He even became the poster child for the center, appearing on pamphlets, posters, and other outreach materials advertising the department and student services office. After graduating, Victor went on to work in student services, and has found a passion for it. “I feel like they are my little ducklings” he said with a smile when asked about his position. From his experience as a student, and

as a program manager, he agrees that traditional culture is a very important aspect within the issue of student retention, and also agrees with the struggle that many Native students have with their identity when going to a university. Therefore one of his main focuses in his position is creating good programming, both cultural and support. “Putting up the tipi is a tangible connection to culture that you can see” he said in reference to the tipi that the student center puts up during Indigenous Peoples Day and Native American heritage month. One of his personal goals is to help retain Native men at the university, since as he mentions, it is one of the bigger issues he has noticed since starting the position. There are often more Native women in higher education than men. He also wants to lay some groundwork for a home for Native students coming from the reservation who do not have a home in Bozeman, or do not have a come to go back to. While it is great to see students practicing their own languages through the emerging Crow and Blackfeet language program, with no one else able to speak Victor’s tribal language, he finds it bittersweet that he is unable to practice his own language with anyone. Yet, Victor does a great job working with students and giving them the opportunity to learn more about their culture and grow as indigenous people.

Rasputia:

An enrolled member of another tribe in Montana, Rasputia was raised traditionally on a reservation in Wyoming. Before starting school here at Montana State, she attended school in Billings. She struggled through school at first because of discrimination and pregnancy. Both factors caused her to temporarily take a break from school, and to continue it later at Montana State. As one of the members of the American

Indian Council at the time of the interview, Rasputia had many suggestions for programming in the student center, as well as having much to say about the importance of culture and identity in the lives of Native students. She feels very strongly that cultural growth is a positive thing for Native students in higher education, if it is done in a good way. “Some things can go between tribes, like beading, food, powwow and sweats.” Despite the intertribal nature of the Native student body, Rasputia feels as though there is enough commonalities between tribes that there can still be cultural programming and growth for all students from all tribes. Even sweats (or sweat lodges) are something that she agrees with as being good for the wellbeing of Native students, if they feel as though they are at home. This topic is a less generally agreed upon however, since other interviewees like Gwendolyn do not feel as though there is a place for sweats at the university, the arguments being that they are either too sacred or too tribally specific. Either way, Rasputia feels as though the most important aspect of this programming is for the students to bring it home with them. “If there is no change at home, then it won't have the same significance” which is quite true, in order for these things to become a habit they need to happen at their school home, and their Home proper. One final critique that she made at the end of our conversation was that in some ways, there can be too many programs. She mentioned that some weeks she felt that there was too much going on, to the point that it kept her away from her schoolwork. She pointed out that there is an important balance that needs to be made, making sure that they do things in the community, while also getting their work done. While this project focuses on the importance of cultural programming, it is always important to make sure that students

complete their course work, even if the cultural programming is happening at the same time, since the end goal for all students is matriculation.

John Doe:

John Doe is a Native man and recent Montana State graduate with ancestry from two different Native nations but is not enrolled in either tribe. He grew up in a non-traditional home in eastern Montana, where he went to high school and spent most of his childhood. For John, most of high school was rough, however when he went off to college, things did seem to improve, but he still experienced micro aggressions when discussing his Native identity. While not having any serious issues while in college, he had to deal with people associating him with the “commonplace" negative stereotypes about Native Americans. For him, the Empower[4] office was his home away from home, another program that helps Native students as well as other minority groups and first-generation students on campus. “Ya know, it sounds bad saying ‘Minorities like to hang out with other people of that same minority’ but it's true! We just get each other”. This is a sentiment that is shared between many of the interviewees. Despite most differences in people being only skin deep, it can be easier to strike up a conversation with a person with a similar cultural background. It can be helpful to have a place where one can feel comfortable and not worry about people staring or making stereotypical assumptions. For

[4] A separate, student support center on Montana State University’s campus

John, that place was the Empower office. When asked about the American Indian Student center, he said that he never felt Native enough to go down there and hang out comfortably. Coming from a non-traditional and non-enrolled Native family, he did not have that same sense of belonging in his mind when he visited. This, plus having other Native students ask him regularly and at times aggressively about his heritage and blood quantum, meant that John did not prefer to spend time around the Native community at the student center. When asked about identity, John did say that he agreed with the ideas that identity is both complicated, and something that plagues many Native people, himself included to a degree. He expressed interest in learning more about his culture and language, but also said that he is completely OK with how he is now as well. For him, the most important factor that lead to him completing his degree was the community that he was part of. He believes that any amount of community centered support is going to be useful, since Native students need a place to go and just be Native.

Angus & Jose:

Angus and Jose were the last pair of students that I spoke with. They are a couple who are both enrolled in the same tribe in Montana. Angus was raised in a traditional family and went to a school on a nearby reservation for his early education. He agrees with the idea that culture and cultural programming at the Student center can be a really great thing for many Native students and agrees with the idea that identities are complicated and often something with which people have issues. Being raised very traditionally, and learning many of the old ways from his family, he feels that he still does not know enough, since knowing many of the traditions makes you keenly aware of

how much you don't know or how much was lost. As a student who regularly visits the student center, aside from additional cultural programming, he had some suggestions on improvements, one of them being a crackdown on students goofing around. He argued that sometimes you must be strict, since that is how it is at home. He mentioned that it would almost feel more like home to have people yelling at you to be quiet and viewed that as a possible improvement on the current center. As far as his experience at MSU is concerned, it has been mainly positive, however he mentioned that he did have issues with some of his non-Native friends about his being Native. "When I started wearing my braids, some of my friends wouldn't play ball with me anymore".

