Factors that enabled success of Native American baccalaureate nursing graduates at Montana State University from 1986 to 1995
by Eleanor Eloise Yurkovich

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
Montana State University
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Abstract:
Historically Native Americans have experienced efforts of assimilation by the Euro-Anglo educational system. Today educators are attempting to actualize the concept of culturally relevant education. However, high attrition and low completion rates of Native American students still exist. In the nursing profession there is a growing need for minority students to become nurses because of the increasing numbers of minority members seeking health care services.

The purpose of this study was to make recommendations that will increase the retention and completion rate of the Native American nursing student at Montana State University. This was accomplished by identifying key factors and enablers that hinder or support successful completion of a baccalaureate nursing degree by the Native American student.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 Native American nurses who graduated from Montana State University between 1986 to 1995. From the constant comparative analysis emerged four core variables—individual Native American nursing student, instructor, institutions, and external influences. These core variables and their properties are interactive dynamic enablers that support the success of the Native American nursing student.

The interviewed Native American nursing graduates and the analysis of data provided recommendations for the University, the College of Nursing, and faculty. The University needs to establish a culturally responsive system, including culturally relevant support services and programs, and actively recruit Native American students into their programs. The University and College of Nursing need to enhance their outreach to high school teachers and counselors on the reservations and to tribal colleges. The orientation of these students to the University system needs to be more focused on the needs of culturally diverse student groups. The College of Nursing needs to assess its student group and develop programs and services that are reflective of this information. The College of Nursing needs to provide an advisor and advocate that is culturally responsive to Native American students' needs including their emotional, social, academic, and survival needs. Nursing faculty need to become more culturally aware and sensitive to the learning needs and styles of Native American students. Teaching strategies need adjusting so they represent greater diversification.
FACTORS THAT ENABLED SUCCESS OF NATIVE AMERICAN BACCALAUREATE NURSING GRADUATES AT MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY FROM 1986 TO 1995

by
Eleanor Eloise Yurkovich

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY--BOZEMAN
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APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Eleanor Eloise Yurkovich

This thesis has been read by each member of the graduate committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

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ABSTRACT

Historically Native Americans have experienced efforts of assimilation by the Euro-Anglo educational system. Today educators are attempting to actualize the concept of culturally relevant education. However, high attrition and low completion rates of Native American students still exist. In the nursing profession there is a growing need for minority students to become nurses because of the increasing numbers of minority members seeking health care services.

The purpose of this study was to make recommendations that will increase the retention and completion rate of the Native American nursing student at Montana State University. This was accomplished by identifying key factors and enablers that hinder or support successful completion of a baccalaureate nursing degree by the Native American student.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 Native American nurses who graduated from Montana State University between 1986 to 1995. From the constant comparative analysis emerged four core variables—individual Native American nursing student, instructor, institutions, and external influences. These core variables and their properties are interactive dynamic enablers that support the success of the Native American nursing student.

The interviewed Native American nursing graduates and the analysis of data provided recommendations for the University, the College of Nursing, and faculty. The University needs to establish a culturally responsive system, including culturally relevant support services and programs, and actively recruit Native American students into their programs. The University and College of Nursing need to enhance their outreach to high school teachers and counselors on the reservations and to tribal colleges. The orientation of these students to the University system needs to be more focused on the needs of culturally diverse student groups. The College of Nursing needs to assess its student group and develop programs and services that are reflective of this information. The College of Nursing needs to provide an advisor and advocate that is culturally responsive to Native American students’ needs including their emotional, social, academic, and survival needs. Nursing faculty need to become more culturally aware and sensitive to the learning needs and styles of Native American students. Teaching strategies need adjusting so they represent greater diversification.
CHAPTER 1

DEFINING A PERCEPTION

Introduction

History has recorded the cross-cultural struggles that have existed between the Euro-Anglo beliefs and Native American ways. The educational process has been a central force in the attempt of the white man to assimilate and even to annihilate the cultural practices of the Native American. The story begins in the colonial days when prestigious institutions such as Harvard and Dartmouth established charters with a purpose of Christianizing and civilizing the "savage" Indians. During the next era, George Washington shifted the focus to vocational training of the Native American. Washington’s educational philosophy began in the 18th century and controlled decision-making processes and policy development related to the type of and access to educational resources into the 20th century. The mission school era, boarding school system, off-reservation industrial boarding school era, and Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 reflect a paternalistic, controlling approach of the Native American with minimal recognition of the Native American’s right to control one’s destiny (LaForge, 1996). These policies and processes also created a meaningless
purpose for education and a distrust for the white man's educational system since it lacked a connection to their way of life (LaForge, 1996; Rowland, 1994; Wright, 1991).

Finally in the 1970s, Federal legislation altered its direction. The Indian Self-determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 and the Tribally Controlled College Assistance Act of 1978 stimulated a most dramatic shift to Native Americans controlling their educational process; a paradigm shift from paternalism and assimilationism policies to Native American self-control (Lujan, 1991).

Native Americans are now developing Higher Educational systems where there is a beginning integration of their culture and traditions with the educational processes (Pease-Windy Boy, 1990). However, there are only 32 tribal colleges (LaForge, 1996) and these tribal systems cannot offer a large variety of costly programs. Thus, many of these students still access higher education through the community college system and the public four-year colleges. Transfers of Native American students into university systems occur at a low rate, and high attrition rates contribute to low college graduation rates (Wright, 1991). Community and four-year colleges still retain the responsibility of providing an educational system that is culturally sensitive to the Native American student.

Authors and researchers have discussed the barriers that are perceived to support high attrition and low
completion rates. The three dominant categories are recognized as (a) Euro-Anglo cultural adjustment, (b) inadequate academic preparation in skills such as math, language arts and science, and (c) financial inadequacy of loans, grants, and scholarships. Programs have been developed in the educational system to reduce these barriers. These changes have not significantly altered the rate of retention or completion in the College of Nursing at Montana State University. According to the Office of Institutional Research at Montana State University, the number of Native American students graduating in 1989 was four and in 1995 only two graduated (C. Johnson, personal communication, December 2, 1996). Enablers that support completion of the educational process by the Native American student must be investigated to enhance our approach to program development in the field of nursing.

Statement of the Problem

Native Americans remain among the least educated ethnic groups. In a 1982 publication, Astin reported that only 6% of the Native population had a college degree, compared to 23% of whites, 12% of African-Americans, and 7% of Hispanic population. Research has revealed that among the Native American population only 55 to 60% graduate from high school (Fries, 1987; McNamara, 1984). Of these Native Americans, between 21% and 40% enter college, which is the lowest rate
of a major ethnic group (American Council on Education, 1990). According to a 1992 American Council on Education research brief, the percentage of Native Americans completing four years of college has increased from 8% in 1980 to only 9% in 1990. In contrast, there was a 4% increase in the total number of American adults completing four years of college (as cited in O’Brien, 1992, p. 2).

Compounding the problem of low enrollment are the high attrition rates which contribute to low college graduation rates. Of course, these facts contribute to even lower rates of representation in graduate programs (Wright, 1991). These statistics are a major concern since they exist in an ethnic group that has been experiencing a rapid growth in population and the college-age cohort.

Wright (1991) noted that due to the very small sample representing this minority group, the reliability of the statistical data remains a concern. In addition to this, Fries (1987) recognized that the Native American is often placed in the "other" category. Therefore, present data on retention and attrition are questionable. This situation leaves educators and policy makers without credible, baseline data to judge the effectiveness of programs (Wright, 1991).

According to the 1990 U.S. Bureau of the Census, there are 47,679 Native Americans in Montana. That means 5.9% of Montana’s population is Native American. Of the Native
American population that attend high school only 56% graduate from high school. Only 4.2% of the Native American people have four or more years of college education. This is lower than the reported national figures of 6% of the Native American population obtaining college degrees (Astin, 1985).

Montana State University has responded to these low statistics by offering several programs to support the success of the Native American student. Some of these are the Center for Native American Studies, the Advance By Choice program, Minority Apprenticeship Program (MAP), tutorial services, and the Indian Club. The University has provided space for the latter program which makes it possible for the Native American students to gather, socialize, and network with one another.

In the fall of 1991 the enrollment figures show that Native Americans made up 3% of the Montana State University system students. At Montana State University, the Native Americans represented 1.79% of the total student population. In that group of 195 Native American students, 16 were nursing students, 8.2% of the total number (Clark, 1992). Of these 16 students, two were registered nurses returning for their baccalaureate degree. The following is the outcome of the remaining 14 Native American students enrolled in the generic program: 8 students graduated,
4 failed out of the program, and 2 dropped out of the College of Nursing and the University. This means 43% of the Native American students enrolled in Nursing the fall of 1991 did not complete in nursing (Yurkovich, 1995). Therefore, even with the university’s past efforts, the success rate was only 57% of the Native American students enrolled in the generic program in the fall of 1991 in the College of Nursing.

As Long (Select Committee of Indian Affairs, 1990), former dean of the College of Nursing, testified to the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs, Montana State University has a commitment to addressing the "needs and preferences" of the Native American. Nationally, nursing professionals recognize the need for minorities in the field of nursing. Rosella, Regan-Kubinski, and Albrecht (1994) stated that there is an urgent need for "a comprehensive approach to designing strategies to increase the numbers of minority health care providers, particularly nurses" (p. 243). This concern relates to the fact that minorities are under represented in the health care professions but are over represented in the health problem areas (Leininger, 1994; Pacquiao, 1995). Long (Select Committee of Indian Affairs, 1990), also indicated in her testimony, that the Native American nurse is needed to provide care to Native Americans.
Clark (1992) prefaced her work with the statement that "the comparatively low educational attainment among American Indians is a complex, multi-variant problem which affects Indian participation and performance at all points along the educational pipeline" (p. ii). Besides the program solutions that have been listed, Clark acknowledged that practitioners recognize individual faculty members can make a critical difference in the life of the Native American student. A faculty member will support student success if he/she is sensitive to the student's cultural diversity, makes this culture equal to one's own, and offers learning experiences within the student's cultural framework (Clark, 1992; Gilliland & Reyhner, 1988). Rosella et al. (1994) identified that design strategies must focus on facilitating entry, increasing competitiveness for advancement, and "ensuring" completion once the Native American is in the system. These are all noteworthy endeavors. However, all the significant factors that would support success in these endeavors are not known or fully understood by nurse educators.

Factors have been identified that are believed to account for the low national trends and Montana's statistics. Senate Subcommittee reports, researchers, educators, and students have continued to report the following barriers: inadequate academic preparation, insufficient financial support, a perceived unsupportive

Underlying all of these barriers is the influence of family systems on Native American students. These systems require different roles and responsibilities which affect the priority setting that occurs in the Native American student's decision-making processes.

Authors have recommended programs that should be instituted to reduce barriers. There appears to be a basic assumption that if one reduces or eliminates these barriers there will be greater success for the Native American student in higher education. However, problems still remain even with the program changes directed at the barriers.

Purpose of the Study

Today educators need to look for the processes and their variables that support success in adult learners (Simpson, 1980). Studies have focused on barriers that Native Americans experience and on recommendations that should be instituted to reduce or eliminate them. The problems still remain even with these changes. The purpose of this study was to identify key factors and enablers that
hinder or support successful completion of the Montana State University, College of Nursing (CON) program by the Native American student. This supported the creation of recommendations that will increase the retention and completion rate of the Native American nursing student at Montana State University.

In 1991 only 57% of the Native American students who enrolled in the nursing program successfully completed it. This success rate is unacceptable when compared with the 69% success rate of non-Native Americans. Serious consideration must be given to this fact, because now is the time that more well prepared Native American health care professionals are urgently needed to bring quality health care to underserved Native American citizens. Nurse educators need to determine what influences the retention and graduation rates of the Native American student in nursing.

Nursing educators need to understand how the identified barriers are relevant to the process of nursing education and Native American students’ successful completion. The current literature cites three barriers to success for Native Americans in higher education. The first is the Euro-Anglo cultural dominance on college campuses that requires cultural adjustment by the Native American student (Cotera, 1988; Layton et al., 1990; Wells, 1989a; Yurkovich, 1994). The presence of this cultural dominance in the College of Nursing needs to be evaluated. The second
barrier is inadequate academic preparation in important skills such as math, language areas, and science. These are all crucial areas of knowledge in nursing education. Inadequate preparation in these areas may require remedial assistance for the Native American student through course work or tutoring. The third barrier is the financial inadequacy of loans, grants, and scholarships to cover the basic living needs of the Native American student. This problem of inadequate financial support is compounded by lack of money management skills and family systems existing in poor economic states (LaForge, 1996). Underlying all of these barriers is the influence of family systems on Native American students. These systems require different roles and responsibilities which affect the priority setting that occurs in the Native American students' decision-making processes (Tafoya, 1986). In essence the student may "stop-out" from the educational process to accommodate financial, physical, or supportive needs of the large extended family.

Research Questions

To accomplish the purpose of this study the following questions were developed. The questions evolved from the review of literature and findings from a pilot study completed with Native American students attending graduate studies in education (Yurkovich, 1994). These Native American students responded more thoroughly about their
educational experiences when allowed to "tell their story." Therefore, the interview process began with very general questions and moved to specifics. The following questions were used in a semi-structured interview process:

1. What motivated you to go into nursing at Montana State University (MSU)?
2. Describe your educational experience in the College of Nursing (CON).
3. Were there events or parts of this learning process and experience that helped you to succeed?
4. Were there events or parts of this learning process and experience that hindered your success?
5. How did you deal with these hindrances?
6. What recommendations would you make to the CON that you think would benefit the Native American student in the nursing program at MSU?

This study included basic demographic questions such as age, sex, tribal affiliation, cultural identification (traditional vs. non-traditional), high school and colleges attended, year of graduation from CON, and birth place. Data from these questions created a profile of descriptive characteristics about the Native American nursing graduates in this study.
Scope of Study

The significance of this study is threefold. The first is an expected improved responsiveness of the MSU-Bozeman nursing program to the Native American student. This improved cultural responsiveness should support an increase in the retention and graduation rates of the Native American student in nursing, and consequently the student benefits. The second significant point is a benefit to the Native American patient. The increased numbers of Native Americans in the nursing profession enhances the care delivery to minority patients. The third point of significance is other Universities and nursing programs may perceive these findings to be relevant to their educational program and student groups. Therefore, the larger field of professional nursing education benefits.

Three assumptions of this study were Native Americans were willing to meet with the researcher and that they had the ability to provide the information requested during a semi-structured interview. The third assumption was the interview questions would generate the data supporting completion of this study’s purpose.

The informants that were interviewed in this study were Native Americans who successfully completed the nursing program at MSU-Bozeman, College of Nursing between 1986 and 1995. The tribal affiliation was diverse, reflecting the
tribal configuration in Montana and in the College of Nursing.

Limitations

A limitation of the study was the inability to identify all Native American nursing students who graduated from the College between 1986 and 1995. Since identification of cultural and ethnic affiliation is self-reporting, the most effective approach was utilization of the Center for Native American Studies membership list with the realization it may not be complete. However, a delimitation was that the researcher did interview other graduates that were identified by those originally listed as Native Americans. During the first contact with these newly identified Native American graduates, validation of their Native American heritage was requested from the informant. Validation that they graduated from the College of Nursing was obtained from the registrar’s office at MSU-Bozeman.

Limited available time and money constraints were also limitations. Because the graduates were located all over the state this researcher could travel only once to each site. Therefore, if the informants were unable to meet because they were working or not present in the area, a telephone interview was planned and completed. Informants that were out of state were also accessed by telephone
interviews. The telephone interview was used for 3 of the 18 informants.

Definitions

Native American: A person who claims blood lineage to a recognized Indian tribe which is urban or reservation based. The tribe does not need to be recognized by the Federal Government. The Native American may be full-blood or mixed blood.

Enabler: An object, meaning person, thing, action, or abstract thought, that supports or makes possible the successful completion of a task or process.

Hindrance: An object, meaning person, thing, action, or abstract thought, that prevents or obstructs the accomplishment of an outcome.
CHAPTER 2

VALIDATING THE PERCEPTION

Introduction

According to a 1992 American Council on Education research brief, the percentage of Native Americans completing four years of college has increased from 8% in 1980 to only 9% in 1990. This 1% increase is 3% less than the total increase in the number of American adults completing four years of college (as cited in O'Brien, 1992, p.2). Tijerina and Biemer (1987-88, p. 88) stated that the reason for this small increase is a national trend towards indifference and tolerance of institutional racism and a federal government departure from an attitude of affirmative action. Noley (1991, p. 5) believed that the barriers to the task of improving the presence and retention of minority students on university campuses are many and perhaps too subtle in some cases to be recognized. The literature clearly presents a variety of barriers. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, barriers will be considered under three headings: inadequate academic preparation, cultural alienation and adjustment, and issues related to financial aid.
This chapter is divided into the following three sections: (a) a discussion of barriers and recommended solutions, (b) a presentation of factors that supported success in higher education as perceived by Native American students, and (c) the definition and application of the conceptual framework, symbolic interactionism. This chapter will not focus on historical issues related to educating the Native American student since this is well documented by other authors and researchers (Wright, 1991; Rowland, 1994; LaForge, 1996).