Jose was raised in a non-traditional family and was raised around Hardin and Billings. She was often moving around between different schools, which made it extremely hard on her and her family. Between these different schools she often was made fun of for being light skinned, or talking like she was non-native, similar Georgeann's experience. When she decided to go to school, she did so with the purpose to better herself and her family and did so at a later age. "If I started school at 18, we would have wanted to party a lot too" she said in reference to how some of her peers do not always take school as seriously as she does. Jose thinks that language classes would be a fantastic addition to the programming, and since the new language classes have started up, has become a regular attendee. She also strongly agrees with the point of identity issues being a source of stress and a lack of confidence for Native students and would herself like to learn more about her own culture.

Both Angus and Jose spoke a lot about issues that they had sometimes with non-Native friends, how they were both often viewed as being mean or hostile, and had to actively code switch or force smiles for the sake of their friends or fellow students to not think they are scary. They also mentioned similar stories to that of Georgeanne and Gwendolyn, talking about how they sometimes get some added heat for being from a particular tribe from the other Native students. In the end, they both strongly supported the addition of more cultural programming, saying: “Fun activities are cool, but why don’t we add more culture to them?!”

SECTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

After compiling the information gathered from these interviews, there were three sections that stood apart as major points of discussion that are relevant to the research questions that launched this project. These three sections being: Cultural Programming, Identity and Community improvements that can be made to the student center. With all three of these parts having an overarching theme of the general insecurity of these students with their own indigenous identity. Or, described in the title of this work "Not being NDN[5] enough".

Cultural Programming

Cultural programming was something that every student who was interviewed considered important, whether it be the current cultural programming that is offered by the student center or prospective ideas for cultural programming in the next few years. There were many specific ideas that were discussed with these students during these two-hour interviews. Beadwork and expansion of the current "Bead and Feed" events became a common topic since this is a popular event for the student community. There were thoughts to include lessons on quill-work, offered by people in the community that are

[5] A colloquial term used on the internet to describe Native people, often seen in the form of memes or facebook pages. Emphasizing a specific method of pronouncing the word Indian, with a focus on the "N" sound rather than the "I" sound.

capable of teaching the skill, as well as finding and adding new beadwork instructors. This is because many of the people attending these events come in with little or no knowledge on the topic, and often need help from an expert. These same ideas were brought up regarding topics like regalia making, as well as dancing and singing. The idea of either bringing in people from student's home communities and taking turns teaching new concepts, or even having virtual meetings if the instructors have issues with mobility. However, this does bring up one problem, the Pan-Indian nature of the student center with this programming. While the previously discussed cultural programming can all be considered as broad cultural activities, shared to some degree by many tribes in this area, there exists a variety of differences like color usage, pattern types, stitch types, even particular dances. This problem came up when discussing the "Indigenous Hand Game" events that are hosted by the student center, since, as was told to me by my interviewees, many of these hand or stick games are very specific to their own tribal communities. It then becomes difficult if the instructor is Crow and is trying to teach a less Crow version of the stick/hand games they grew up with. Even though it is being done for the sake of learning, and cultural sharing, it can be uncomfortable for the instructor to be given these restrictions.

This was also seen with a specific discussion of school sponsored sweat lodges, as was brought up in the interviews. Gwendolyn is of a tribe with a specific sweat lodge tradition and did not feel comfortable doing another tribes practice for this ceremony. While other students mentioned that they did not share this same hesitation, there was an element of secrecy that they wanted to keep around the issue, even if there happened to

be more sweat lodges sponsored. Which brings up the broad question of, how many non-native allies is too many in an indigenous space? Since our community includes our non-native allies, it is a very tricky issue to discuss, when a space reaches a point where students no longer feel comfortable expressing their issues out of fear the non-native people would not understand their specific concerns. Which, speaking honestly, can be a valid reason to not host specific ceremonies, lest word get out and the people hosting get swarmed by curious non-native people. For many cultural programming events, this is less of an issue since there is not a religious background. Whereas for sweat lodges, the opinions vary.

The reason why these programs are wanted, touches closely to the upcoming discussion of identity. In many cases, the students interviewed were either not traditional, or were raised traditionally and had forgotten much of what they were taught and looked at this programming to try and recover or learn these skills. To some students, these programs provide the opportunity to bring them closer to the idea of "being NDN enough" that some of the students are seeking. However, this is not done out of desperation. While certain students like Sharon say that "Without their Identity you feel lost", you also have students like John Doe who is interested in learning his culture but does not feel as though he needs it, being ok with himself with or without this knowledge. Yet, every student interviewed said that they at some point did "Not feel NDN enough" during their experience in higher education.

Identity

The second major discussion point, and possibly the largest topic discussed in this work is identity. While it is difficult to discuss, since I had to remove tribal affiliation from the condensed interviews, the way that I discuss identity with these students is as they self-identified. Whether they are directly enrolled in a tribe that they identify with, or whether they have decendency from the tribe.

The student themselves came from a broad demographic of various tribal affiliations, traditional awareness, urban or reservation upbringings and even varied connections to their family. While this diversity among interviewees is a boon in some ways, like showing the true nature of indigenous identity being on the continuum as previously discussed (Joseph & Windchief, 2015), it is also difficult since there is not an easy way to organize these identities other than going by their own self-identification. Which in this context, is fine since our student community is open and accepting, however identity fraud can be an issue in other communities.

A discussion that must be had within this talk of identity follows a question that was asked of all the participants, if they considered themselves as being traditional. As has been discussed previously, this question had many answers. Most participants stated that they had some degree of traditional upbringing, with only a couple exceptions. Which begs the question, what counts as traditional? One could be raised with their Eastern Shoshone traditions, while being enrolled Northern Arapaho. Or be a Blackfeet tribal member, raised without any traditions on a different reservation, but has recently begun seeking out that knowledge. One could even say they were raised very traditional,

but since they know how much their family practices, relative to how much they practice, they consider themselves non-traditional, like Angus. For that matter, what even counts as traditional? Is “traditional” only things that have an pre-contact background? If that is the case, then the whole “Bead and Feed” event is non-traditional since beads were introduced by colonizing peoples. Is powwow traditional? In the case of Esmerelda, that was how she identified as being traditional since she danced at powwow in her youth. Some could argue that powwows are relatively recent in the grand scheme of tradition and would not consider that “traditionally traditional” for lack of a better term. It is probably clear by now that there is no right answer to this, but if I were to be forced to give one, it would be that it is not my place to judge. As someone from outside the Montana indigenous community and as someone who is just now seeking his cultural knowledge, it is not my place to decide who counts as traditional and who does not. The closest thing that we can get to a real answer, is that that indigenous identity is owned by the person, and they are held accountable to that identity by their community in question.

All of this said, there is another question, how does this lack of tradition or self confidence in their traditional selves *hurt* their own identity or that of others, since as was mentioned, every person interviewed not only expressed a lack of confidence in their indigenous identity , but that other indigenous people lacked that confidence as well.. When a student walks into the student center, and all the heads of students turn around to see who walked in, it is easy to feel uncomfortable or unwanted. Every student that brought this up, myself included, viewed it as an uninviting feeling. Sensing the air of judgement, and immediate feelings of “Not being NDN enough”. However, many

students mentioned that once they met the people there, they realized that it was a friendly environment, and even became regulars in the center, which again begs the question, where do these feelings come from? One could view them in two ways: either these feelings of "Not being NDN enough" are internalized to the point that they would expect to be not welcome either way, or the feelings are valid and the community is being protective of their own space from possible identity frauds or people who want to harm the community. Or, possibly, both at the same time. Much of this is just speculation, since one can never truly know anyone's own path through identity but their own. However, through these interviews one can see similarities that exists between all these Native people. As one anonymous student said after reading his section in this work, he had no idea that so many Native people had the same issues that he felt that he faced alone. We all feel like we go through these trials of identity alone, yet we could not be more wrong.

Community Improvement

As has been mentioned, one of the biggest issues that faces the student center and the Native student community is the issue of hospitality. While everyone who is part of the community can agree that the people are kind, newcomers sometimes have a different feeling when they walk into the room. As is seen in the interviews, several people's initial reactions to the student center have been negative, whether it be from their own internalized issues with identity, or due to lateral oppression from other Native students as seen in John Doe's story. That said, all the students interviewed also expressed that the community they were a part of, either the Native student center or a different program,

weas integral in their success on their higher education journey. The question is, how can the sense of community within the student center be improved, so that the students can feel more at home? The answer for some was an increase in the amount of parenting done by the heads of the student center. Rasputia specifically mentioned that there were too many younger students messing around in the student center which she found obnoxious. This can create a very distracting environment for students who are there to study, like Rasputia, who is not the same age as the younger freshman in the center. This poses a serious problem. While these students clearly feel at home, they are taking away from the usability of the center from other students. This is where the additional parenting concept could be utilized. Considering the risks that come with reprimanding young students, if it were to be done in a more parental way, there is a chance that the center can feel more like a Home environment, with a family focus. Since one of the goals is the creation of that home (Joseph & Windchief, 2015), having that familial approach may end up being beneficial for both the younger and older students, creating a more organized space where students can study and feel at home. There were also concerns raised over the number of events that were taking place regularly, saying that sometimes there was too much going on at once, which proved overwhelming for the students coming in for the exclusive purpose of studying. This, however, is an issue that boils down to the sheer space available to the student center at the current time.

The importance of having a close community cannot be overstated, which is seen throughout the student interviews. Bertha states that Home is where she goes to recharge, since being at an institution of higher education can be very draining for her. If the

student center can manage to replicate aspects of the Home feeling while not trying to replace it, the benefits to students would be significant, and possibly help students finally feel "NDN enough" to explore more facets of their identity. The one major constraint that the student center faces currently is the issue of space, which will be discussed further in the recommendations section that will follow.