Barriers and Recommendations

Inadequate Academic Preparation

Inadequate academic preparation includes the quality of instructional processes as well as advising issues that were identified as barriers to success in higher education by Native American students. The following quote was shared by a Native American graduate student informant, majoring in education, while participating in a pilot study (Yurkovich, 1994):

I don’t feel I was prepared at all for college out of high school—and that [tribal college] was kind of a stepping stone . . . remedial build-up . . . Although I was in the top of my class in high school and I was in an honor society, I feel I wasn’t prepared at all, I found [this was true] later on.

All three of the informants in this pilot felt unprepared to deal with the academic rigors of higher education. This
finding is similar to the published literature that has studied retention and attrition of the Native American student.

Several authors have identified that math and English language arts which include reading, writing, and speaking were problematic for the entering Native American Freshman (Aitken & Falk, 1986; Fletcher, 1983; Guyette & Heth, 1984; LaForge, 1996; Layton et al., 1990; Noley, 1991; Trent & Gillman, 1985; Voyich, 1974; Wells, 1989a; Wright, 1986, 1991). Wright (1991) and LaForge (1996) also stated that Native Americans perceived an inadequacy in science skills. Noley (1991) and Aitken and Falk (1986) reported that Native Americans recognized a deficit in their study skills. All inadequateness has been linked with substandard K-12 educational systems (Aitken & Falk, 1986; LaForge, 1996; Layton et al., 1990; Noley, 1991). Noley (1991) also believed that the educational difficulties began at birth due to poor parenting skills of the significant care provider.

In LaForge’s (1996) study of Crow reservation-oriented college graduates and non-graduates, he identified nine courses that the students considered most difficult. The following were the top six courses most frequently recognized by students: math, science, biology, English, literature, and history (p. 61). The Crow reservation-oriented students attributed their difficulties in college
to the following: (a) Elementary schools did not provide sufficient preparation in math, science, and language arts of reading, writing, and comprehension for high school level course work; (b) the high schools did not provide sufficient preparation in science, math, and language arts for college level course work; (c) high school and college teachers were not always helpful; (d) the high teacher turnover rates in elementary and secondary schools created inconsistency in the classroom and in the district; and (e) lack of academic help and tutoring when it was needed in high school or in college.

LaForge (1996) also reported that there were four primary reasons for the Crow Indian students to feel they were not academically prepared and inferior to non-Crow students. These reasons included (a) teachers were trained to teach an audience of white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant students, not Native American children; (b) teachers had no knowledge of the Crow culture, heritage, and language, which created conflict between the culture of the teacher and the students within and outside of school; (c) teachers used a didactic non-participatory style of teaching which was a less effective teaching method for Crow Indian students; and (d) teachers had no understanding of Crow Indian students' learning styles which usually consist of hands-on, visual, experimental, and exploratory learning.
In Yurkovich's (1994) pilot study, all three informants stated they were not encouraged by high school counselors or teachers to take college preparation courses. One informant was told not to take science courses because she would not need them. This advice still reflects the mentality that Native Americans should attend vocational training programs not college. Authors (Aitken & Falk, 1986; Dorsey-Gaines & Lewis, 1987; Falk & Aitken, 1984; Layton et al., 1990; Noley, 1991; Yurkovich, 1994) currently identify several advising issues that affected the numbers of Native American students participating in college preparation courses. The following is a summarized list of these concerns: institutional literature unavailable in high schools; counselors not encouraging students to attend college because of their perceived problems with finances, travel, and dormitory space; a lack of bridge programs from colleges or universities to target high schools; no ongoing relationships with counselors that would support exploration of options and development of goals; no assistance with the completion of college entrance forms or financial aid forms; lack of a value system in high school that emphasizes education; and few identifiable role models of Native American descent in the educational system.

The perceptions held by the Native American students fit with the findings that their academic skills on entering college were substantially less than those of their
non-Native American peers as measured by standard college admission tests. Furthermore, they showed the smallest gain in five years as compared to other ethnic groups (Jacobson, 1986, p. 108). In contrast to these concerns is Suina's position. Suina (1987) found in research with Pueblo Indians in New Mexico that ACT scores of Pueblo Indians were not valid predictors of persistence for this population (p. 127).

The issue of academic success should not be viewed as a lack of Native American intellectual ability or potential. The National Advisory Council on Indian Education (NACIE) in its 1990 report stated that the reasons for lower achievement on the ACT and SAT are associated with multiple factors. These factors included social and economic conditions, family situations, and strong influences from cultural traditions in the Indian communities (p. 61). These findings reinforced the perception that education never exists in isolation.

Confounding the issues already discussed are the responses from higher educational systems to these Native American educational issues. These responses are the process of open enrollment, which may set-up a non-prepared student for failure, development of remedial course work that does not count as college credits, and finally setting higher college admission standards. The latter action was intended to place secondary schools on notice that the
higher educational systems will no longer accept unprepared students and to reinforce that educational standards will not be reduced for minority groups (Noley, 1991). Tijerina and Biemer (1987-88) stated Native American students have become the victims of these solutions. Because of the poor quality of their elementary and high school education, Native Americans may not qualify for college admission or succeed in their educational endeavors (Noley, 1991).

Several researchers (Aitken & Falk, 1986; Jeanotte, 1983; LaForge, 1996; Layton et al., 1990; Noley, 1996; Wells, 1989a; Wright, 1991) made recommendations that focus on inadequate academic preparation of the Native American student. The recommendations can be classified as those pertaining to the deficiencies in the elementary and secondary school systems and pre-school years and those relating to higher educational systems.

LaForge (1996) made eight recommendations based on his research of reservation-oriented Crow students who were graduates or non-graduates of higher education. The following is a summary of those points restated more broadly to relate to all tribes: (a) Teachers must have higher expectations of Indian children as individuals and as a group since the class often functions as one; (b) opportunities should be provided to, and in some cases required of, teachers to become knowledgeable about the Native cultures, heritages, and languages of those that they
teach; (c) educational systems should provide in-service training or college courses that educate a teacher to work with and in bilingual/multicultural educational environments; (d) reservation schools should also work closely with tribal colleges and other higher educational institutions to provide teacher training and role modeling for the educational staff; and (e) Indian school boards should use their state school laws to provide the best educational opportunities and preserve the culture of their tribes.

Secondary educational systems also should involve families in pre-college workshops and educational processes to develop a support system for college bound students. These workshops could focus on career information, completing application forms, budgeting, study skills, and college culture (Aitken & Falk, 1986; Jeanotte, 1983; LaForge, 1996; Wright, 1991). Wright (1991) strongly recommended continued involvement of Native American high school students in the TRIO Programs. The three programs, Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Student Support Services, provided a large variety of services. Also summer camps that have focused on science, math, and engineering have affected areas of academic inadequacy and assisted students in bridging the world of their reservations to that of the college campus. It becomes apparent in the literature that for Native American students to take advantage of these
resources they need prepared advisors and counselors who act as their advocates.

In consideration of preschool children, Noley (1991) recommended parenting programs and early educational programs such as Head Start to offset the negative influences of poverty. Confidence building at a very early age will influence future educational success.

Recommendations pertaining to the institution's role and focus on academic inadequacy of Native American college students are numerous. The intent of these recommendations is to increase retention and support successful completion of a degree program.

Noley (1991) stated that institutions need to assess their climates. Members of institutions need to consider the existence of racism and the lack of sensitivity to cultural diversity. Aitken and Falk (1986) also identified a need for overt institutional commitment by establishing special staffing, student support groups, faculty and staff role models, and recruitment and retention programs of Native American personnel. Coser (1990) recommended the creation of a visible Native American alumni association and a Native American faculty and staff association. Both organizations would provide role models.

Based on her research findings, Jeanotte (1983) recommended the development of Native American student cultural centers that provide a comfortable positive
atmosphere for studying, tutoring, counseling, advising, and social outlets. These centers could be equipped with computers and other electronic equipment. Noley (1991) supported these recommendations. He recognized that students have the right to expect the duplication of some services when it contributes to their relative comfort—which is routinely provided to the white majority. He further stated that institutions must develop a climate that is hospitable to all students.

Dorsey-Gaines and Lewis (1987) believed administration, faculty, and staff must seek ways to personalize their relationships with Native American students. Their recommendations included increasing the frequency of community contacts through school visits and direct mailing, visits by minority students for special campus events, and establishing bridge programs with the local school districts.

Noley (1991) recognized that college advisors to the Native American students must be informed about their students’ cultural values and beliefs and academic preparation. The advisors must support realistic program planning that leads to success. He stated that students who leave are an acknowledgment of failure on the part of the student and the institution.
Culture Alienation and Adjustment

Cultural pressures and dissonance in higher educational settings contribute to the Native American attrition rate (Aitken & Falk, 1986; Guyette & Heth, 1984; LaForge, 1996; Noley, 1991; Tinto, 1975; Wells, 1989a; Whittaker, 1986; Wright, 1991; Yurkovich, 1994). Guyette and Heth (1984) identified through a survey that the cultural pressures increased as a Native American moved from the two-year colleges to the Ph.D. granting universities. It is speculated the latter educational systems are more culturally dominated by the Euro-Anglo culture. What their data also presents is a description of cultural pressures that resembles the term "cultural shock." Cultural shock is defined as a holistic experience with high anxiety and low productivity that may invade all aspects of life (Kramer, 1974). It occurs in response to being exposed to an alien society and creates feelings of helplessness and distrust related to lack of predictable environmental responses. Because of this inability to predict the environment and responses from it, a person is unable to use customary categories of experience and habitual behaviors. During culture shock a person also tends to believe that their home culture is better because it is more comfortable and easily understood. In response to this belief a person may seek out others of like culture or isolate from all people in the foreign environment. LaForge (1996) found a pattern of
isolation present in some of the Crow Native American non-graduated students. The isolation presented by students leaving school to be with family from Thursday to Monday night. The students isolated self and escaped from the college environment. By returning to the familiar security of their family, culture, and environment the students attempted to cope with the pressures and dissonance in the foreign college environment.

A pilot study conducted by this writer (Yurkovich, 1994) with three Native American students enrolled in higher education programs supported the concept that the lack of cultural adjustment contributed to their departure from their first higher educational experience. Two of the three students dropped out because of an inability to acculturate. The third student experienced cultural discontinuity, a lesser degree of cultural shock, and was able to adjust being and behaving to the new college culture. The ability to adjust to a culture or the development of biculturalism does contribute to the retention rate of Native Americans (LaForge, 1996). The findings support Spindler's (1987) statement, "Education is a cultural process and occurs in a social context" (p. 302).

Native American students may also depart from the system because they fear losing their cultural identity (Wells, 1989a). Huffman, Sill, and Brokenleg (1986) stated that students may leave the educational system when they
feel threatened with losing their "Indianness" through absorption into the "mainstream" of the college setting (p. 33). This loss of Indianness may be akin to losing their personal identity, which would increase their feeling of inferiority and sense of displacement.

When considering culture, the unique nature of the family structure cannot be overlooked. Studies have identified that personal and family problems are barriers to completing an educational program (Aitken & Falk, 1986; Cotera, 1988; LaForge, 1996; Wells, 1989a; Wright, 1991). In contrast to this perspective is the recognition that support from the tribe, extended family, spouse, and professional native role models contributes to retention and completion of the Native American student (Aitken & Falk, 1986; LaForge, 1996; Noley, 1991). The health and welfare of the family often supersede the need of the individual since the Native American focuses on the needs of the group and family (Tafoya, 1986). What the Euro-Anglo culture may perceive as failure by dropping out may be perceived as fulfilling an important family role by the Native American.

Literature suggests an interrelationship of goal setting, native culture, the family structure, and the family's history of success or lack of it in higher education. Several studies related that goal setting gave direction to and supported motivation and self-esteem in the Native American student (Aitken & Falk, 1986; Hornett, 1989;
Students were not always able to access guidance in goal setting from their tribal elders, who are their traditional source for assistance. An informant stated that advice was sought from a respected elder, but what was given was support that one should attend college (Yurkovich, 1994). What curriculum or career to choose and how to pursue this direction was still unknown to the informant because the source had never attended college. Thus, the elder was unable to assist the informant any further in goal setting. This lack of direction and purpose was a hindrance to the success of this student.

LaForge (1996, pp. 83-86) was able to list six factors that the reservation-oriented Crow students considered culturally helpful in attaining their degree. These six cultural factors were the following: Crow tribal scholarships, nothing to do on the reservation, perception that college was a chance to leave the reservation, spiritual and emotional support from the tribal ceremonies, increased job opportunities off the reservation due to a college education, and cultural pride with a Crow attitude of success. LaForge also identified cultural factors that hindered attainment of a degree. The following eight points were identified by the same group of Crow students:
(a) bilingualism that limited their English proficiency;
(b) poor academic preparation in their reservation schools.
for college level work; (c) Crow learning styles including experiential, hands-on, and participatory processes were not consistent with the college classroom; (d) transition from the traditional reservation setting into the academic world; (e) tribal politics and their control of educational funds; (f) lack of support for and giving priority to education by the tribe; (g) placement of cultural and tribal events before class attendance; and (h) lack of scholarships for Native Americans from local, state, or national organizations. LaForge’s (1996) work provides a thorough perspective of cultural influences as experienced by the Crow reservation-oriented Native American. However, it is important to note that these may not be as relevant to Native Americans that are less traditional and non-reservation oriented.

The literature presented recommendations for educators and the educational systems that were connected to cultural maintenance and adjustment (Aitken & Falk, 1986; LaForge, 1996; Noley, 1991; Wells, 1989a; Wright, 1991). The following is a summary of these recommendations.

LaForge (1996) made recommendations that focused on elementary and secondary educational processes. He states that schools should teach classes on the historical and contemporary Crow family structures and Crow traditional ceremonies. These classes should include family members and their elders. He also recommended that the schools conduct
bilingual education classes to improve the linguistic abilities of the native Crow. Finally he believes family workshops or seminars should be conducted in the K-12 schools that demonstrate the importance of supporting students and their goal to succeed in higher education.

Other authors focused on the role of the higher educational institution (Aitken & Falk, 1986; Noley, 1991; Wells, 1989a; Wright, 1991). Some of these recommendations focused on summer bridge programs. These programs would facilitate the cultural transition from life on the reservations or in smaller urban centers to the larger campus environment. This is believed to assist with the emotional and social readiness that supports college adaptation.

Wright (1991) and Wells (1989a) recognized a need for proactive or intrusive advising for the Native American student. This advising process needs to be offered in a comfortable setting with culturally sensitive professionals that stress the need to be goal oriented. Counseling was an important service that needed to be developed in the same mode as the advising services since personal and family problems were considered relevant to attrition. Both of these services should be available in cultural centers.

Most authors identified the need for development of cultural centers in the higher educational systems. These centers would provide a wide range of services for the
Native American such as advising and counseling services. Wright (1991) identified two other services that these centers could provide. The first one was a social gathering place for the critical mass of Native Americans which supported open discussion of the differences between cultures and their adjustment processes. The second service was the provision of education to the larger system about its cultural and social diversity. This information would reinforce to the system and its educators the need to maintain flexibility in its processes and programs. The primary function of the cultural center was the preservation of identification with and pride for the Native American culture in each of its members.

Wright (1991) and Noley (1991) identified one other institutional responsibility. Higher educational institutions need to remain strong in their affirmative action activities. Administrators and faculty should actively recruit Native Americans for administrative, faculty, and staff positions. Mentorship of these employees by senior members is important to their retention. Role models in these positions support Native American retention and instill pride in their culture.

Issues Related to Financial Aid

Literature documents that financial aid is crucial to the Native American’s ability to attend and complete higher
educational programs (Aitken & Falk, 1986; Coser, 1990; Cotera, 1988; Jeanotte, 1981; LaForge, 1996; Noley, 1991; Wells, 1989a; Wright, 1991). Researchers have also identified that the lack of enough funds and the complexity of accessing them remain barriers to retention (Cotera, 1988; Wells, 1989a; Wright, 1991). Financial resources and amounts have not kept up with the cost of living (Noley, 1991). However the numbers of Native Americans that are becoming eligible for these funds are increasing.

Native Americans come from communities with the highest unemployment and the lowest per capita income. Therefore those that attend college cannot expect to receive financial support from their families. In reality they may be expected to take time off from studies to assist their families financially. The students' financial needs may intensify because Native American students may be older than the traditional student, female, have a family, and be a single head of a household (Wright, 1991). This latter description fits the nursing student population.

LaForge's (1996) research on the reservation-oriented Crow students who were graduates and non-graduates of higher education reinforced another issue regarding finances. Both groups of students had difficulty with budgeting and financial management of their aid money. Jeanotte (1981) and Aitken and Falk (1986) had also identified this as an issue that needed the attention of secondary and higher
educational systems. LaForge (1996) believed the money management issues were a "direct result of low socioeconomic backgrounds of the Crow students" (p. 118). He reasoned that the difficulties existed, "because the Crow students and their families never had much money during their elementary and secondary school days to worry about budgeting and management" (p. 118). He further stated that the families only had survival money and this they shared with extended family members as is the Crow tradition. LaForge was able to correlate that students who left college because of financial reasons were usually the ones who had not learned money management skills.