General Conclusions

After discussing some of the major data points that came from the interviews, it is easy to make some general conclusions based on this information. The first being, that all the students who were interviewed want more cultural programming. There are students who want it to different degrees, as was mentioned throughout the discussion. Students like Gertrude and Rasputia feel as though there should be more of a push towards development of a community, or that there are already a high number of programs happening currently. However, both students also expressed that an increase in the variety of cultural programming available would be beneficial, albeit not as much as other factors that they mentioned. There were even issues with the introduction of some more culturally specific or sensitive programming, like the discussion on having student center sponsored sweat lodge ceremonies. All of this said, there was a clear agreement on the importance of implementing more cultural programming, which in my mind is an achievement, and something that this research accomplished well. Few things are better than asking specifically what could improve the current student center and getting a clear, unanimous responses from all the students involved. I think that Angus and Jose say it best, "Fun activities are cool, but why not add culture into them?!"

The second major finding was the general importance of indigenous identity for all the Native students who were interviewed. As we have seen, this is far from being an easy topic to discuss, given the inherent complexity of identity in this specific instance. To this day, we as Native people continue to feel the impacts of colonial policy that was tailored specifically to assimilate our people into the majority culture. In just this microcosm of Native community, you can see many of the effects, from students who were adopted by non-Native parents and do not know their roots, to incidents of identity-based gatekeeping. All of these are symptoms from these assimilationist policies. Luckily, all the students here, while having issues with their own identity, acknowledge the importance of that same identity and how identity work and cultural education can have a positive impact on their lives. As with the point above, I would consider this finding a success. Though to some it may seem obvious, many students truly were surprised to find out that so many other Native students were having the same struggles and experiences that they were having. As I mentioned in my critique on transculturation, sometimes all it takes to really help someone is an acknowledgment of the issues that they face and having someone that they can share that experience with.

The final major finding is that of community, and the importance of community to the students involved. It was truly fortunate that all my students agreed on this point cementing the importance of this, and other student communities on campus as something that keeps them motivated and on a path towards success in higher education. While there are improvements that can be made to the student center, many students expressed how they already consider the center to be a home away from Home. Many

students already view the head of the student center as a mother figure, and this can be seen visually in the center as well. Whenever one of the staff leaves the center, there is an almost deafening chorus of goodbyes, showing the love that people hold towards them. While there is work that needs to be done, specifically creating a more hospitable environment for some of the new students coming through the university, much of it cannot really be changed until the new American Indian Hall is built in the coming years.

These points lead to ideas and actions that can be considered attempts at trying to rid the university of these pre-conceived notions of being "Not NDN enough". It is by no means an easy task and is not something that can be done by an institution, or by anyone other than the students themselves. However, by creating a student community that fosters and supports personal growth, there is a chance that students can begin to consider themselves "NDN enough".

Recommendations

Coming from the analyses and conclusions, these recommendations are short points that can possibly be utilized by institutions like Montana State University. While some are self-explanatory and have already been covered, they still must be stated clearly. The first recommendation is to create more diverse cultural programming, that can utilize the expertise of the students who have come to call this university home. While the funding will most likely be scarce at first, if the student community pushes hard enough, I feel as though there will be funding that can be found within the institutions and student government. The emphasis is on the student community, since without students turning out for these events, they will be difficult to fund, and continue

funding for the long term. This will be difficult to do until the new building is finished, since many of the true critiques of the student center are ones that can be solved with more space. Currently, the students who are more fun loving can often pose a problem for those that are work minded, making it difficult for them to coexist in the same room. However, if there is a larger space to spread out in, it is a much more feasible prospect. The same goes for space for clubs and activities, having multiple rooms available after hours makes the scheduling and coordinating less of a Sisyphean task.

The other major recommendation is not my own, but one presented by the interviewee Bertha. I cannot even express how much I agree with her idea of having a form of camp, or pre semester retreat for the student employees of the student center, to help them get r focused on being helpful and welcoming. It can be easy to fall back into old friend groups, but that creates difficulties for anyone who wants to start being an active participant in the student community. With this sort of retreat, and the push to focus on hospitality for new students, the old students can bring a reinvigorating new energy to the center every semester, rather than having the same cliques of students continuing from year to year. The new building will aid in this as well. By having a welcoming desk at the front, it ends the era of awkwardly walking in the door and having students whip their heads around trying to discover who is the new person in the doorway. The desk will provide the student with a friendly or familiar face instead of an intimidating blank doorway.

Many of these recommendations depend on outside funding, rather than changes that can be easily made by the student center or Native American studies department,

which is certainly problematic. However, if these findings are considered when the new building is completed, many of these recommendations can be implemented with much more ease than if they were implemented currently.

STUDENT WELLBEING MODEL

The student wellbeing model was born out of the work that was done with this research, as well as the work of the combined minds from the steering committee dedicated to the WINHEC accreditation and self-study. As a group, we formulated an idea for a new student wellbeing model, taking the expertise of everyone on the steering committee. Each of us came from different backgrounds and fields of study within the Native American Studies department. Faculty, staff, graduate, and undergraduate students, Native and non-Native all came together to create this model, which we used as an integral part of our self-study.

We created a model that showed a path-- one of many --that an indigenous student just freshly entering the University, can take that would lead to a connection with the indigenous community on campus, with one of the goals being to create a home away from Home, (Joseph, Windchief, 2015). The model itself is split into four quadrants, representing the colors of the medicine wheel. In an attempt to reflect the inter-tribal nature of the student center and department, the quadrants are separated into sections representing the major aspects of many Native communities: *Knowledge*, both of your own people and of yourself; *Relationship*s with the community and people within it; knowledge and *Acknowledgment of the land* that you stand on; and *Knowledge of sovereignty* and of the struggles under federal law and policy. We picked these elements because we felt that these points are important ones that are held not just with the tribes of Montana, but tribes across the country and, to some extent, the world. MSU is a large institution, and Montana itself is Home to twelve unique tribes, not counting people

coming from tribes across the Dakotas, Washington, Wyoming, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Arizona. Taking some inspiration from the Indigenous peoplehood matrix (Holm, Pearson, Chavis, 2003), as well as from the values we hold in our own department, we came up with the following model:

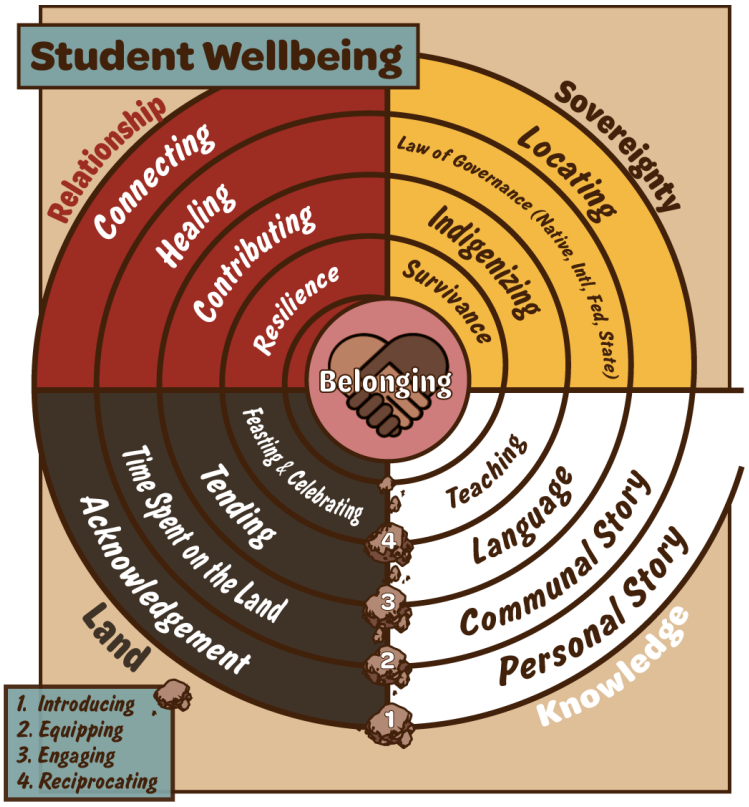


Figure 3- The Path to Student Wellbeing Model

Looking at the model itself, it can be a little much to take in initially. It is broken down into 4 main quadrants, showing the major points of indigenous community here at MSU, but looking even further, each separate quadrant has 4 distinct layers. These layers are broken down in order, 1 through 4, making a path in a spiral all the way down to the

goal of student belonging, home, and a healthy indigenous student community. The first, or outermost ring, is that of *Introductions*. It is not easy to move away from Home, away from family and community members whom students have known for their whole lives, so the model takes that into account and does not make any motions towards jumping all in at first. The first circle of the spiral is composed of all introductory concepts, for example, sharing your own personal story, since all students will already have a story of home, family, friends and community coming from high school, making sharing a good first step. This same idea can be displayed in the form of land acknowledgment; since many of these Native students will now be on land that is new to them, it is important to start with acknowledgment as to whose land this was originally, and to begin to create a relationship with the land by becoming familiar with it. This process of introduction fills the whole outer ring, as it moves down to the next layer, *equipping*. This ring focuses on getting students ``toolkits" so to speak, to be ready for the rest of their college journey. This ring has two unique facets to it, since there are multiple ways that one could say they are being equipped. First, they are getting ready for the rigors of college, whether this be in the form of frustrating and challenging classes or other students. However, it can also be in the form of preparation for participation in student groups and other aspects of the community, which leads into the next ring: *Engaging*. This layer focuses on participation within the community itself, even if it is to a small degree. This idea of small contributions is the reason for the wording choice, rather than "Leading", since any small contribution can be huge in the minds of the students in question. It is important to respect every contribution and the students who make them, since for all we know it

could be their first time joining a club or community. The last ring as shown in this model, is referred to as *Reciprocating*. As a member of the MSU student community who has "seen it all" at this point, the hope will be that they reciprocate the knowledge they received and share it with the younger generation, which can be done in a number of ways. Essentially, these older students become the student community "elders" who can give out knowledge and help the younger students when they need help, either with school or leading student organizations. As is clear, this is where the visual model ends, in our circle of belonging and harmony between the Native students at MSU. However, that does not mean the circle ends, which is the reason for the spiral. It gives space for the students to continue their own journeys, since they certainly do not stop at the university level. That said, the goal of not only our model, but also that of the American Indian/ Alaska Native Student Services is to have these students belong in the community, know the land, know about self-determination and sovereignty while also gaining confidence in themselves and their Native identities.