Long (Select Committee of Indian Affairs, 1990) addressed several issues that affected funding to Native American nursing students and ultimately their ability to complete the program. These issues were stated as recommendations to the Senate's Select Committee on Indian Affairs on June 14, 1990: (a) Funding regulations need to be simplified, (b) regulations need to allow for personal individualized programs of study, (c) funding should include remedial work and repeated course work, and (d) regulations need to allow for part-time credit loads during some of the semesters. Long (Select Committee of Indian Affairs, 1990) also recommended federal funding be provided for institutional support of individualized and extensive academic advising and for the provision of support systems
and crisis intervention. There needs to be resources not only to cover direct educational costs of tuition and books, but also monies for living and surviving as a student with dependent children and many financial obligations. Aitken and Falk (1986) supported the latter concerns by identifying a need also for adequate funding of transportation, clothing, and medical expenses while in college.

Besides the recommendations that were identified by Long (Select Committee of Indian Affairs, 1990), several other authors have suggested actions to be taken by the educational system to reduce the financial aid barrier (Aitken & Falk, 1986; LaForge, 1996; Jeanotte, 1983; Noley, 1991; Wright, 1991). These recommendations have been consolidated to encapsulate their ideas:

1. Federal, state, and local government agencies need to work together with tribal councils and university systems to evaluate and effectively reconstruct adequate financial aid packages. These packages need to recognize the student’s unique characteristics and their cultural needs.

2. Institutions need to enhance their financial aid advising processes by increasing the number of personnel and increasing their presence or availability to the Native American student population. Noley (1991) reported that the Cherokee Nation sponsored a parent and student financial aid information night. This activity brought the universities’ and colleges’ financial aid staffs to the consumer for the
purpose of answering questions, establishing confidence in completing forms, and providing career information. Also, having this meeting within a tribal setting supported the development of a comfortable atmosphere which promoted open dialogue between the parties.

Several recommendations developed from research focused on the lack of budgeting skills for managing financial aid money. Jeanotte (1983) discussed an institutional action that had benefited students. The student and the institution negotiated several smaller fee payments of the student's aid money and provided budget counseling on how to spend it. LaForge (1996) and Aitken and Falk (1986) recommended precollege or college level workshops that focus on money management. LaForge believes that these workshops should include college survival skills of "money management and budgeting, purchasing, identification of other financial resources, and survival on a limited income" (p. 119). He also recommended the involvement of family members since the advice of elders is influential in the Native American decision-making processes. Knowledge empowers students and family members to assist one another in sound financial planning.

Factors that Support Success

Among the recommendations offered for each barrier exists the researchers' perception of which approaches will
reduce barriers and increase retention and completion. However, LaForge (1996) and Aitken and Falk (1986) requested feedback from their Native American research subjects on what factors supported retention in and completion of their higher educational experience.

LaForge (1996, pp. 83-86) was able to list six factors that the reservation-oriented Crow student considered culturally helpful to attainment of their degree. These six cultural factors were listed in the section on Cultural Alienation and Adjustment (p. 28). LaForge (1996) also reported supportive factors that relate to family practices. These factors are:

- encouragement from family members
- participation in religious ceremonies
- parent as a role model
- spouse support
- sibling as a role model
- child care provider
- [ability to positively] affect the family name
- parents alive and supportive
- oldest [child] in the family
- [being the] only child or one of two [children].

(p. 77)

The factors reported by the reservation-oriented Crow students have some similarity with Aitken and Falk’s (1986, p. 10) research with the Minnesota Chippewa tribal students. The Chippewa students, during interviews, mentioned the following factors that promote retention: having a critical mass of Native Americans on one campus for peer identification, faculty and staff who show concern for Indian students, parental and peer support, and support from outside agencies or organizations. Through a questionnaire (Aitken & Falk, 1986), Native Americans further identified
the following factors as facilitators of their educational attendance: personal motivation, adequate financial support, support of friends, special classes or workshops on study skills, and the presence of tutoring services. It is significant to note that adequate academic preparation and comfort in the collegian environment were not identified as facilitators of success. One might conclude that with all the data present on barriers and recommendations to reduce them, administrators, educators, and staff have more challenges ahead to create a culturally responsive environment for the Native American student.

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual frameworks for grounded theory studies are not typically used prior to the actual research. Because grounded theory studies are empirical discovery in nature, rather than conceptual, conceptual frameworks are emergent rather than preconceived (Buehler, 1982; Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). However, Chenitz and Swanson (1986) pointed out that the philosophic basis for grounded theory studies are based upon assumptions from the symbolic interactionist perspective (Blumer, 1969; Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). Symbolic interactionism (SI) is a social psychological perspective on self-determined action or behavior which is utilized by people as an approach to defining their life situations.
Central to SI is the recognition that individuals can be the object of their own thought or action and interact with the world around them (Blumer, 1967). This is opposite of the belief that people react to an outer world of pre-existing objects which stimulate them and call forth a response. An object or symbol is defined as person, place, event, action, or abstract thought. Thus, response to the object or symbol is based on the meaning that has been attached to it by the person interpreting it. The meaning can be influenced by a cultural system, a social organization, and one's experiential base. The person may be considering demands, expectations, prohibitions, and consequences that could occur because of one's action. Once a response is given, the person receives feedback from the environment about one's response which validates that it was appropriate or inappropriate. The person then continues to construct a line of action, which is negotiated step-by-step, and will take into account the meaning given to this feedback from others (Becker & McCall, 1990; Meltzer, 1967). Repetitive exposure to the same situations requires less processing and may create an impression of an automatic response process.

In group or communal responses, individuals arrive at the same outcome and determine to act in the same manner. Therefore, it once again appears that an external stimulus is causing a reaction from the people. In essence, the
A Native American, as any other person, can construct an appropriate line of action within a social setting. This process occurs because the Native American is accurately interpreting the responses from others to their own actions. This process also assumes that the person can incorporate the actions of others into their behavioral responses and interactions. A person who has grown up in a different culture than the one he/she is being educated in may have difficulty completing the following behaviors: accurately perceiving this different environment and its messages, cognitively understanding an experience or given information, and effectively utilizing the experience to predict the next interaction. Because of these difficulties, this person may withdraw and isolate self from the new experience and environment or seek out people and places that resemble what is familiar.

Native American students entering the colleges or universities that are not culturally responsive to their needs attempt to interpret this new environment based on their previous culturally grounded experiences. It has been determined through research (LaForge, 1996, p. 126) that Native American students have a greater chance at succeeding in the educational process if they adapt to the new
environmental situations and create new appropriate responses. Thus, SI is an appropriate philosophical framework to use because it fits with the methodology and the focus of this research.

Summary

The review of literature has validated the perception that there are barriers— inadequate academic preparation, cultural alienation and adjustment, and issues related to financial aid— affecting retention and completion of higher education by the Native American student. Recommendations focused on reducing or eliminating the barriers have also been made and could be summarized (Wells, 1989a) as (a) early intervention in elementary and secondary schools with teacher education on multiculturalism and family involvement to strengthen educational preparation and planning; (b) analysis of the atmosphere that exists in higher educational systems for the evaluation of racism towards faculty and students and a strengthening of affirmative action practices; (c) summer bridge courses that assist students in their transition to college level course work and campus atmosphere; (d) tailored financial aid programs that provide for living needs of the family and education or supportive direction in budgeting these resources; (e) strong academic assessment programs that
reduce the gaps in preparation; (f) adequate tutoring services, learning services and laboratories, and mentoring programs that are available in a culturally sensitive environment; (g) intrusive or proactive culturally sensitive academic advising that focuses on goal setting and guidance in course and career selections; (h) career guidance that links nonspecific educational goals and programs of study to desired outcomes; and (i) institutional outreach to tribal communities that begins to create a supportive response towards Native Americans seeking degrees in higher educational systems. Researchers also have a beginning understanding of what supports success in the educational process. What remains disconcerting is that this knowledge and educational efforts have not increased the numbers of Native American students completing higher educational degrees. In fact, the numbers of Native American students are decreasing in proportion to the increasing numbers of students attending college (Noley, 1991).

What also remains unclear is how this relates to the successful Native American nursing student. Nursing students were not singled out in the databases by researchers. LaForge (1996) had separated out the degrees that students had obtained. Nursing was not listed (p. 90). Layton et al. (1990) believed that what affected the retention of Native American students attending general university programs was closely paralleled to those issues
and concern affecting retention of the Native American students in health professional schools. This researcher believes that there has not been enough data generated specific to Native American nursing students to justify this generalization.

Nursing is dynamic since it is an essential part of a society that grows and continues to evolve (American Nurses Association [ANA], 1996). Thus, nursing reflects the changing nature of societal need. Nursing exists in an interactive relationship with society, its culture, its systems and institutions, and its members. Nursing is also an art and a science. Nursing as a professional practice discipline involves the development of the whole person. Therefore, for Native American students to feel supported in their nursing educational process, faculty must understand how cultural diversity affects their ability to succeed (Leininger, 1994; Pacquiao, 1995). This study focused on this issue and the alterations needed in the educational process to enhance program completion by Native American nursing students.
CHAPTER 3

TOOLS FOR DEVELOPING A NEW PERCEPTION

Methodology

A qualitative mode was chosen for this research process. Tierney (1991) stated:

I worked from the assumption that post-secondary organizations need researchers to provide not simple minded answers--cookbook recipes--for helping Indian students; rather, college and university participants need research that helps us think about the nature of Indian students and faculty participation in their institutions. (p. 83)

Tierney (1991) recommended the use of qualitative research approaches that provide sensitive studies moving beyond statistical surveys and charts. A qualitative approach supports discovery of reality as it exists in the minds of the informants, which is their personal frame of reference. Thus, multiple reality is expected and analyzed. Qualitative research, like naturalistic inquiry, recognizes that the reality manifold is constantly changing based on a person's perception, a previously established experiential base, timing of occurrence, number of episodes, variances in settings, and accompanying circumstances (Guba, 1978, p. 15). Acknowledgment of multiple realities allows the inquirer to identify similarities, themes, patterns, and
differences. This provides a rich description of the phenomena under investigation. Tierney (1991) hoped that the outcome of this type of research would "enact a vision of academe that is based on pluralism, cultural integrity and empowerment" (p. 83).

There are a variety of research methodologies that are qualitative. Each of these methods have a different focus. Ethnography focuses on the culture of the informant group. Participant observation, traditional to anthropology, is the primary method of the ethnographer. This requires intensive field work which supports the immersion of the investigator in the culture under study (Patton, 1990, p. 67). What also makes this approach distinct "is the matter of interpreting and applying the findings from a cultural perspective" (p. 68).

Another method of qualitative research is phenomenology. This method focuses on "the structure and essence of experience of this phenomenon for these people" (Patton, 1990, p. 69). A basic assumption of this approach was that we can only know what we experience by attending to perceptions and meaning that awaken our conscious awareness. . . . Thus, phenomenologists focus on how we put together the phenomena we experience in such a way as to make sense of the world and, in so doing, develop a world view. (p. 69)
This can be differentiated from other methods through the assumption phenomenologists hold that "there is an essence or essences to shared experience" (p. 70).

For this study a grounded theory approach was chosen because it is a qualitative research methodology which utilizes symbolic interactionism. "Symbolic interactionism is both a philosophy of human life and social experience, and a distinctive approach to the study of human life" (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986, p. ix). Therefore, grounded theory is a systematic approach to the collection and the analysis of qualitative data for the purpose of generating an understanding of social and psychological phenomena. The objective is to develop an explanation of basic patterns common in social life and their variations around a phenomenon or problem. The qualitative data are gathered in the natural, everyday world.

The grounded theory approach allows the researcher to inductively discover and explore the core variables that emerge from the empirical life under study. It also provides a means to learn about the participant’s world and the interacting influences of personal, social, and cultural characteristics without imposing the cultural biases of the interviewer (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This method provided the process needed for the defining of enablers and hindrances that affected completion of the nursing program by the Native American student.
Data Collection

Chenitz and Swanson (1986) state that data collection, in a grounded theory study, is guided by a sampling approach called "theoretical sampling." This strategy is based on the need to collect "more data to examine categories and their relationships and to assure the representativeness in the category exists" (p. 9). Thus, data collection and analysis must occur simultaneously. A category's full range and variation is sought to assist in the development of the emerging theory. Incoming data are evaluated for fit in the categories or for the creation of new categories. Sampling begins with testing, elaborating and refining categories for the purpose of verifying or checking the validity of a category. However as the process continues, sampling is done to develop the categories' relationships and interrelationships. When the categories appear saturated the data collection for the study is completed.

Population

The population of this study consisted of Native American graduates that completed the baccalaureate degree in nursing at Montana State University--Bozeman. Informants were identified from the annual and semester lists of Native Americans given to the College of Nursing by the Center for Native American Studies on the Montana State University--Bozeman campus. Alumni lists verified the graduation of the
student from the College and University. The sample consisted of Native Americans with tribal affiliations in Montana and North Dakota.

Seven reservations were home to the majority of these tribal members. The Montana reservations included Flathead, Blackfeet, Rocky Boy, Fort Peck, Crow, and Northern Cheyenne. Turtle Mountain of North Dakota was also represented. Most of the tribes having two or more graduates were represented in the student groups graduating between 1986 and the fall of 1995. This time frame was established to obtain a full range of tribal representation and encourage variation in the informant's perspectives, which supports the development of emerging theory.

The total population considered for this study was 32 Native Americans. This researcher began contacting the most recent Native American nursing graduates from the chronologically organized Indian Club list. Six of these graduates could not be located through the most current information and Native American contacts made by this researcher. One graduate did not show for the scheduled interview. A total of 18 Native Americans were interviewed before the categories were saturated. When the categories became saturated the last seven Native Americans on the list were not contacted. Two of the graduates were R.N. associate degree students who were in the R.N. baccalaureate track program. All informants were females. They were from
seven different reservations and represent 12 different blood quantum configurations. Ten years was chosen as the cutoff point because it represented approximately five years in the quarter curriculum system and five years in the semester curriculum system. To go back any further in years, one would enter a different curriculum structure which could be counterproductive to the purpose of this study.

Procedure

The Native American nursing students who were identified by the Indian Club and validated as graduates of the nursing program became eligible for this study. Telephone numbers and addresses of Spring 1990 to Fall 1995 graduates were located through the assistance of faculty members and staff on the upper division campuses. Graduates from 1986 and 1988 were located through the help of the Office of Indian Health Services of Montana. The informants were contacted by this researcher. The first contact focused on the purpose of the research and the request to participate. Once the informant agreed to participate, a day, time, and place was arranged to meet for the interview. Confidentiality was guaranteed. All informants granted their permission, through a consent form, to participate in a taped interview in a private setting. Informants were informed that all data would be reported in a group format.
The tools for data collection were semi-structured interviews and, to a lesser extent, participant observation. Open-ended questions were used to stimulate free responses about the participants' views on their educational experience in the College of Nursing, and what resources helped or hindered their success (Appendix B). These questions were based on a literature review and a pilot study conducted by this researcher in the summer of 1994. Demographic questions were also asked for the purpose of developing a group profile of the informants. Informants were encouraged to speak freely and use their own terminology. Three graduates were interviewed by telephone because they lived out of state or they were unreachable when meeting times were being arranged. Participant observation included observation of the participant's appearance, ease with answering the questions, and other non-verbal communication. Interviews were conducted in the offices of the informant and researcher, in the informants' homes, in health care agencies, and in the researcher's motel room.

Analysis

Comparative analysis was utilized throughout this study's process. The first two interviews were compared for similarities and differences. These data were coded and the codes were compared to find relationships to context,
conditions, strategies, and consequences (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Codes were grouped into categories and these were collapsed further into significant variables and their properties. Memo writing and the continual review of the transcribed tapes provided the mechanism for generating more questions about the data. The memos assisted the processes of comparison, verification, and modification as new data came in.

As data collection continued and analysis began to present categories and a model, informants were requested to give feedback on these emerging perceptions, thus providing triangulation. Informants were able to verify the visual representation as a "fit" with their perceptions and experiences.

Conclusion

The use of the qualitative mode of Grounded Theory provided this researcher with the tool to enter the informants' experience from their perspective. This permitted the bridging of a gap that may exist between the individual student, the instructor, and the institution. Understanding the Native American nursing student's perceptions and recommendations may give the College of Nursing the opportunity to create change that will increase the retention and completion rate of these students.
CHAPTER 4

REPORTING COLLECTED FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify key factors and enablers that hinder or support successful completion of the nursing program at Montana State University--Bozeman through a grounded theory approach. The tools for data collection were semi-structured interviews and to a lesser extent participant observation. Open-ended questions were used to stimulate free responses about the participant’s views on their educational experience in the College of Nursing. The focus of the questions was based on a review of literature, and a pilot study determined that Native Americans respond more freely to questions when allowed to "tell their story" (Yurkovich, 1994). Thus, the interview process began with general questions and moved to specifics. Six questions were developed to complete the purpose of this study and provide a framework for the semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B). The interviews began with demographic questions which supported the development of a rapport between the researcher and the informant.

The qualitative answers that were collected on the demographics and the six interview questions were analyzed
using a constant comparative method. Categories were created and collapsed further as data verified their existence. Chapter 4 focuses on the findings of the 18 interviews by first discussing the demographic data and then the analysis of the answers to each of the six questions.