Now that the concepts of the model itself are clear, let us examine the different levels step by step. By fleshing out some of the terms in the quadrants that could be considered a little vague or confusing, it becomes easier to see that this model does not move in a single direction. Starting at the beginning of the path, at the eastern doorway where the journeys always begin, in the Knowledge quadrant.

Every student comes in with their own stories, from high school and from their previous life experiences. Since this path is only one segment of a student's life, it is only right that we start this path with the stories that all students bring with them. From this,

the student moves into connecting, in this context, with the indigenous student communities in whatever form that may be. It could be directly with the American Indian Council, or student services, or even other MSU support branches connected to the AI/AN Student Service office, like EmPower or TRIO[6] programs. Moving further down the path, is Land Acknowledgement. For many, if not all indigenous cultures, land is one of the most sacred aspects of culture. For students who have never been to Bozeman, it is important that they take the time to get to know the land that they will be on, in order to feel comfortable at the school, and in the town as a whole. Locating oneself within the political structure that the United States has set up for Native Americans is the next step. Since Native people have a unique relationship with the American government, and every student needs to know what that relationship is before they move on through not only this particular quadrant of the model, but also their lives as a whole.

We now move into the second layer of the model, equipping, starting off with the communal story. This is the story of MSU, and our student community within the institution, as well as the stories of the other students within the community as a whole, thereby equipping them with knowledge of the school as well as the knowledge of the community that they would be a part of. Once the student is confident with their knowledge of their new community and institution, then they can begin to heal. Whether it be something that happened during their childhood or high school experience, or the

[6] TRIO is an additional student support service offered by the University

academic journey that students had taken up until that point that Brian Brayboy refers to as being “Inherently Assimilative” (Brayboy, 2005, p 429), every Native student that comes into the school will need some level of healing, which will happen on their own time and at their own pace. Part of this healing will take place on the land. Through working this land, the students will create a connection and relationship with it, which can in many ways be a healing experience. In the sovereignty quadrant, the next step is law, which is understanding the basics of federal Indian law, from the Marshall Trilogy to the Herrera case that just recently concluded, it is important for the students to know their rights as indigenous people in a colonized space.

Engagement within these quadrants is the next step in the model, since now the students would theoretically be equipped and comfortable in the Student center, the next step is that they themselves participate. In the knowledge quadrant, this engagement revolves around learning one's language. Without some knowledge of their own Native language, it is difficult for students to truly be connected with their culture, or epistemologies. This engagement is shown by relationship, by the student contributing to the community. As was mentioned before, the term *contributing* was used since any amount of engagement would be enough. While some students may choose to lead clubs or even create clubs of their own, others may feel more comfortable just participating rather than leading themselves, which is just fine as well, as long as the student is contributing to some element of the community. This contribution even goes over to the land quadrant, in the form of tending to the land. By actively engaging in the land and tending to it, they are helping and contributing to the community. In the sovereignty

quadrant, the next level is the term “Indigenizing”, the goal being to have the students learn how to bring the indigenous knowledges that they hold into the PWIs that they attend, in an attempt to strengthen and increase the mainstream utility of Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing. Some indigenous scholars disagree with the idea of indigenizing the academy, like Leanne Simson, who proposes focusing on our own communities instead of trying to change an institution which has been used to assimilate us in the past (Simpson, 2017). That said, I feel that those two concepts are not mutually exclusive. Work can be done in both worlds, since we do need to work in our own communities, but at the same time, we still have Indigenous people attending PWIs who need help navigating these institutions.

The final layer of the model focuses on the reciprocation of the knowledge and skills that the students have received throughout their time at MSU. Since these students would theoretically be in the final stretch of their undergraduate studies by the time they get to this layer, they would in essence be the “elders” of the student community, and be able to share their knowledge among all of the other students. That is why you see things such as “Teaching” in the knowledge quadrant, and “Celebrating” in the land quadrant. Teaching students and celebrating as a group on the land itself are amazing ways to give back to the community. Even through learning survivance and resilience as indigenous peoples, the students going down their path through higher education to belonging will be able to utilize these skills later down their own path through life. Through survivance, they will learn how to work together and not allow themselves to be dragged down by negative rhetoric and stories of loss but will look at it through the lens of survival and

resilience. By learning about their rights as indigenous people, they will be able to learn true resilience, by knowing their own personal rights and responsibilities. All these concepts and traits are near the end of this path to belonging; traits that can be utilized in many ways in all their prospective futures.

While this path as described is certainly one that students can take on their journey to belonging, it is certainly not the only path to succeed in this institution. While this model is a spiral, as one can see, there are also lines going through the vertices all through this shape, making it much more like a web, and that is how it is meant to be understood. While there is one main path that was drawn, this web design enables students to start at any point on the path and jump to the sections that they either find more important or are capable of doing in that moment. Students who are not ready to heal, since some will come with more trauma than others, can skip that particular section, or even create a path of their own within the web, seeking ways that they can grow their identity as indigenous persons.

FUTURE WORK AND FUTURE PROJECTS

While this work was done for the sake of the American Indian/Alaska Native Student Center, as well as the WINHEC self-study and accreditation process, it was also done as a groundwork for future research. While it was originally going to be done as my Master's thesis work, I quickly realized that it was more of a dissertation project, so I embarked on the journey that led to the work that has just preceded. The original idea being, that this work can be a foundation for future work in cultural education around my tribe's traditional homelands, particularly around where I grew up in northern Wisconsin. By providing evidence that having a strong cultural identity can help with a Native student's retention in higher education, I am hoping to be able to more easily create a situation where I can work with Anishinaabeg youth in urban settings, like myself, learn about their cultural identity. This would not be just for college, but for their own sake as young indigenous people.

The project will be to work through Archibald's Storywork theory, as well as other Storywork based theoretical and methodological perspectives, to create a story-based pedagogy like the indigenous Ojibwe pedagogy as discussed at the beginning of the literature review. By utilizing different elements and stories within the Anishinaabeg oral tradition, I hope to create a curriculum that teaches young Ojibwe students' elements of traditional culture, modern culture, and language, in a way that will help them cement their own identities. While these ideas are not thoroughly fleshed out, the goal is to get the involvement of the local, and if possible, extended community to assist. This is due to my position as a relative outsider. Though I may be Ojibwe, I was raised in an urban

setting, and am unfamiliar with the community. By handing over whatever I produce to the community in question, I hope to give the community and people agency over the program, so that they can use it as they see fit, and can make the calls as to who would be included in the work.

Most likely, not all people will fully acknowledge the importance of traditional identity as being something inherently important to indigenous youth. However, by showing this work and that of Terry Huffman as examples of future student success in higher education, I am hoping to strengthen the case to people who may doubt, that there is an additional benefit to finding oneself culturally.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the result of this research, like that of Huffman's, is the importance of indigenous identity within the context of success for indigenous students, was overwhelmingly positive. There was a clear connection in the interviews conducted within the student community between their cultural identity and their success or desire for success in higher education. This clear connection to success creates a solid foundation for future research in the realm of cultural education of Native American youth in the United States, similar to Huffman's work. With such an obvious connection, it would not be difficult to link cultural education in the earlier years of a child's life to having an impact on their success in institutions of higher education in the future. There is still much work to be done as far as creating a home away from Home in the University setting for Native students, since there are still many implicit assimilative practices. Particularly STEM fields and other departments further from the various Liberal Arts disciplines suffer from these policies. However, with work like this, as well as work with accrediting bodies such as WINHEC, spaces are slowly being carved out within PWIs that create a place for indigenous peoples to voice their own ways of knowing, being and doing. What is more, there has even been an immediate effect on some students' lives, just from doing this work. While I was in the process of sending revisions of this work, one of the students I had interviewed gave me his critiques on their section. After some correspondence, he said after reading the interview section that "being able to relate to these other stories makes me realize even those registered have some of the same feelings and experiences I do. I really appreciate your time; you have helped me and hopefully I

was helpful to you" (Anonymous Interviewee). As was stated in the introduction, if I can walk away from this work having helped one indigenous student succeed or feel more confident in themselves, then I would view this as a success. It is with an incredible amount of gratitude and happiness that I can conclude this work by saying that this goal has been achieved.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

Interview Questions for Patrick Jeffers Thesis work

1. General Information: What year in school are you, age and tribal affiliation

2. What is your overall relationship or experience with the education system? Either in College or Higher school

3. Do you have a home away from home?

4. Do you participate in activities associated with the American Indian/ Alaska Native student services office?

5. Do you feel as though the school system, either intentionally or unintentionally, is trying to change your identity as an indigenous person?

6. Is your identity as an indigenous person a source of strength, anxiety, or both?

7. Have you learned anything new during AIC (American Indian Council) events?

8. What are your major driving forces for staying in school?

9. Who was the head of AI/AN SS when you started school?

10. What other types of events would you like to see? Are there anything events currently that you feel do not work well?

11. Do you consider yourself traditional?

12. If so, would you consider it a source of strength or pride?

13. If not, are you wanting to be? Would you go to the AIC to participate in more traditionally focused events?

APPENDIX B

SUBJECT CONSENT FORM

SUBJECT CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN HUMAN RESEARCH

AT MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

Title of the study: "How does a students connection to their indigenous identity help them retain in higher education? "

You are being asked to participated on a study involving student retention in higher education for American Indian / Alaska Native students. The goal of this research is to determine if a Native students connection to their indigenous identity has any correlation with their success in college. This study will hopefully be used to help achieve accreditation for WINHEC (World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium) as well as possibly help to secure more funds for cultural events within our American Indian Student Center.

Participation is Voluntary, and if you chose to participate then you will be asked about your school experience both in High School and in College. While these interviews are done more like a conversation, if there are any questions you do not want to answer you can say so, and no further questioning will be done on that topic. Any stories that you tell can also be retracted at any time. There are no foreseeable risks in relation to this work, and all participants in this project will be recognized in the research by a pseudonym, so that the privacy of all people involved remains protected.

If you have any questions feel free to contact me at patrickjeffers@montana.edu or my on my cell, 630-408-9198

AUTHORIZATION: I have read the above and understand the discomforts, inconvenience and risk of this study. I, _____ *(name of subject)*, agree to participate in this research. I understand that I may later refuse to participate and that I may withdraw from the study at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records.