Descriptive Profile of Informants

As data were being collected and analyzed, it became apparent that the informants represented a rich cultural diversity. These graduates come from seven different reservations and represent 12 different configurations of Native American tribal heritages (see Table 1). The reservations listed are the Native Americans' present homes or the place where they hold a tribal affiliation or enrollment.

Eleven of the informants were born on reservations, and seven were born off the reservation. Of the seven born off the reservation, two reported that it was related to their father being in a relocation program at the time of their birth. Presently 12 informants live on reservations. Two other informants would like to live on the reservation, but their jobs require them to live off the reservation. Two
### Table 1. Reservation and Tribal Affiliations of Native Americans Who Participated as Informants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reservation</th>
<th>Tribes</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Blackfeet</td>
<td>Blackfeet</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blackfeet/Cree/Gros Ventre</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Crow</td>
<td>Crow/Sioux</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Flathead</td>
<td>Salish</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kootenai</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salish/Pend d’Oreille/Nez Père</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sioux</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Fort Peck</td>
<td>Sioux/Assiniboine</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Northern Cheyenne</td>
<td>Northern Cheyenne</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Rocky Boy</td>
<td>Chippewa-Cree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) Turtle Mtn. N.D.</td>
<td>Chippewa</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cree/Blackfeet</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Informants live near a reservation so they can maintain contact with family members on the reservation. Two informants live off the reservation and intend to remain this way. They do not have family members on reservations in Montana. Informants talked about the social nature of the Native American and the need to remain in contact with their family and their people. Their choice of where to live reflects this need.

### High School History

Twelve informants attended high schools on Indian reservations, five informants attended high school off the reservation, and one attended an out-of-state Native
American boarding high school. In the evaluation of the request for the dominant culture in the high school, 10 students perceived it to be white dominant culture, seven perceived it to be Native American, and one perceived it to be a mix of both cultures. However, it became apparent during the interviews with 17 informants that the educational process was dominated by Euro-Anglo culture without a significant presence of culturally relevant teaching.

**College Attendance**

Demographic questions were asked regarding the colleges that the informant attended, the number of years in each college, and the age that the informant began and finished their nursing education. The last question focused on stop-outs of the educational process and the reason for these occurrences. Four different patterns of college attendance by Native Americans emerged from the data (see Table 2).

Table 2. Pattern of College Attendance by Native American Graduates of MSU--Bozeman, College of Nursing, 1986-1995.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Attendance Pattern</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attended One Non-Native American College</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended Two Non-Native American Colleges</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended Three Non-Native American Colleges</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended Three or More Colleges; Mix of Native and Non-Native Colleges</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Two-thirds of the informants attended more than one college. During the interviews, the reason for this phenomenon was discussed with the informants. Four themes emerged. The first theme was "it was convenient" and "close," which meant the informant did not have to leave her home or family until it was necessary to go to MSU--Bozeman for the sophomore level nursing courses. The second theme was the desire of the informant to "ease into college work" or "to get my feet wet by taking a few courses." The intent was to bridge the gap between high school education and college education and to adjust to reentry into the educational system as an "older student" who was out of school for several years. The third theme was the "need to work and provide for my family." These informants had jobs and family members that were dependent on them, so they began college in a part-time mode. The fourth theme was the "use of the colleges to build up a weakness, like writing skills." These informants identified their weaknesses and reduced them through course work before entering the University and the College of Nursing.

The informants' average number of years used to complete their college education was 5 years. The range was 4 years to 8 years. The mean age when these nursing graduates began nursing education was 25 years old with a range of 17 to 41 years old. The mean age at completion of their degree was 30 years old, with a range of 22 to 47
years of age. LaForge's (1996) study of the reservation-oriented Crow Indians who graduated from college indicated that the mean age for females entering college was 19 and for completion was 27. He also reported that the average number of years it took them to complete was 8 years. LaForge suggested in his work that older students had a better potential of succeeding and completing in higher education. The statistics in this study do reflect this perception since the mean age was higher and the years to complete was lower. However, these statistics do not present a complete understanding of these data.

There were six informants that could be considered the young traditional student (17, 18, 19 years old) who began college right after completing high school. However, half of these six teenage students were married with children. They were not the stereotypical traditional student. They were young married students with family responsibilities. This was viewed as a disadvantage or asset by the informants. One informant wished she could have been "that free traditional student while in college" so she could have taken advantage of all the activities. Being married was perceived as a disadvantage. However, another student wished she would have had "ties" and "kids" because that would have kept her "more focused" so she could not "fool around." Being married was perceived as an asset.
Informants were asked if they stopped-out of the educational process and, if they did, what was the reason. Only 5 of the 18 graduates had stopped out of the educational program for a quarter or a semester. The reason given by four informants was health problems of family members, self, or both. The second reason was the loss of funding due to low grades.

What was apparent from the interviews was that other non-stop-out informants had many difficulties similar to the first reason given by the stop-out informants. These non-stop-out informants were older, had more significant responsibilities, and feared stopping-out. As one informant stated, "If I had stopped-out, I was afraid I would never come back and finish." They perceived stopping-out was not a viable choice and that it was counterproductive to their educational and family goals.

Native American Orientation

The nursing graduates were asked if they considered themselves to be traditional or non-traditional Native Americans and what was the rationale for their decision. Some informants found the two categories too limiting. Therefore, they created two other groups which were the "blend" and the "white Indian." A discussion of the characteristics of each of the four groups follows.
Traditional Native American

The three informants that identified themselves as traditional Native Americans lived on their reservation. They communicated the following characteristics as reasons for identifying with the classification of traditional: (a) follow the beliefs closely, (b) maintain the value system of their tribe, (c) participate in most religious and medicine ceremonies, and (d) participate in Pow-Wows. They also indicated that they were comfortable in their knowledge of their cultural practices and have shared this information with others including their peers. In regard to being bilingual, these informants could speak some of their language but were better at understanding it, especially during their ceremonies. They did not see this ability or lack of it as reducing their traditional status.

Blend Native American

Six informants felt they were neither traditional nor non-traditional. One informant coined the term "blend," and all the other informants placed in this category felt it fit their situation. Blend informants hold to the value of family centrality and to traditional medicine beliefs and practices. One of the differentiating characteristics that separates this group from the traditional Native Americans was their participation in only some of the ceremonies. One informant stated that this was an acceptable practice because each person has their own personal relationship with
the spirit and must follow that direction or way. Motivation for participating in the ceremonies may be to act as "a role model" for their children. They want their children to learn and participate in the traditions, language and ceremonies of their tribe.

The blend informants spoke of the "difficulty" in being a traditional Native American and "integrating into present society." The perception of this researcher was that this group was very aware of both cultures and continued to work to bridge their existence in both cultures without losing the best elements of either. They saw themselves as needing to make their heritage relevant to the present time.

**Non-Traditional Native American**

This group of five informants displayed the physical characteristics of a Native American which are dark skin, dark hair, and brown eyes. They have knowledge of their culture and traditions but do not practice them. One could consider them observer bystanders. One informant stated, "[I] learned about them [traditions and ceremonies] but I've never lived them." They maintain some of the culture values, for example, respect for the elders.

This group also spoke of their perception about being a Native American in this time. One informant stated that Native Americans should not "let this Native American culture hold us back." This informant also believed that Native Americans "cannot meld the Native American traditions
with contemporary" society. Another informant stated that she saw herself as part of the "now," "contemporary" culture on the reservation. This was defined as an "accepting," open, giving, and informal social structure which included living in a mixed culture. This researcher perceived this group of informants as fitting Deloria's (1991) comment, "The very idea of being an Indian has become something external to many people; in a fundamental sense, Indians are quickly becoming consumers and hobbyists of their own culture" (p. 10). In this study, the non-traditional Native American was a hobbyist of their own culture; watching it but not participating in its key practices. They appear to be more acculturated into the dominant white society.

White Indian

This category was suggested by an informant because she is called white Indian by other Native Americans on her reservation. The three other informants in this group agreed with the term and their placement. The major characteristic of this group was their physical presentation of fair complexion, blond or light hair, and blue or green eyes. They are not readily perceived as a Native American.

In this category, two sub-groups emerged. They were white Indians that live on the reservation and those that live off the reservation. The sub-groups appear appropriate because of the different experiences that these two groups reported. One informant who lives on the reservation spoke
of experiencing reverse discrimination. She was an enrolled member but "wasn't automatically included" in the tribal ceremonies or practices. She sensed a "you don't belong here" attitude when present for council meetings. This informant is more comfortable off the reservation with white people because she doesn't have to deal with discrimination. In most social activities she chooses not to associate with Native Americans and is acculturated into the white dominant culture.

Informants living off the reservation spoke of not being recognized by the general population as Native American. In fact no one knows unless they tell them that they are Native American. However, they were quick to state that other members of their family (brothers or sisters) may look very Native American. These informants did not have much of an exposure to their Native American culture. Two of them could recall a grandparent or a cousin's grandparent teaching them when they were small children. As these informants grew older there was less interaction with the Native American cultures and traditions. Each of these informants as adults have sought knowledge about their heritage through formal classes, attendance at family funerals, and being invited to attend other tribal ceremonies such as the sun dance.

The four categories that the informants developed to establish their relationship with their Indian heritage did
not create any recognizable difference in their answers to the six interview questions. The white Indians spoke from their experience as a Native American, from their knowledge base, and from their observation of verbal and non-verbal responses directed at other Native Americans during the educational process. They are sensitive to their Native American heritage. Therefore, all data are reported as a whole without delineation of responses into these four groups.

During the interviews all informants demonstrated, through their stories and non-verbal communication, a pride in their Native American heritage. Each informant identified their blood quantum, which has become significant to their tribal enrollment process. One of these informants (1/16 Native American) stated that being Native American was not based on blood quantum but on one's actions, one's presentation of the Indian way, and who "you are inside." She felt she was more Native American than some that claimed to be full-blood.

Fifty percent of the informants experienced discrimination or observed other Native Americans experience discrimination in the educational system, in their own tribal system, and in near-by communities. The internal ranking of blood quantum and physical appearance supports prejudicial treatment on the reservation and off the reservation.
This descriptive profile of the 18 informants has demonstrated the diversity and similarities that exist in the Native American culture. The diversity is also present in the university system and its classrooms because students do not leave their culture at home or on the reservation.

Analysis of Interview Questions

Motivators

Question 1: What motivated you to go into nursing at Montana State University, College of Nursing?

When the data from the Native American nursing graduates' interviews were analyzed it was clear that this question really had two foci. The first focus was "What motivated you to choose nursing?" The second focus was "Why did you go to Montana State University--Bozeman, College of Nursing?" The analysis of question 1 will deal with the answers to both of these foci.

What Motivated You to Choose Nursing?

The data analysis, relating to the choice of nursing, emerged into two categories. The first category was survival needs, which were identified by Maslow as physiological and safety needs (cited in Knowles, 1970). Fourteen informants repeatedly expressed a need to provide for their children. This also included the nine married informants with spouses who could provide some financial or
supportive assistance. One informant stated that with a nursing education "I knew I could take care of my family financially." Nursing was perceived as a secure job or career to invest in through an education. All the informants are presently employed in nursing. Another informant stated:

I have four children. It was like I need this work. I wanted to be a nurse. I looked up all the possibilities of employment. What's going to pay good if I go someplace else? Where can I get a job? So I did a lot of research on it. I got newspapers from Spokane, Washington, and Missoula, and Great Falls, and Kalispell, and I was looking at the job ads and I had just gone through a second divorce and I was thinking I got four kids; I need to support them. I need to have a certain amount of dollars and if I need to go someplace else I want to make sure there is a position out there . . . and every paper had it [nursing jobs].

Another informant stated:

I wanted a job that would keep me on the reservation and give me enough security to raise my two children and the only big areas of employment are the schools and hospital or health care . . . too much job hopping [for the teachers] . . . I wanted something that was stable for my kids.

The nursing profession was perceived as a stable income for the provision of their family's basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter and as a secure job opportunity.

The second category that relates to choosing nursing is self-development or "dream" fulfillment. Informants stated, "I wanted to be a nurse since I was three years old," "I always wanted to be a nurse," and "I wanted to know about them [family illnesses and dysfunction]. I wanted to know how I could help the people at home and teach others how to
take care of themselves. I knew I could help them and they could learn." This latter quote was from an informant that could not begin nursing education until after she divorced her husband who was non-supportive of her dream.

There were environmental conditions and social situations that supported the existence of their dreams. These were family or friends that acted as nursing or health care role models, positive personal and family health care experiences, and external reinforcement that told them they work well with people. These conditions also reinforced their internal perception that nursing was a "fit" with their personality.

**Why Did You Go to MSU—Bozeman, College of Nursing?**

During the analysis of this data, four positive and one negative motivating factors emerged that addressed why the graduates had chosen MSU—Bozeman, CON. The first positive factor was the quality reputation that the college has in this state. The following quote summarizes the perception held by these informants:

> My mother graduated from a diploma program and she worked with a lot of RNs and always said that MSU put out good RNs. She encouraged me to go to that school. She was real particular. If she thought it wasn’t a good school she would have pushed for some other school. She called a spade a spade.

Another informant stated she had checked out many schools and had narrowed the selection down to two schools. She chose MSU because of the "high success rate of the NCLEX,"
which is the licensure exam for the RN. This exam also
measures the outcome of the program’s educational process.
As students, Native American graduates looked for a program
with high standards and a high success rate.

The second motivating factor was the college’s
closeness to home and family. One informant stated, "I
chose MSU because it was in Montana and I didn’t want to
leave home. I wanted to come home to the reservation." The
convenience of attending a nursing program in the state and
close enough to travel home to family on the weekends
permitted the informants to maintain their family support.
This family support helped them "revitalize" self and retain
their personal balance.

The third motivating factor for attending MSU, CON was
the understanding, "It was the right way to go... If you
are going to get an education. It should be a four-year
degree." This awareness was often reinforced by role models
that had baccalaureate degrees, such as parents, brothers
and sisters, nieces and nephews, aunts and uncles, and
respected friends that acted as mentors.

The fourth positive motivating factor was the
informants source of funding. Several informants stated
that when they received Indian Health Service (IHS) funding
and scholarships they were told that the four-year degree
was the "preferred" approach to nursing education.
Therefore, they attended MSU, CON.
The final motivating factor is negative in nature. These informants identified the need to prove to former high school teachers or counselors and tribal members that they could succeed in a university system by earning a degree. One informant stated, "When I was in high school I never thought of going to college. I thought I was too dumb. I had teachers that reinforced that. [I] showed them that I wasn't stupid." Another informant said that upon leaving the reservation tribal members told her, "Oh, you'll be back. . . . You won't be gone for long." This informant also stated that this statement can be discouraging or it can be turned around into a motivating behavior that allows one to prove them wrong.

After analyzing all the data a unifying theme emerged which is goal-directed behavior towards being a nurse. This behavior was present in every graduate. Each informant was clear about wanting to obtain a baccalaureate degree in the science of nursing (BSN) which would permit them to effectively care for the needs of others. They also wanted to practice their profession near their family members and earn a salary that would allow them to provide for their significant others. Being goal directed helped them to focus all their energy towards the single outcome of graduating with a BSN.
Educational Experience

Question 2: Describe your educational experience in the College of Nursing.

This request allowed the informants to tell their story in their own words. They freely talked about their experiences without the constraints of categorizing them into enablers and hindrances. Two categories emerged from the analysis of these data. The first category was transitional responses and processes. The second category was conflictual processes in the educational environment.

Transitional Responses and Processes

All informants experienced some degree of transition because of their move to Bozeman and then to their upper division campus at the end of their sophomore year. Each informant described their transitional responses and process. Informants stated they felt "a bit overwhelmed with the size of the university and Bozeman . . . [and not knowing] where things are," and "the size was intimidating . . . scary." Another informant stated that her chemistry class was as large as her whole high school. These informants were comparing the university environment to the reservations, their familiar small rural town, and their last educational experience.

Other informants used the words "culture shock" to describe their transitional experience in the university.
They felt "disconnected" and "alone." One informant described her transition in the following manner:

The hardest part was lower division because that was the first time I had ever been separated from my children. I found that very hard and at that time I had left my job and support system and everything that was stable in my life.

She later stated that she had always worked and provided for her children but while in school she could not do these activities. She had lost parts of her life that provided predictability and a sense of purpose. In response to these feelings she isolated herself by socializing very little.

Other informants spoke of their transitional process including isolation from a different perspective. Their isolation was self-imposed because of their family situation. These informants had a structured schedule of studying and attending classes during the week. On Friday morning or evening they drove home to their family, whenever their class schedule permitted. They took care of them until Sunday evening when they drove back to college. They did not socialize or attend university activities. They never really developed a connectedness or sense of belonging to the college environment or culture.

Informants that had their children with them spoke of having only enough time to study, go to classes, work a job, and be with their children. When they were not doing one of the first three activities, they uniformly stated that the
free time was for their family. Their isolation from the
campus social culture was also self-imposed.

Isolation in the university system that existed for
either reason had the negative consequence of affecting the
time invested in student networking. In turn the informants
did not become aware of or familiar with resources and
services that come with networking. These resources, for
example, ABC program, Center for Native American Studies,
and Indian Club, and their services could have assisted them
in their educational experience. The positive side to the
self-imposed isolation is that it permitted the students to
gain support and positive feelings from their family
members. This in turn replenished their energy for coping
during the week.

Besides being overwhelmed by size, losing their sources
of stability, and experiencing isolation, two other factors
affected transition and required adjustment. These were the
transition to college learning in contrast to their high
school process, and to speaking the "intellectual" language
as contrasted to their colloquial communication.

One third of the group spoke of needing to learn to
study and needing to adjust to the learning process in the
university. One informant's comments about her experience
with chemistry summarizes this problem:

I had to learn how to study. I had no study
skills. Didn't know how to study. Never did in
high school. Had a 3.9 in high school but never
studied. So I went to college thinking I have
this down. Didn’t study and got a "D" in chem, had to retake it. Never had anything lower than a "C" in high school. So I took some study skill classes with the Indian Club. I went to them (ABC program) for tutors. Once I learned how to study it was easy.

This informant was not as isolated as some of the other informants and was able to access resources without inhibiting her movement towards success. Other informants in this group stated they never studied while in high school and felt their reading skills were not strong; both affected their ability to complete their college learning activities.

Learning to speak the language was an important part of learning to interact with the university and college system.

One informant addressed it this way:

They were afraid to talk. Coming from high school and their counselors. They would think that they would sound dumb to the advisors. Again coming to college there was that language. How do I say it ... unless we had parents that talked to us in that intellectual way or [not] using the language we used with our kids ... slang or Native American type ... so when you get to college it’s a whole new language. You are talking your profession and I have to learn that language to be accepted, to move on, and to learn.

This informant also connected the need to learn this language with her ability to develop assertive behaviors.

Transitional responses and processes were experienced by all informants during their educational experience. Transition was experienced in varying degrees from culture discontinuity to culture shock. The informants also chose a variety of approaches to help them adjust to these experiences which are discussed further under question 5.
Conflictual Processes in the Educational Environment

During the analysis of data three different conflictual processes emerged. These conflictual processes were (a) pedagogy versus andragogy during the teacher-student interactions, (b) the prominence of white dominant culture versus Native American culture or beliefs, and (c) perceptual differences in the setting of priorities.

Pedagogy vs. andragogy. Informants discussed the paternalistic, controlling behavior that existed in their interactions with advisors or faculty members in the college and university. Informants perceived themselves not in control of their learning and their outcome. Comments such as "weeding out," "instructors think . . . act like they are gods," "thrashing them so that they get into line to be a better nurse," and "some are not as compassionate as they need to be because it is a tough program" were used to verbalize their feelings and experiences. Also, informants described communication processes that were focused in "being told what to do" without assessment of their needs or encouragement. One informant shared the following situation that demonstrates these behaviors:

My first day [in lower division] was the worst, I almost didn’t go to school. I had just lost a sister in a car accident, so I was two weeks late in getting to school. I felt the person who was my advisor had no compassion and said you need to do this, this, and that, and I said, "Well, I got two kids and I won’t take over 12 credits," because she had me in this real heavy schedule.
I'd been out of school for a while, a couple of years, and I wasn't sure how much I could take on. I walked in. The lady said what I needed to take, and I thought, "I'm not ready for this." She didn't give me a glimmer of light in all of what she said. She said, "You'll be lucky if they even let you into their classes because you are so late."

This informant then described how she dealt with the situation. She returned to married housing crying and a sister helped her to become assertive. She then went to the ABC program and received their assistance. They acted as an advocate with the course instructors, planned a 5-year program of study with her, and requested a new advisor for her from the CON. This scenario exemplifies the paternalistic behavior of telling the student what she must do without assessing the needs of the student for a fit with the process. The informant had an awareness of her needs but was not asked for these perceptions nor involved in the planning process of her own education. "Not being included" and "not being given information" that could allow the informants to actively participate in program planning was a common experience for the informants. The older students were often resourceful in finding ways to change this process.

Andragogy, which is the "art and science of helping adults learn" (Knowles, 1970, p. 38), was experienced by informants through interactive processes with faculty during some of their course work. Informants were able to describe how positive it was for them:
There were a lot of people in my classes that wanted to drop out because they did not want to deal with the pressures that go along with nursing school . . . but the professors were willing to take the time to talk to you about everything. If you had something going on in your personal life that was conflicting with school . . . they were real willing to work with you. I had difficulty dealing with that [several family losses] but the faculty were willing to work with me as far as making up exams and getting papers turned in. They were willing to just sit and talk with me and that helped a real lot.

A pattern did exist in the data analysis. Informants that spoke of negative interactions and learning experiences described controlling, demanding behaviors without their input or involvement. Compassion and flexibility were non-existent in these student experiences. Positive interactions and experiences were described as open and responsive processes that supported healthy student faculty exchanges and ultimately growth in both parties. Informants spoke of more negative processes than positive ones. The older and physically apparent Native American with dark complexion and dark eyes described more negative processes, which could be related to discriminatory behavior by faculty or the informants having a greater expectation of being treated as adult learners.

During this part of the interview, learning styles of the informants were also discussed. Fourteen informants described their learning styles as listening, observing, and doing. One informant talked about listening being a significant learning style because, "Native Americans pass
on their tradition by word of mouth . . . so their memory has been developed by listening to this tradition." Another informant stated that she took notes but used them to help her recall what she heard which was much more than what she wrote. What was also significant to this learning style was having the audio material "connected to the real world."

There was a need for the theory base to have a "visible" application to the practice setting. Informants stated that lectures alone were not adequate. Instructors who used that approach were difficult to understand and students experienced "overload." Informants validated that incorporating discussions of clinical situations into the lecture format was an effective teaching strategy.

Understanding these perceptions made it apparent that observing and doing would fit as part of their learning process. Informants consistently verified in their descriptions that upper division nursing was more meaningful to them because of the ready connection between their classroom content and their clinical experience. This was due to the fact it supported the observing and doing styles of learning. Gilliland and Reyhner (1988) stated:

A child learns through observing over a long period of time, then begins to practice the skill as he feels secure in doing so. Only when they have observed until they feel competent do they feel that it is appropriate to take over and do the task. (p. 48)

This process was described by the informants. They confirmed that they did not use a trial and error process.
In fact one informant that admitted to using this process stated, "This is a weakness that I have." Knowledge of Native American nursing students' learning styles affects the instructors choice of teaching strategies and their development of laboratory and clinical activities. Assessment of the student's learning needs, student involvement in program planning, adaptation of teaching strategies to the learning styles of the student, and application of theory to the real world are congruent with andragogy as Knowles' (1970) principles define it, but not with pedagogy.

Cultural conflict. Mankiller (1991) wrote, "There is no Native Culture per se. Rather, there are over 350 different tribal groups, each with a distinct history, culture, and language. Certainly tribal people share more commonalities than differences, but differences are significant" (p. 6). Therefore, there exists not only differences between the white dominant culture and Native American culture but also among the Native American tribes. Understanding these differences supports the establishment of a culturally relevant learning environment. When they are not understood, Native Americans are placed in a "vulnerable" state. The following is an example of such a situation that reflects lack of understanding:

You know we are taught different especially about the elders. Universally we are taught to be nice to everybody, but what an elder says is law. As
you get older and become an elder on our reservation you are automatically elevated to a position of being wise. So I think that when you are in a position of being a teacher or even when you are . . . an authority, we consider people to be wiser and sometimes we get burned because of that. It's almost like as a child you are taught to be seen and not heard, especially if it pertains to an elder. So that leaves the person very vulnerable if she is in a position where the adult elder . . . takes advantage of you.

As dialogue continued, she talked about an understanding of reciprocal respect and acceptance for one another. There exists this unquestionable faith that the elder or adult is going to treat you in a respectful, caring manner. The behavior that follows this assumption is not to question or act against an adult’s or elder’s behavior when it is unacceptable and disrespectful, such as demeaning the practices of medicine men during class lectures. This leaves the student in a "burned" condition.

Informants described experiences that created "burned" conditions. The descriptions included behaviors exhibited by advisors and instructors such as "not being listened to," "non-inclusion in discussions about their needs," "no respect for their assessment of their abilities," and the "giving of inaccurate information about transfer courses." The latter behavior cost the student two years of her life, energy, and money resources. These students followed the native way of not questioning the "elders." After being "burned" some of them coped by becoming assertive and altering their traditional way of behaving. Others kept
their native way and "focused on getting through without making waves."

Another area of cultural conflict evolved from the expectations communicated by a Euro-Anglo competitive society to its members: you should be the best. Native American culture speaks to cooperation not competition. Included in this communication is the expectation of group praise for accomplished outcomes of the cooperative work. Singling out a Native American for one's work is not characteristic of their culture. The informants all identified their involvement in student groups for the purpose of studying, emotional support, and judicious use of their limited resources such as food, commodities, and gas. The group process allowed them to maintain their cooperative approach to learning. Informants described their discomfort in being "pinpointed" in the classroom. One informant shared this situation:

To be singled out when you are sitting in the back row . . . it is offensive . . . they were asking me questions that were very uncomfortable. For example, what would you do if you have someone sick and the whole family comes? This is the way it is; the whole family comes.

This informant further stated that this was happening in all the classes when they talked about culture. In this situation it should be noted that the student was present in class when very negative comments were made about Native American medicine practices. She had perceived that the
environment was not open to her communication of the Native American way.

Two other Native Americans spoke of giving guest lectures and speaking to their classes about the Native American health care practices and their culture. These students spoke of feeling it was a privilege to share with others and felt it benefited their people for others to have correct information on their culture. However, one of these informants stated, "In a lot of Indian cultures you are taught not to draw attention to yourself. That was true in high school, but it started to change in Miles City [at the community college] when they started to ask me questions."

This statement may reflect the "need to be accepted and a part" of the dominant culture and overcoming the "fear" of being rejected. The adjustment and adaptation of Native Americans to white dominant culture also varies within this informant group. This comparison of experiences helps demonstrate that cultural differences and sameness do exist among and between the Native American cultures and white dominant culture.

The demonstration of reciprocal respect and preference for cooperative educational approaches which created conflict in expectations and outcome behaviors are not considered all inclusive. The development of cultural understanding and knowledge would expand the faculties' awareness of how their own culture, values, and beliefs may
insidiously be creating conflict in the learning environment.

**Setting of priorities.** Perceptual differences used to set priorities by students and faculty created conflict. These perceptual differences were connected to cultural values and teaching philosophies. One informant stated the issue quite succinctly, her focus "was on survival not on learning." Informants with families spoke of the need to give priority to their children and family. Situations that included sick children created a great deal of stress for them. They felt in order to succeed they had to attend classes. If they chose not to attend, this could interfere with their goal of completing. They perceived the system as not responsive to the needs that existed in the real world where they lived. Instead, the system gave out messages that you "must be present in class and clinical or you will fail." These informants were very clear that they "did not want special treatment." They identified a need for "flexibility" and responsiveness to their priorities. The principles of andragogy include interactive processes between students and teachers that focus on meeting the students' learning needs in a mutually satisfying approach.
Factors Which Helped Success

Question 3: Were there events or parts of this learning process and experience that helped you to succeed?

The themes that emerged from data analysis of the responses to this question go beyond the limitations of events or parts. The informants quickly identified the three broader properties of support, determination, and goals. The following analysis of what helped the informants to succeed will focus on (a) interpersonal support processes, (b) extrapersonal support resources, and (c) determination focused towards goal completion.

**Interpersonal Support Processes**

Native American informants experienced interpersonal support through their relationships with immediate and extended family members, social communities on the university campus, role models or mentors, and student study groups. This support was communicated through words and actions.

The central source of support was identified as the immediate and extended family. Communication, actions, or both were described by all informants. This support was reflective of a very close family system. As an informant stated, "The extended family is an important part of everyone's life... whether it is good or bad... pull is still equally as great for the person with the good life
and the bad life. There is still a pull to the family life. Informants stated, "My family support really helped," "my father was really supportive and pushed me on . . . he had grandiose ideas," and "he (spouse) was very supportive of me getting my degree." Besides encouragement, their supportive relationships gave them energy and connection or a feeling of belonging. An informant stated, "I needed to be a part of the family . . . that is a big issue . . . that support revitalizes . . . I'm not a part of that college scene and I need to be a part of something." These relationships also empowered some students to act in their behalf. One student after a distressing incident with her advisor stated,

I went home [married housing] crying and one of my older sisters, [who] had helped us move in, told me, "You are paying for this. Paying for this! Your schooling and your education, and you go back and tell her you are going to take what you want to take." I think what she was saying is this is your education; you need to be more assertive and you have rights.

Verbal communication with their interpersonal support systems provided encouragement, increased confidence, revitalization, connection, and empowerment.

Family closeness was painful for some of the informants when it was absent. As one stated, "It was far more difficult being away from my family because my family was very close. Being away from and not seeing my mom and dad when I wanted to [was difficult]." Establishing a social
community on the university campus, traveling home on weekends, or both helped to fill that void.

Informants described several different types of supportive actions taken by family members. Family members "during mid terms and finals would come and get my children for a whole week. . . . They could help us out with money for the electric bill. . . . They also had the emotional support I needed [because] my family had been sober for 10 years." One informant discussed the following situation that she perceived as parental support. The informant had been "screwing around" in school and not "buckling down," so her parents removed her from school. She stated:

My parents pulled me out to work as a waitress. Hard work. [They] wouldn't let me work in a plush job. They wanted me to see what I could be doing the rest of my life. It made me buckle down and get back to studying. No working for the BIA which can be a screw off job. I grew up and don't drink at all . . . and after the first year I used the Indian Club more [for] socialization.

Spouses also performed supportive actions such as, "My husband was working on tenure [as a teacher]. That was his tenure year and he resigned his position so we could keep our family together and . . . we moved down to married housing." Other informants talked of sisters or family members that would live with them in Bozeman so they could care for the children while the informant (parent) was in school. All of these supportive actions contributed to the informants' ability to complete their educational process while maintaining their cultural and family values.
Informants that lived on campus identified their social community as a family substitute, a way to reduce isolation and loneliness, and a mechanism for survival. The informants spoke positively of married housing and the Indian Club room because it provided the setting for this socialization. An informant stated,

The [married] housing is really good in Bozeman because it was so large. We would all group together for dinner. We would depend on each other for that extended family. We would all converge to the Indian Club room. My day would consist of stopping in there . . . just seeing who was in there and stopping and chatting for a little while and then going on.

Another informant spoke of this social community as a survival mechanism:

Younger women with babies have to worry about how are they going to feed them. We never shared so much food in our lives as we did in Bozeman. It built camaraderie . . . and the same thing on the [upper division] campus . . . it wasn’t just Native Americans either . . . it was a diverse group. We pooled our resources to eat . . . to babysit, to help one another to do what we needed to do. We got mad at one another and we tried to help each other through this. Even with the stuff like how are we going to get gas money to get back to school after the holidays and what are we going to eat. We all feed one another when we got commodities . . . that was our socialization. Indians have a socialization that there is no Indian that is a stranger to one another. If you needed a night out, we babysat for one another. Family was the center . . . some of them had to go home because their kids were at home . . . those were the survival type stuff.

Their actions and communication supported the respect and acceptance that they had for one another. This in turn
contributed to their self-esteem and supported their determination to complete.

Role models and mentors provided verbal encouragement that they could succeed:

I had an older individual and nurse mentors that said, "You can do this." It was a change in your way of thinking, but it was all positive even if I was scared, and I looked around and said this is what I want to be. I wanted to be like these women.

Informants also identified another role that these individuals played which was to listen and problem solve with them. An informant stated, "She [mentor] would say you don't have to be afraid of this. What do you think about this. Let's do this. She would ask like our opinion counted . . . you have one and it counts. We would better understand each other." The informant also shared that this interactive process was seldom experienced during the formal educational process. Informants recognized that their role models and mentors "nurtured them," invested time in "teaching" them, assisted their socialization, "increased [their] self-esteem," and directed them towards further education and nursing. Many of these informants still maintain relationships with these individuals.

All the informants identified that they were involved in student study groups except one. This informant had dyslexia that made it necessary to study alone. These groups consisted of only Native Americans or were a mixed
cultural group. One informant spoke of the student study groups in the following way:

We are very socialized people. We need to be in a group. We need to be two or three in a group. Even studying I couldn't study alone. I had a study group in lower division and upper division. That was pretty much the only reason I survived. There were three of us. One was Native American. Then we had another non-Native American. She was older and got in with us. Went through all our rotations together. We shared notes and she [non-Native American] was good because she brought a different perspective into our group which was still a part of the mainstream. That is what got us through . . . the three of us together.

Other informants indicated that the study groups also functioned as their support and socialization. Another informant stated that all their responsibilities of job, family, and studies allowed them little time for socialization. Their study group met this significant need.

All informants maintained an interpersonal support system. It was viewed as essential to their academic, emotional, physical, and cultural survival, and sustained their effort to complete their education.