Signed: _____

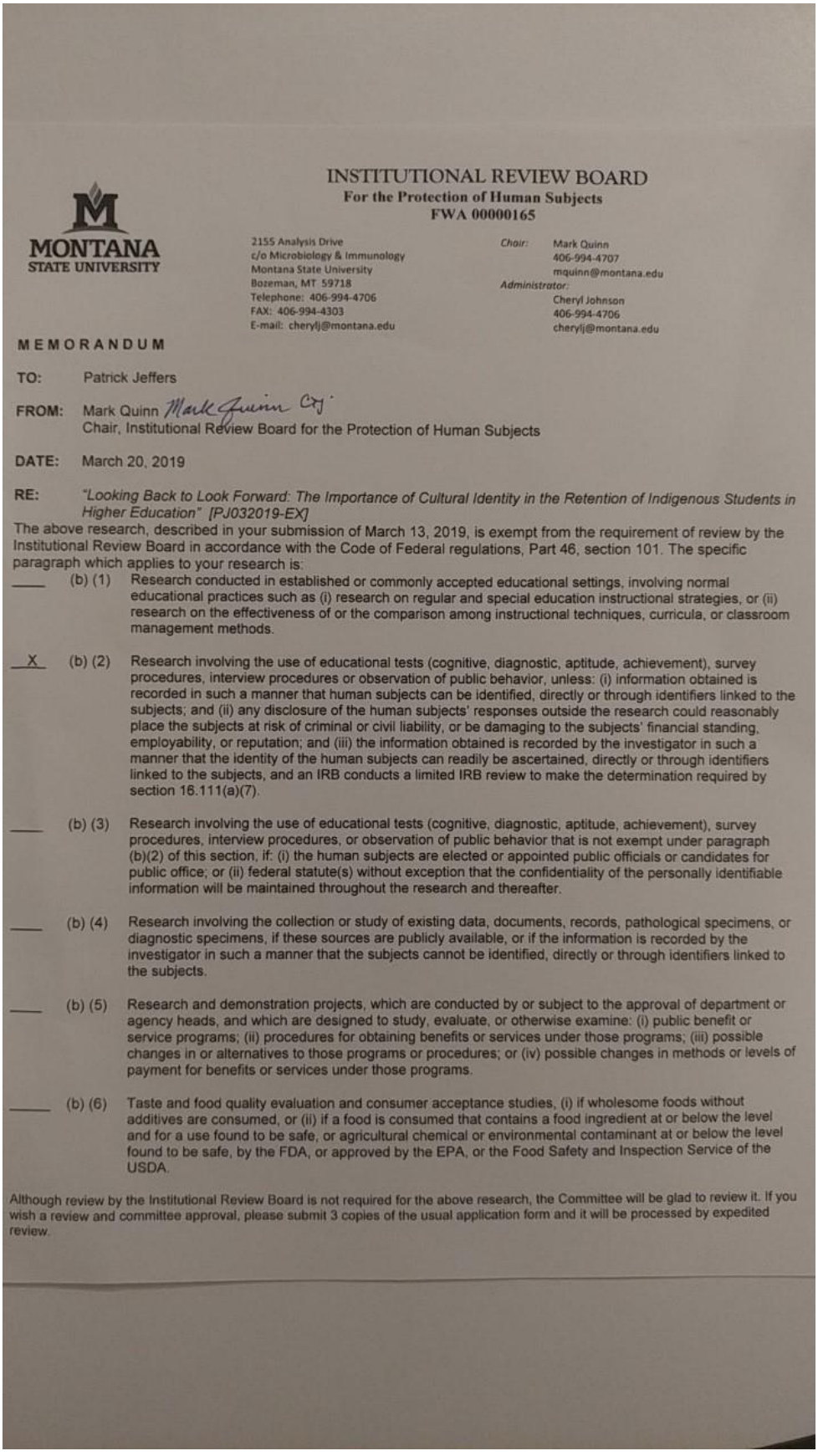
Investigator: _____

Date: _____

APPROVED
MSU IRB
03/20/2019
Date approved

APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL FORM



INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
For the Protection of Human Subjects
FWA 00000165

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

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c/o Microbiology & Immunology
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Bozeman, MT 59718
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Chair: Mark Quinn
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Administrator:
Cheryl Johnson
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Patrick Jeffers

FROM: Mark Quinn Mark Quinn Chj.
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

DATE: March 20, 2019

RE: *"Looking Back to Look Forward: The Importance of Cultural Identity in the Retention of Indigenous Students in Higher Education" [PJ032019-EX]*

The above research, described in your submission of March 13, 2019, is exempt from the requirement of review by the Institutional Review Board in accordance with the Code of Federal regulations, Part 46, section 101. The specific paragraph which applies to your research is:

____ (b) (1) Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

__X__ (b) (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation; and (iii) the information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by section 16.111(a)(7).

____ (b) (3) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under paragraph (b)(2) of this section, if: (i) the human subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; or (ii) federal statute(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.

____ (b) (4) Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available, or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

____ (b) (5) Research and demonstration projects, which are conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine: (i) public benefit or service programs; (ii) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs; (iii) possible changes in or alternatives to those programs or procedures; or (iv) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those programs.

____ (b) (6) Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, (i) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed, or (ii) if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe, by the FDA, or approved by the EPA, or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the USDA.

Although review by the Institutional Review Board is not required for the above research, the Committee will be glad to review it. If you wish a review and committee approval, please submit 3 copies of the usual application form and it will be processed by expedited review.