Extrapersonal Support Resources

Extrapersonal support resources were identified as financial assistance, organizations and programs in the university, faculty in educational institutions, employment within and outside the university, and support groups. These support resources were external to their personal life and greatly influenced their ability to succeed.
Informants spoke of financial support as being essential to their ability to attend the College of Nursing. Financial resources came from the Indian Health Service (IHS) program, tribal support and scholarships, Kellogg Foundation, student loans, and work study programs. IHS funding and tribal support had defined pay-back systems through work commitments. Therefore, some of the informants did not perceive these funding sources as an option since they could be required to move and freedom of job choice would not exist. Even with these financial resources, the 14 informants that had dependents struggled to make their money cover their costs. One informant indicated that she survived her first year in lower division because she had enough meat from her hunting trips. She also supplemented this by "going to the food bank . . . and free stores for clothing." None of the informants discussed having a surplus or having a comfortable existence because of the amount of financial aid they received. Only one single student stated she did "okay" with her finances because she closely monitored her budget and had a tribal scholarship.

The most frequently identified organizations and programs in the university were the Indian Club and Advance By Choice Program (ABC). As identified earlier, the Indian Club provided a place for supportive socialization and cultural maintenance. However, both resources provided access to many more services. These two systems connected
students with tutoring, jobs and work programs, information on other financial sources, support groups, advocates, and educational programs such as study skills, test taking skills, and remedial courses. All of these support services facilitated the students' ability to adjust to the system's academic rigors and survive. However, one service stood out as very significant. This was the advocacy role enacted by key employees of these programs. Without these advocates several of the informants concluded that they would not have completed.

Informants that discussed their use of these advocates clearly described their behavior and function. Advocates were "always visible," have an "informal office structure," actively "listen," "problem solve and then act," and "didn't intimidate you." The function of the advocate was varied and depended on the informant's problem. These advocates did the following tasks: (a) helped with locating and completing financial aid requests, (b) resolved course enrollment problems, (c) intervened with faculty in emergencies, (d) helped locate available housing, and (d) made a person feel confident. In regards to the latter function the advocates were able to "make you feel confident without knowing [they were] doing that ... so you are ready to take off on your own ... weans you from one system to another to get you on your own." This weaning
made it possible for students to easily adjust during transition to upper division nursing.

All informants did not access the resources provided by the Indian Club and the ABC program. Informants shared their reasons for this: (a) Their own tribal members were not present in the Indian Club, (b) they felt out of place if a different tribal language was being spoken, (c) they felt uncomfortable if the resource person was not of their tribe or non-Native American, (d) they had not heard of the services until they were finished with lower division courses, and (e) they did not have the time to be involved in either the club or program. In some cases their lack of involvement deprived them of resources that could have made their learning experience progress more smoothly.

Faculty in educational institutions were recognized for their ability to listen, be "flexible," and respond to the special needs of the student. These behaviors were usually identified as present in faculty working in community college settings. These faculty were described as treating the student as an "adult that lives in the real world." Faculty in nursing were only described in this capacity when a student had an emergency, for example, a death in the family; children being ill did not qualify for this type of a response. The faculty’s response to the students’ needs and treatment of their situational problems in realistic
human ways reduced the students' stress level and made learning a feasible process.

Informants also shared that the variety of teaching methods used by faculty were effective. The only time students had a great deal of difficulty learning was when instructors used only a lecture format. "Straight lecture" would create "content overload" and an inability to understand all the information. The study groups that used note comparison created the understanding needed to learn the material.

Work within and outside the university provided more to the informants than money. One informant spoke of work providing role models, socialization, and an increase in her self-esteem. She stated:

I got into the MBRS program (Minority Biomedical Research Support Program). I had exposure to doctors from all over the world. Some were getting PhDs and fellowships. Some were role models. If I didn't pick up that many skills working in research, I picked up a lot of socialization. Their backgrounds were an eye opener to me. These guys were all big shots. Because of the BIA . . . we were always class aware. It was very intimidating going into the lab in the beginning. The socialization of rubbing elbows with these PhDs was helpful. It is easy . . . comfortable for me to interact with them [doctors and people from Washington]. I don't feel inferior at all . . . [because of this work] my self-esteem was increased.

Other informants spoke of working as a certified nursing assistant (CNA). This position allowed informants to become competent in simpler nursing tasks such as blood pressures and become comfortable with the hospital setting and
schedules. Thus, when the informant practiced as a nursing student she was able to focus on more complex processes. Comfort, competence, and confidence were important to satisfactory completion of their clinical experiences.

Support groups that focused on alcoholism, such as Adult Children of Alcoholics, were considered relevant to success. Informants openly spoke of chemical and physical abuse as problems within their families and on their reservations. These problems were also present in the university’s community life. It was important to have access to these support services since the strange new environment and new expectations increased their stress and strained their coping strategies. Informants clearly communicated that both the interpersonal support processes and the extrapersonal support resources helped them succeed. All informants had varying amounts of each type of support.

**Determination Focused Toward Goal Completion**

All informants, except one, expressed a clear determination to become a nurse when they began in higher education. The exception stated she wanted to be in the health care arena and had thought of first being a doctor. The informants’ determination to complete their education remained strong because of their goal-directed behavior. Determination was defined as "perseverance," an "ornery streak to prove people wrong," and "focused"
self-commitment. Informants spoke of their determination in different ways because they had different experiences and motivators. An informant stated the following after describing her involvement in a negative experience:

That made me angry, more determined to prove him wrong. . . . My parents always instilled that [determination] in me. [They would say] you have three knocks against you . . . you are a woman, you are from [a reservation], and you are an Indian. People are going to dislike you for those three reasons, and so you need to go and prove to them that you are better if not just as good as everyone else. You are just as good . . . just as smart.

Another informant shared the following, "My grandfather in Canada told me, 'You are the only one that can fail yourself.' Make up your mind about what you are going to do and you can do it." One informant that drove a long distance each day to get to classes while in upper division stated:

It is kinda amazing when I look back, but if you want it you just go for it. Don’t let anything stand in your way and don’t think about it or you will start to feel sorry for yourself . . . then you are done for. You start to feel overwhelmed.

After describing many difficulties, including a failure in an upper division course, this informant stated, "Determination was present and I cried a lot. I threatened to give up over and over again, and they [family] said I couldn’t give up. I had to keep going." One informant spoke of the consequences that would occur if she did not persevere. "I just felt I had to finish school and . . . I knew if I ever quit I never would have gone back. It was
hard...I had to remember I was doing it for me and my kids." Their determination kept them going because their motivators gave purpose to their focused goal and their support systems supplied reinforcement and energy.

One other characteristic which relates to this concept of determination is the ability of the informants to reframe negative experiences into challenges or opportunities to succeed. As students, some were challenged to prove faculty wrong:

The only thing that may have turned me off but strangely made me more determined was I got a "D" in that [nursing] class, and when I went in to be counseled by the teacher [after getting a D on a major assignment in the class]...that was the first time I ever felt like I was being discriminated against because of my race and my age. She gave me the impression that I wasn't knowledgeable enough to learn that [nursing process] concept. She wondered why I even came in. She acted cold and aloft. She acted like she was angry at me. She said I was a border-line "C" student and didn't see me able to make it in this program. I said, "I believe you are wrong. I'm going to make it."

Another informant simply stated that all the difficulties she had in life and school "made me stronger." One other informant indicated that you had to "take the situation and turn it to a challenge...and put all your emotions into it" in order to survive the difficulties.

The Native American informants experienced many problems, disappointments, and struggles during their educational process. They agreed that the program was "tough" but they had "learned a lot." They identified that
they succeeded because they had their support systems, their support resources, their focused goal-directed behavior, and strong determination.

Factors Which Hindered Success

Question 4: Were there events or parts of this learning process and experience that hindered your success?

Analysis of the data collected in response to this question created categories similar to the analysis of factors that supported success in question 3. This is a logical outcome since the absence of enabling factors could be perceived as hindrances. The data can be grouped under intrapersonal, interpersonal, and extrapersonal environmental hindrances.

Intrapersonal Hindrances

Intrapersonal hindrances could be defined as internal struggles and processes related to their educational experiences that drew energy from completing their focused goal. There were several different properties under this category: (a) transitional shock or discontinuity, (b) cognitive conflict, (c) fear and anxiety, (d) loss and grief, and (e) anger generated by discrimination.

Transitional shock or discontinuity in response to the university system required the informants to invest energy in adjusting to unpredictable environmental responses, a new language, and new role expectations. Informants did this by
assessing the educational setting, accessing resources, creating new social groups or isolating themselves, and defining new role-specific behaviors. Lack of adjustment hindered their utilization of academic or personal support services and transition into student and nurse roles.

Cognitive conflict emerged from the internal dissonance that was created by different student and teacher expectations, differences in cultural values and beliefs, and different focuses when setting priorities. These were discussed in depth under the analysis of question 2. Deciphering culturally pertinent messages of the dominant society and adjusting to these differences while managing the needs of their dependents consumed the Native American student's energy and created stress. Thus, there was further depletion of the energy needed to remain determined and focused on their goal of completion.

Fear and anxiety were emotional responses discussed by informants in different contexts. The presence of fear was directed towards math, test-taking, and failure. One informant shared that she did remedial math and then put off taking the required course until her last semester in lower division because of her fear. This informant also shared that the high school math teacher frequently stated "they were all stupid." She felt she did not "get" math until she took the core university course. Informants related test-taking fear to their poor reading skills and the lack of
cultural sensitivity in the test questions. Also, anxiety towards test taking was connected to their need to pass and the college's requirements for movement into upper division nursing. Thus, these fears created more stress.

Fear of failure was, however, contextually broader than test-taking. One informant stated:

For me it [greatest hindrance] was the fear of not succeeding. Fear of being around the non-Native American culture. Not fitting in. Not being smart enough and to the faculty of not even being college material. Not being good enough.

Another informant stated the consequences of failure:

[We were] older than average and we were thinking if we didn't make the grade, how were we going to go on and support our families. We would have to go home as failures again . . . [failures already because of being divorced] . . . flunkies or failures.

The need to succeed and fear of failing were connected to their self-esteem and interpersonal support processes, consequently creating increased pressure and straining their confidence level.

Loss and grief were experienced in response to family separation, deaths of significant family members, and divorce of parents or self. The separation from family was a universal grief. Informants who took their immediate family with them grieved the loss of the extended family. For some informants, depression was also part of this experience. Energy was invested in traveling to their families or resolving the feelings of loneliness through substituted social processes. One informant stated the way
you survive problems is, "If things looked like they weren’t going to be real positive, my goal was to get through. So I always tried to do what I had to do to reverse the feelings that I may have had or get them resolved quickly." Of course, the degree of loss and the effectiveness of their resolution controlled the amount of energy drained from the learning process.

Informants experienced anger in response to discriminatory practices of faculty. Some students experienced these behaviors while in high school and carried this anger into their higher educational experience. An informant stated, "I was mad at society because it told me I couldn’t do this [succeed in education]." A high school advisor would not permit the informant to take the college preparation track. She stated:

My friends had taken algebra and chemistry, and he wouldn’t let me take those classes and I asked him why. . . . He said because I was Indian and our stats show that by the time you are 17 or 18 you will be pregnant and drop out of school. So we don’t spend our precious resources on people who will drop out.

This informant also experienced discrimination in a university setting while taking pre-nursing courses. While pregnant, she became ill. She called an instructor to relate that she would need to miss a test coming up and requested another time to take it. The instructor stated she must take the test or fail it. The informant had a sister with fair hair and blue eyes who also became ill.
This sister made a similar request and it was granted without difficulty. Such experiences only generated more hostility and acted as a drain on their energy sources.

Within the College of Nursing, informants described discriminatory communication. One informant stated, "An instructor made several racial slurs about Native American medicine men and witch doctors, and she had told me it is hocus-pocus stuff. I told her it wasn't that way." This informant also had an instructor write in her course evaluation that "[she] had overcome her Native Americanism and beliefs and now she can be a proficient nurse."

Likewise, a white Indian informant stated she had observed discriminatory actions and statements being made towards and about Native American students by nursing faculty. Being aware of these attitudes and behaviors creates the pressure to "prove to them [teachers] that you are better if not just as good as everyone else."

**Interpersonal Hindrances**

Interpersonal hindrances were described as behaviors within their relationships that were not supportive and interfered with their ability to focus their energies on their educational goal. These negative behaviors within their relationships were spouse abuse and use or abuse of chemicals.

Several informants spoke of the effects of spouse abuse. An informant stated:
At that part of my life I wouldn’t have questioned anybody [advisors or teachers]. For two years of my life [during school years] I had an abusive husband [that was] drinking and beating me and he wouldn’t let me study at home. At that point in my life I thought I deserved it all.

For this informant the lack of assertiveness by not questioning an advisor permitted several advising errors.

One informant stated her husband would not let her go to school, which is psychological and social abuse. She divorced him and began her education. Another informant talked about her experience with abusive behavior:

My kids’ dad was my biggest problem while in school. I think there were two times I almost quit. Once was when I took the quarter over and once right before I went to lower division that I almost didn’t continue. He wouldn’t come out and tell me to quit, but he would do things to try and get me to quit. That is why my boy didn’t stay there. He would bring women into my home when I wasn’t there and things like that. I think there was some jealousy; he didn’t want me to succeed. I don’t know if he thought he would lose us or what. . . . Alcohol is part of his problem. His biggest problem. . . . He doesn’t beat me anymore. He knew I couldn’t support the family if I couldn’t work.

This informant almost lost her ability to succeed due to the stress and family problems caused by the abusive behavior.

Abuse of spouse was often connected to abuse of chemicals. However, chemical abuse was also spoken of from a personal perspective which affected interpersonal relations. One informant shared her own abuse of alcohol that generated a parental response of removing her from school for a semester. Another informant spoke of her pride in her family’s 10 years of sobriety. This commitment to
sobriety sustained her through her spouse's drug abuse during the last year of nursing education and their divorce after her graduation. These informants were challenged to cope with the difficulties present in their interpersonal relationships while maintaining their focused determination to complete their education.

**Extrapersonal Hindrances**

Informants identified extrapersonal environmental hindrances as: (a) the lack of assessment processes, lack of communication about resources and services, or both, and (b) the presence of a negative learning environment. These hindrances created barriers to accessing relevant resources in a timely manner and validated the need for a culturally relevant educational process.

Informants identified the assessment of their educational needs and support systems as a significant missing process. Informants stated that they were told what to do without asking for their input. An informant stated, "It was like this is the way we do it and this is what is [expected]". . . not "what is your idea about this?"

Another informant stated:

I felt that the person that was my advisor had no compassion and said you need to do this, this, and that, and I said, "Well, I got two kids and I won't take over 12 credits. She had me in this real heavy schedule. . . . I'd been out of school for a while. . . . She didn't give me a glimmer of light in all that she said. . . . It was other programs that really helped me get through it.
The lack of an interactive dialogue between the student and the faculty or advisor created a controlling pedagogical environment. This was not an effective approach in assessing or meeting the needs of the adult Native American informants. Therefore, they sought the assistance of an outside advocate to deal with their issues.

The second missing process identified by the informants as a hindrance to their education was the communication of resources and support services. Informants stated, "The advisors tell you this and that, but they don’t give you any information. You know there are these support groups. This group you may want to see, or there is this Native American study group." Informants spoke of their advisors as having knowledge about the nursing program but not about academic and personal support programs; "their focus was too narrow" to meet their needs.

Informants reported that this missing information was obtained through communication with friends, other Native American students, relatives, and tribal members. It was apparent that information on resources was accessed only through oral exchange. If faculty and advisors relied on written materials about resources as their method of communication, it was not a successful approach. Certainly this approach connects with the faculty’s lack of cultural awareness. Native American informants validated that oral
communication was the major mechanism for sharing information.

The second environmental hindrance was the negativeness and rigidity present in the learning environment. Informants identified what they needed in a learning environment and what they experienced. Within their cultural framework, they needed an "open," "informal," "flexible," "supportive," and "compassionate" environment. Informants that experienced one or more of these descriptors during their learning process did so only in upper division nursing and often in response to a major loss. One informant stated:

During school I had a lot of personal problems that made me feel that I couldn't deal with any more. . . . But after talking with family and faculty, I realized that they were there to support me and help me get through this. . . . I got through the family problems that were hindering the learning. . . . The faculty responded and were willing to be there when I needed them [to listen].

Other informants spoke about their negative perceptions and experiences. An informant shared the following:

In upper division it is very stressful. There is a dark cloud over your head all the time. I think it was reinforced by the instructors all the time. In fact other students who work here and graduated from MSU . . . would bring up an experience in nursing school and someone else would respond with, "Oh yeah! Wasn't it the black hole of our lives." It becomes the survival of the fittest. You will do this or it was a sense of impending doom through the whole thing. I know my study friend shared she was having nightmares and feared the whole thing. Another one shared she thought she was going crazy. . . . It was the fear that the upper division instructors and classes put in us. It was evident in lower division too. Fear is not a pleasant experience nor was nursing
school. I hear it from other nurses too. . . . I didn’t feel in control of my ability to succeed. . . . I hear a lot of nurses say that nursing instructors think they are gods. They seem to think that they are gods.

Another informant provided the following information:

I think the program of nursing was a difficult and high stress process. I made it through okay. I’d like to get the masters, but I’ll never come back to MSU. Just because of the difficulty I had with teachers. Tended to be a little more difficult with students than they needed to be. . . . I don’t know if it is a control issue with them, and maybe as a student at 18 or 19 it might be okay, but when you’re in your later 20s it’s hard to deal with people like that, but you know you have to get through, but I think that some of the teachers seek out the student and make their life a little more difficult than they need to. I don’t know if they think that they are thrashing them so that they get into line to be a better nurse. . . . In nursing they talk about eating our young, and that starts in nursing school and some are not as compassionate as they need to be because it is a tough program. It was a good program that way. I was ready to get out and work. They prepared me well but I couldn’t come back and get a masters here.

Another informant shared how she and other nursing students reframed a negative clinical experience:

We came to the consensus that this person wasn’t trying to make us feel like the stupidest people on earth but was trying to make us strong. We tried to look at it like that, and I truly believe that she was letting us know that someplace in our nursing career we would run into a person that would challenge our nursing base and knowledge and just challenge us personally. I think [the instructor] wanted to see how well we would stand up to that. This instructor was the only person that made me cry.

The informant was able to identify that the behavior she experienced was not discriminatory since most of her classmates held the same perception. The students coped by
reframing their negative process. However, this experience created more pressure and stress in the learning environment. Informants did identify that there were instructors in the system that provided an effective learning environment. The younger traditional students (not married) had less hindrances to report in all three areas. The non-traditional students had more complex situations, had expectations of being treated as adults, and reported more negative experiences during the educational process. However, these hindrances did not stop them from completing. One informant shared her perspective on why students quit:

In upper division I was afraid. I lost many classmates [in upper and lower division and some were relatives]. . . . A lot had to do with problem solving, their attitudes, and their expectations. The expectations of the school that they felt wasn’t explained to them or they weren’t helped through. Loss of others was scary. Problems related to family with external demands [and] others not supportive of them. I think that individual self-commitment and determination . . . the work culture so to speak and their values [supports success]. They wanted it but weren’t able to focus [and] worked on it to a lesser degree and [in some situations] they had a husband to support them.

This informant compared key values, beliefs, and behaviors that supported her ability to overcome hindrances to the lesser investment of unsuccessful Native Americans.

In summarizing the hindrances it should be noted that students did perceive financial support as key to obtaining and completing their education. It was not an area that was quickly identified as a hindrance; the researcher usually
asked for their perception about financial aid. Financial assistance fit in a category of essential to their survival and educational process. Issues relating to accessing and retaining the support were more of a hindrance. Students required assistance in completing the complex paperwork for financial aid. Rules that mandated a full load of credits and program completion within a certain number of years added stress to the learning process. Also the pay-back through a work arrangement that could require moving away from family was unacceptable to some of the informants. These rules are not congruent with the characteristics and needs of the non-traditional Native American nursing student.

Approaches to Dealing with Hindrances

Question 5: How did you deal with these hindrances?

The outcome of this data analysis is similar to the categories that emerged with the analysis of the hindrances. The approaches to dealing with the hindrances clearly connected with the factors that helped them to succeed. The approaches that the informants used to deal with the hindrances are grouped under intrapersonal coping, interpersonal support, and utilization of extrapersonal environment.
Intrapersonal Approaches

Intrapersonal approaches are internal coping strategies that the informants utilized to deal with the hindrances they experienced during their nursing education. Their determination, coupled with a focused goal, was the core to their intrapersonal processes. Strategies chosen to deal with hindrances supported the maintenance of the informant's attitude and focus. Several strategies were utilized.

1. Isolation was used to create and maintain a focused vision. This allowed the informants to control the distractions and demands being placed on them by their interpersonal and extrapersonal environments.

2. They "bottled-up feelings" for the purpose of maintaining status quo. Informants that chose this approach "did not want to make waves" and just wanted to get through. Another informant stated, "I tend to keep things in and don't want to get a lot of people involved." These informants seldom spoke of acting assertively.

3. Catharsis provided the emotional relieve that the informants needed to reduce stress. An informant shared, "I cried a lot." This approach was used in isolation, in the presence of family and close friends, or both.

4. Withholding of information protected the person from discriminatory behavior of faculty. Students shared that once they become aware of the racial or prejudicial thinking of individuals, they were careful not to become the
target of these behaviors. Native Americans that were lighter complexioned or white Indians used this strategy more than other informants.

5. Reframing the situation from a difficult problem to a challenge or new opportunity supported their feeling of control and allowed for a quick resolution. One informant stated that problems made her "grow stronger." Another informant stated, "You resolve the problem quickly by reframing the problem or solving it." Part of the process of reframing was the informants’ recall of "reassuring" and "wise" words from parents and elders.

6. "You bend and let go of some things" for the purpose of bridging the two cultures. Coping with the Euro-Anglo culture of the university system required informants to assess what was significant to their Native American beliefs and practices. They were then able to determine what could be given up or retained for the duration of their nursing education. This process also helped them identify the new behaviors that they needed to learn. For example, an informant stated that faculty had to teach her to look into the eyes and faces of her patients.

As a group, informants did not allow the hindrances to control their intrapersonal environment or the ability to succeed. The "back burner" issues were appropriately prioritized and given full attention and energy toward resolutions after graduation.
Interpersonal Approaches

The interpersonal support processes that helped the informant succeed were also used to deal with hindrances. The various support systems assumed different roles depending on the hindrances with which the informant struggled. The following are examples of interpersonal support utilization to deal with hindrances.

1. Immediate and extended family members were a source of energy, encouragement, empowerment, and resources. These enablers supported their ability to survive spousal abuse and provided the strength to access extrapersonal resources (e.g., an advocate from ABC) and verbalize their needs.

2. Study groups were a source of emotional support, socialization, and survival. Feelings of loss and loneliness for family members were reduced through group interaction and socialization. Instructor issues (e.g., preferential treatment or discriminatory actions) and spousal behaviors were safely discussed and validated in this environment. Limited commodities and services were shared.

3. Social groups established through the Indian Club or the married housing environment became extended or substitute families to the informants. This provided the connection that the informants valued as part of their culture. Basic survival goods were also shared in this group.
4. Their relationships with mentors and role models reinforced their self-worth and built their confidence. Informants utilized such people when they needed nurturing and reinforcement that they "could succeed."

The interpersonal support utilized by the informants was effective in reducing the negative affects of experienced hindrances. Informants identified that the approaches they used while in lower division were modified and strengthened in upper division nursing. For example, the small clinical groups and classes in upper division supported an increase in the development and utilization of study groups.

Utilization of Extrapersonal Environment

Utilization of extrapersonal environmental enablers to deal with hindrances correlated somewhat with extrapersonal support resources that helped the informants succeed. Informants were able to deal with all their extrapersonal hindrances through the use of all three approaches. The negative learning environment was the only hindrance that students expressed little control over; this was perceived as the domain of faculty. Intrapersonal and interpersonal approaches were utilized to cope with this hindrance. Locating extrapersonal resources was usually accomplished through oral communication among their Native American
cohort. The following is a list of these extrapersonal resources and their purpose.

1. Financial aid, which was obtained through their tribes, IHS, Kellogg Foundation, scholarships, and work study programs, was essential to obtaining an education. Even with the limitations imposed by these sources, the students perceived the assistance as essential.

2. Support groups served as a forum for problem solving and the development of self-awareness. Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA) and Alcohol Anonymous (AA) were utilized to support healthy stress management and maintain a balance.

3. Support programs and services (e.g., ABC and Indian Club) were accessed for academic services, advocates, and a social environment. These programs and services also assisted students in bridging the gaps between the two cultures by explaining the new culture's language, rules, or policies and system expectations within a supportive environment.

4. Advisors and faculty were utilized to gain information about the nursing curriculum and their current course work and to resolve issues created by conflicts between the students' needs and educational expectations. These individuals were a source of knowledge and power that supported program completion.
5. Preceptorship courses or summer preceptorship programs were taken for the purpose of building their nursing skills, increasing their familiarity with the health care system, and enhancing their level of confidence. Preceptorships also exposed them to nursing role models that nurtured and taught them about "the real world."

Recommendations

Question 6: What recommendations would you make to the College of Nursing that you think would benefit the Native American student beginning in the nursing program at MSU?

The data analysis for this question includes responses to this question and recommendations made during the discussion of the other questions. Informants did not limit their recommendations to just the CON. They told their whole story and kept recommendations within the context of their whole educational experience. The recommendations are categorized under (a) University and College of Nursing and (b) learning environment. The recommendations are a reflection of informants' positive and negative experiences, approaches used to succeed, and observations of the struggles of fellow Native American nursing students.

Recommendations to the University and College of Nursing

The recommendations that relate to the University connect with students' reaction to the size of the system, previous higher educational experiences or lack of one, and
their transitional adjustment. The recommendations that relate to the CON connect with their experience within that curriculum. The following are recommendations that relate to the university:

1. Provide information on and access to a variety of financial resources that meet the diverse needs of the Native American student group. Assist faculty in understanding the financial resources available to Native Americans.

2. Provide "friendly" assistance in completing application forms for financial aid. Also, advocate to the federal government for alteration in these forms so they are user friendly and can be interpreted by students from diverse cultures.

3. Provide support services that are culturally relevant. These services need to include tutoring and remedial assistance especially in math and science, development of study skills, support groups (e.g., ACOA, AA), and counseling.

4. Reduce the number of students in sections of university core courses and nursing prerequisites. As informants stated, these courses were as large as the high schools they attended. Included in this recommendation is the elimination of common hour tests. In both cases the issue is size, which creates greater anxiety and reduces the interactive relationship between the student and teacher.
5. Expand the on-campus housing for married students and their families. Married housing was a strong center of support for students since it provided the environment to socialize and create a new extended family. For some informants, housing was not available; they lived outside of Bozeman and traveled daily to classes.

6. Provide information on housing options (e.g., HUD, low income), day care resources, and financial aid to incoming Native American students. One informant stated:

Housing wasn't available if you had kids . . . I called 8 months ahead. They said they had a 2 year waiting list. The rent is extremely high in the area [so she lived in Three Forks.] Make it possible for students to get HUD housing . . . . I was paying full day care, $18 a day. I wasn't getting $18 a day . . . . If I hadn't planned ahead with my hunting meat . . . I wouldn't have made it.

When students are able to meet their survival needs, they are free to focus on learning.

7. Communicate to high school counselors about Native American success in college track programs. Get the CON program information out to high school students by using Native American graduates during career days. Place program information from the College of Nursing in IHS health clinics. Have counselors recommend to Native American adult learners that they begin their higher education in smaller systems, which assists them in "getting their feet wet," and then transfer to the university.
These recommendations acknowledge that programs and services do exist but need further development and evaluation. For example, the tutoring that is provided was not always effective in meeting the students’ needs. The person providing the assistance was not using an approach that benefited the student or was not culturally relevant.

In addition, the students’ ability to access and utilize services was limited. This point relates to oral communication as the most significant way to obtain these data. The university needs to identify a culturally relevant way to get the information out and determine how to support a Native American network.

Recommendations that were made to the College of Nursing related to the hindrances that the students experienced. The following recommendations focus on the structure and the process of communication in the CON.

1. Assess the students’ status. For example, the student may have been out of school for some time and in need of a gradual re-introduction to the educational process. An informant stated, "Assess first, then plan." Identify the person’s total obligations, learning styles, support resources, and perceived weaknesses. With these data a curriculum that supports success can then be developed for the student.

2. Build flexibility into the curriculum that allows for individualization. Recognize that some students will
prefer to take 5 years instead of 4 years to complete. Develop a curriculum model that supports this choice.

3. Appoint an advisor that is interested in working with the special needs of Native Americans. This person should not be narrowly focused on the CON curriculum and would have knowledge of university resources. The role of advocate (previously defined under analysis of question 3) would also be assumed by this person. This advisor would create an open, informal atmosphere and a visible presence.

4. Create a mentorship program that facilitates transition into the university and college settings. This could be accomplished within the Indian Club, through the student nurses' organization, or through the alumni association. The mentors could be nursing students, Native American students, or both.

5. Develop a fund that can provide assistance to indigent students. For example, one informant talked of having no money to buy the required stethoscope for her clinical experience. A decision between food or instrument was necessary. This fund would be available for emergencies and valid needs. Pay-back would be delayed until after the student graduated or money is given as a grant. The intent would be to move the focus from survival to learning.

Recommendations made to the college and university focused on meeting their survival needs and supporting their transition into the educational system. They identified
information and processes that needed to be developed or enhanced for survival.

Learning Environment

The recommendations in this area identified a need for faculty, as a group, to become culturally aware. With this new awareness, they should begin alteration of their interactive processes and teaching methodology.

Recommendations relating to the learning environment were categorized into two areas (a) supportive processes and (b) teaching strategies.

In the category of supportive processes, informants focused on the need to develop an atmosphere that was responsive to their culturally based needs. The need to experience connection with and acceptance by the dominant culture was significant. The following is a list of recommendations that support this connection for faculty:

1. Become informed about Native American culture. The Native American student wants to be recognized as different with special needs. They do not want to be coerced into acting as a "white man." They want the faculty’s assistance in bridging the two cultures and assuming role specific behavior as student and nurse within their cultural domain. This assistance requires a mutual respect, acceptance, and sharing of their cultural beliefs and practices.

2. Acknowledge the difference that exists in setting priorities. Family is central to their maintaining a
balance and support system. Faculty need to be flexible in the way course objectives are met without reducing the quality of program, thus meeting both sets of priorities. Negotiation is the key process.

3. Reinforce to the Native American students that they can succeed in the nursing program. Present a positive, encouraging posture. This supports their self-esteem and builds their confidence.

4. Recognize their status as an adult learner. Apply adult learning theory which includes identification of their experiential base, assessment of learning needs, and immediate application of new knowledge to practical life processes.

5. Involve students in all processes. Whether it is advising or teaching, faculty need to request the student’s perception in a respectful manner. Reinforce that their ideas are valued and equal to others. Encourage and teach problem-solving and assertive techniques.

6. Give accurate information regarding curriculum requirements. Recognize there may be various ways to complete the curriculum requirements. Listen, assess, and do joint planning in this area.

7. Help students determine what creates and supports their harmony. With this awareness, jointly create a plan that will assist in maintaining this harmony and reduce stress.
These recommendations reflect Native American students' cultural behaviors. Enacting the recommendations would create a less foreign environment and one that is more conducive to supporting their success.

Informants readily discussed which teaching strategies worked for them in their learning process. Their success in the learning process correlated with the strategies used or not used by faculty. The following recommendations were shared by the informants.

1. Use a mix of methods in classroom teaching. Informants learned by listening, observing, and doing. Reading was not their preferred approach and students found it "not as meaningful." Lecturing while using overheads or summarized handouts was most useful.

2. Connect the classroom theory to clinical situations, real life, or both. Informants recognized this connection helped them understand and retain the material longer.

3. Utilize group discussion and small co-operative work groups within the classroom process. These groups should be heterogeneous, a mix of Native American and non-Native American. Encourage students to develop their own study groups. Small group processes were key to their learning and meeting their social needs, survival needs, or both.
4. Encourage Native American students to use internship or preceptorship programs. Informants agreed that these programs increased their skill level, comfort with nursing care schedules, and confidence.

5. Work towards culturally sensitive tests. Consider having students write sample test questions.

6. Incorporate greater use of community based health care services into the clinical experiences. Have clear boundaries and expectations established for these experiences because many Native American nurses work in community clinics or small rural hospitals.

The goal of these recommendations is to create a culturally relevant learning environment that retains high standards and supports successful completion by the Native American student.

Summary

Informants openly shared perceptions of their educational experience at MSU--Bozeman, College of Nursing. These informants also presented common behavioral characteristics. These behaviors were observed by this researcher or shared by informants as belonging to them. The following is a list of these behavioral characteristics: (a) verbally assertive when situations required this behavior, (b) goal-directed focus to become a baccalaureate nurse, (c) strong determination to complete along with the
ability to reframe the negative into a challenge, (d) motivated to improve their existence for self and family, and (e) accepting and respecting of the diversity among other people and cultures. Native American nursing students recognized these common behavioral characteristics, their support processes and resources, and the ability to bridge cultures as significant to their success. Also, the social nature of the Native American and the educational process creates a need for interactive processes and permeable boundaries between students, instructors, the institution, and external influences.
CHAPTER 5

CREATING A MODEL

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify key factors and enablers that hinder or support successful completion of the Montana State University, College of Nursing (CON) program by the Native American student. This supported the creation of recommendations that will increase the retention and completion rate of the Native American nursing student at Montana State University. A grounded theory approach was utilized since it is a qualitative methodology that connects with symbolic interactionism (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). Both provide a distinctive approach to the study of human and social life. Grounded theory allows the researcher to discover and explore emerging core variables that evolve from the empirical life under study. It also provides a means to learn about the participant's world and the interacting influences of personal, social, and cultural characteristics without imposing the cultural biases of the interviewer.

Constant comparative analysis provided the mechanism to analyze and organize the data. Categories were systematically identified and collapsed further into significant variables and their properties. A model emerged
from the data during this analytical process. After completing their interviews, three informants were asked to give feedback on this model. Modifications of the model were made in response to their feedback and the constant data analysis. Informants were able to verify a fit between their perceptions and the model.

Chapter 5 discusses the meaning of this model (Figure 1). It will begin with an examination of the model's structural organization and continue with an explanation of the properties that relate to the individual Native American nursing student, the instructor, institutions, and external influences.

Explanation of the Model

Structural Organization

The model represents interactive enablers that Native American informants discussed during their interviews. The core variables of individual, instructor, institutions, and external influences are similar to the grouping that Seaman and Fellenz (1989) used in discussing how adults learn. These authors identified the needs and preferences of the learner, teacher, organization, and content. This model focuses on holistic learning needs and preferences identified in the properties that supported the success of Native American nursing students. Also, this model gives direction to the recommendations made to the College of Nursing.
Figure 1. Interactive Enablers that Support Success for Native American Nursing Students.
The social nature of the Native American culture is symbolized in the broken lines of the circles because they depict permeable boundaries and interaction between the core variables and their properties. The permeable boundaries allow for the exchange of information, values, beliefs, practices, traditions, and languages. The exchange of new objects or symbols enables the members of the two cultures, Native American and Euro-Anglo, to interpret their worlds, to incorporate new behaviors into their responses, and to predict or anticipate subsequent interactions. The model indicates that the systems within each circle are open and dynamic. The properties within each circle identify actions that enable the success of the Native American student.

Circles were used in honor of Native Americans and their beliefs and traditions. Long Standing Bear Chief (1992) wrote the following explanation:

A circle is significant to us as Indians because it never ends. . . . Our life is dependent upon the Creator. Therefore the circle is symbolically looked upon as the way of the Creator and how things on this Mother Earth exist. Our way of life is never ending as long as we honor and respect the joy of life. The circle is indeed a sacred symbol. . . . The Indian tipi is also circular, and it faces east so the round sun can waken us in the early morning hours. Everything is alive and we are intertwined. We are related to all things. We are not squares, divided into sections, who do not interact with one another. (pp. 31-32)

The circles are a reminder that all life, in all its diversified states, is sacred and deserving of honor and respect.
In the instructor zone, the triangles connect a significant behavior (at the apex) with two other behaviors that are necessary for its completion. The triangles reinforce the interrelatedness of all things.

Individual Native American Nursing Student

The individual is at the center of this model because it is the student learner that is the focus of the educational process. Also the student is central because the model is based on data collected from graduates that shared their educational experience as a student; therefore, the model evolves from their collective perceptions. Within the circle labeled individual, there are identified properties necessary for success in nursing education. They portray a holistic approach to the educational process. From this humanistic orientation, the learner views the learning process as a personal act that fulfills one's potential and provides the opportunity to move towards self-actualization and autonomy (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991).

This orientation seems to fit the importance of harmony in and development of the whole person that is part of the Native American way (Taylor, 1996). Thus, to the Native American, completing an educational degree is dream fulfillment or self-development and it is a tool for survival.
Discussion of Properties

Focuses on goal. The individual’s focus on goal attainment includes the determination to complete that goal. This focusing permitted the student to direct all energies and organization of one’s efforts towards graduation, family and job. The narrowness of this focus supports one’s ability to quickly reframe negative situations to challenges or place issues on the back burner until after accomplishing the goal. Also, this kind of focusing keeps the student in control of energy utilization.

Invests in self-evaluation. A student needs to invest in several areas of self-evaluation. The first area is an assessment and articulation of one’s goal. A second area of self-evaluation includes what motivates self to succeed and how this supports one’s determination to complete. The third area is an evaluation of one’s support systems that assist in revitalization or serve as a survival resource. The fourth area is an assessment of what part of their Native American culture is significant to themselves. This awareness helps one determine what is different between cultures, what guides priority setting in each culture, what one needs to retain or can give up from one’s culture, and what one needs to learn or change. The fifth assessment focuses on the academic strength and weaknesses of the student. For example, does the student have study skills,
If fears or anxieties regarding test-taking, or a strong preparation in math and science? The student should also identify one’s learning styles to determine compatibility with teaching methodology or identify if the need exists for an expansion of their approaches to learning. Evaluation in all these areas increases the student’s ability to recognize conflict, dissonance, and sources of stress which reduce the energy available for succeeding. This recognition enables the student to seek resources and support services that meet one’s needs.

**Adapts to the culture.** The Native American nursing student needs to adjust to the Euro-Anglo culture of the University and College. Self-evaluation will provide knowledge and awareness of differences and similarities between cultures. The student needs to determine strategies that will bridge the gap between the cultures at a level that is comfortable to self and supports program completion. Key to this process is the student’s ability to maintain a family connection, to develop a balance or harmony between self and the environment, to establish a sense of predictability and security in the new environment, and to assume behaviors that are congruent with the new roles. The student may choose to do a transitional adjustment in stages, such as beginning in the educational process at a tribal or community college and progressing to a university setting. This provides the opportunity to adjust to the
demands of higher education before having to adjust to a larger, more foreign educational environment.

**Develops assertive skills.** The student's development of assertive skills will begin to empower the student to advocate for one's issues and needs. The student will then have the ability to actively involve self in program planning, participate in problem-solving processes within and outside of the academic setting, and seek connection with support resources. Likewise, assertive skills will provide the mode for communicating one's self-evaluation in an effective manner. Practicing these skills will also enhance the student's self-esteem and confidence. These feelings are important to the functional behaviors expected in clinical health care settings. Assertive skills will support the development of a partnership between the student and the educational environment.

**Establishes support community.** The student's establishment of a support community was considered crucial to one's success. The support community reduces loneliness and isolation, provides socialization within one's cultural system, acts as a substitute for absent family members, creates a mechanism for the sharing of survival resources, furnishes a network for the oral communication of information, establishes a source of emotional support and encouragement, and assists in one's interpretation and
validation of messages from the environment. All of these services contribute to the student’s efforts in self-evaluation and cultural adjustment.

Socializes into roles of student and nurse. Self-evaluation and cultural adjustment assist the Native American’s socialization into roles of student and nurse. The degree of effort and success in all these areas affects the student’s ability to interpret new role expectations, to identify a mutual fit between these roles and self, to begin practicing these new behaviors, and to hold self accountable and responsible for the outcomes. A student that adapts to the new roles and environment realizes these have replaced the lost securities of job, family, and reservation or rural life. Also, students use mentors and role models to facilitate the assumption of new roles. These nurturing individuals act as active listeners, problem-solvers, and teachers. Some students use preceptorship courses or work environments to access these mentors.

Masters course content. A successful student uses the six previous behavioral properties to accomplish the mastery of course content. Energy that comes from the student’s determination and goal-directed behavior is used to master the course content. The student’s investment in self-evaluation facilitates the development of study groups, utilization of support resources (e.g., tutoring), and other
learning approaches that support success. Applying course content to behavioral presentations in the clinical setting is an aspect of role socialization. Cultural adjustment reinforces the student's belief that one can succeed. Assertive skills and the social support of the community empower the student to display actions that validate mastery of content to the faculty. Mastery of course content supports completion of the educational program.

All seven of the behavioral properties are interrelated. The Native American nursing student uses these behaviors to reach the goal of becoming a baccalaureate nursing graduate.

**Instructor**

In this model the instructor is any faculty member that interacts with the Native American student in the capacity of teaching, advising, or both. The properties identified and validated by the informants need to interact with properties of the individual to accomplish successful completion of the educational program. The lack of these properties or their opposite behavior creates hindrances to successful program completion by Native American nursing students. The six behavioral properties are connected by two triangles. One of the three behaviors is central to the presence of the other two behaviors. These six behavioral
properties are discussed as two triangular groupings; the key behavior of each is identified and discussed first.

**Triangle 1: Properties Related to the Learning and Teaching Process**

Practices humanistic andragogical approaches. The key behavioral property of this triangle has two focuses. The first is a humanistic orientation to the educational environment and the second is andragogy.

Humanism fits with the Native American way. Native American graduates stated the need for faculty to be "compassionate" and "nurturing." They identified the importance of being involved in program planning. These Native American informants wanted faculty that actively listened to them, treated them with respect, and accepted them as culturally different. They did not want to be treated as less capable, and they entered the CON because of its high standards. Native American informants requested the development of an informal and friendly learning environment that was responsive to their "real world" issues. They expected to grow holistically and become well prepared to function effectively as a bachelor prepared nurse.

Humanists include important thinkers such as Rousseau, Comenius, and Pestalozzi. Rousseau's *Emile* (as cited in Elias & Merriam, 1980) expounded on the natural goodness of human nature and the need for education to preserve the
naturalness of man. Thus, "the humane and sensitive teacher would allow the learner to become self-sufficient, to develop all his/her potentialities, and to learn naturally" (p. 113). Rousseau advocated for the learner to be the center of a warm and relaxed student-teacher relationship. The purpose of education is to develop the whole person. This humanistic orientation permits the individual to maintain one’s cultural beliefs and practices in diverse settings. It also supports the development of new role behaviors as a professional nurse.

Elias and Merriam (1980) state:

Carl Rogers articulated and popularized many of the practical applications of a humanistic philosophy to education. His emphasis upon self-initiated learning that is relevant to the learner, student participation in planning and evaluation, the teacher as facilitator, and group methods has served as a model for adult educators. (p. 131)

Native American informants identified the need for humanism in their educational experience. Their stated need for involvement in planning their educational program and process and for the utilization of group approaches in the learning activities fits with Carl Rogers’ philosophy.

Humanism also fits well with Malcolm Knowles’ theoretical framework for adult educators, andragogy as contrasted to pedagogy. A central assumption to his framework maintains that as persons mature their self-concepts move from being dependent personalities toward being self-directed human beings (Knowles, 1970, p. 39).
Accepting this assumption means one accepts the autonomous nature of the adult, and therefore educational strategies need to reflect this perception. Native American students would agree with Elias and Merriam's (1980) statement that the learning environment should be "supportive, cooperative, informal, and . . . cause adults to feel accepted and respected" (p. 132). Because adults are autonomous and self-directed, they have the ability to determine their own educational needs. As adult learners the informants desired the presence of humanism in the educational setting. These Native Americans recognized the importance of developing the self-concept, supporting the process of self-diagnosed learning and evaluation, creating a cooperative rather than a competitive atmosphere, and demonstrating respect and trust to the adult learner.

There are three other assumptions from Knowles' (1970, p. 39) andragogy that fit the Native American nursing student's learning experience. First, this student comes to the learning environment with an accumulated reservoir of experience that can be used as a resource for learning. Secondly, his/her desire to learn becomes focused on the developmental tasks that relate to one's social roles. Thirdly, the adult student desires immediate application of knowledge rather than delayed application, and learning shifts from subject-centeredness to problem-centeredness.
Based on this understanding of andragogy, faculty teaching adult Native American nursing students need to adjust the teaching process to meet the students' needs since they are at the center. The learning climate that is helpful to the Native American student needs to psychologically provide acceptance, respect, and support. It needs to have a spirit of mutuality between student and teacher as partners in learning and to have freedom of expression without discrimination and ridicule. The Native American needs a friendly informal atmosphere that allows opportunity for socialization between peers and faculty. The behavior of the instructor is the most influential factor in creating this learning environment (Adams, 1992).

Another need expressed by adult Native American students was the desire to be active participants in the planning of their program and learning processes. Andragogy emphasizes the involvement of adult learners in a process of self-diagnosis of needs for learning. This process exists in three phases: (a) construct a model of competencies expected as an outcome of the program so the student has a vision of the "good" nurse which articulates the amalgamated goals of student, instructor, institution, and society; (b) provide experiences in which the student can assess one's present level, compare it to the constructed model, safely practice new behaviors, and receive feedback on strengths and weaknesses which supports further assessment;
(c) help the learner measure gaps between the real and the ideal model, support dissatisfaction, and assist in identifying specific directions for growth since this process motivates the person to learn. This process of self-diagnosis of learning needs would be effective with Native Americans during program planning and their progression through the curriculum.

Native American nursing students also stated a need to be active participants in defining their learning activities (e.g., clinical activities and classroom assignments). A basic element in the technology of andragogy is involving the learners in planning the strategies that will support completion of course objectives and goals. The teacher serves in the capacity of a procedural guide and content resource. Permitting individuals to be active in this process enhances the commitment the person has to the outcome.

Native American nursing students recognized that their active participation in the learning-teaching process enhanced comprehension. Also, timely application of theory to real world situations supported their visual learning styles. These styles are congruent with the andragogical approach to conducting a leaning experience. Andragogical practice treats the learning/teaching transaction as the mutual responsibility of learners and teachers. Teaching strategies need to incorporate clinical situations that
demonstrate theory application and situations that pose clinical problems requiring group discussion and problem-solving or both. Cooperative groups, small discussion groups, and study groups are all relevant strategies to encourage in and outside the classroom.

*Creates culturally relevant learning environment.* On the second point of the triangle is the property creates culturally relevant learning environment. In defining culturally relevant teaching, it can be contrasted to "assimilationist" teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1992). The latter approach represents and champions the status quo. Therefore, its major function is to transmit the dominant culture and induct students into a predetermined role in society without the ability to critically question the way all people are educated. In essence the differences that exist between cultures are ignored and coercion is used for assimilation. Ladson-Billings (1992) defined culturally relevant teaching as:

> [It] serves to empower students to the point where they will be able to examine critically educational content and process and ask what its role is in creating a truly democratic and multicultural society. It uses the students’ culture to help them create meaning and understand the world. Thus, not only academic success, but social and cultural success are emphasized by the culturally relevant teacher. (p. 110)

A culturally relevant learning environment would provide students the opportunity to examine aspects of their culture and other cultures (Gilliland & Reyhner, 1988). They would
then be able to critically determine what aspects they wish to retain or give up and replace with aspects from other cultures. None of the cultures in the environment are denigrated or ranked as better. Instead, there is a verbalized equality and all are valued. Students who are involved in this approach are then able to transfer this process to a multicultural health care setting.

The term culturally responsive education is also similar in intent to culturally relevant. Erickson (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1992) referred to culturally responsive education as a "special effort by the school that can reduce miscommunication by teachers and students, foster trust, and prevent the genesis of conflict that moves rapidly . . . to bitter struggle of negative identity exchange" (p. 110). Osborn (cited in Ladson-Billings, 1992) compiled a list of 24 ethnographic studies that validate 11 assertions related to culturally responsive pedagogies. These eleven connect with culturally relevant teaching and reflect the findings of this study. The eleven assertions include the teacher's recognition that:

- socio-political, historic, economic factors beyond the purview of the school constrain what transpires in the classroom [external factors];
- the teacher's cultural background is not the determinant of culturally responsive teaching behavior;
- student agendas during lessons are often different from that of the teacher;
- students need some flexibility in rules of behavior [similar to role behavior]
- individual attention either positive or negative is undesirable;
- school language and communication structures should contain links to students' home/community language and communication structures;
- students favor group work over individual work;
- students need to have the cultural assumptions under which the classroom functions elaborated;
- teacher effectiveness is tied to both personal warmth and academic rigor;
- students respond to a more relaxed teaching/learning pace;
- the curriculum should be relevant to the students' lives. (p. 111)

Ladson-Billings (1992) stated a limitation of this scholarship is in its generalizability. Osborn's assertions and literature review focuses on small scale Native American and Torres Strait Islander communities. It is this focus of his work that makes his 11 assertions very relevant to this study.

Obviously, a culturally relevant learning environment is congruent with and flows from major premises of humanistic andragogy. Congruence exists in that both support the naturalness of man, the teacher as a facilitator, the informal yet rigorous nature of the learning environment, and recommended teaching strategies. Culturally relevant teaching adds the emphasis of culture as an element that affects the students ability to respond to humanistic andragogy.

Create low stress, flexible learning environment and processes. The third point of the triangle is the property creates low stress, flexible learning environment and processes. This property reinforces the need to evaluate
how the instructor structures the learning experiences. If humanistic andragogy and a culturally relevant learning environment exist, the instructor considers the needs of the learner and begins to assess how to organize essential elements around these needs. Multiple avenues to complete the course objectives evolve from the student and faculty discussing needs and approaches to reach the stated college outcomes. The learning activities move closer to recognizing the student as "an adult that lives in the real world." The student involvement also reinforces their self-esteem and builds their confidence in their ability to complete. Stress is reduced through the student-faculty relationship because the student knows an open respectful interaction is available for problem solving.

**Triangle 2: Properties Related to the Role of Faculty Advisor**

Whereas the first triangle of three properties focused on the learning and teaching process between the Native American nursing student and faculty, the second triangle of properties focuses more on the faculty’s development in the role of advisor. As noted in this study, the actions of the advisor created many hindrances for the Native American student.

Becomes aware, accepts, and respects cultural diversity. Significant behaviors—becomes aware, accepts, and respects cultural diversity—were often recommended by
the informants and the need for them was reinforced by Native American nursing leaders at the 1996 American Indian Nursing Summit II. Gilliland and Reyhner (1988) stated that if the instructors desire respect they must first demonstrate respect for students and their culture. These authors further stated:

However rich and worthwhile the culture of a people, if you, the teacher, do not know and understand both your own cultural background and that of your students, those students will be at a disadvantage in your classroom. You not only will fail to adapt to their experiential background, their motivations, and their values, but whether or not you are aware of it you will be exerting pressure for change, and giving the students the feeling that you do not respect either them or their culture. The need for respect is obvious, yet in actual practice it is rare. (p. 3)

To become responsive to student needs in a culturally diverse classroom means one must first become aware of different cultures. Then obtaining knowledge of diverse cultures will give one the necessary information to begin alteration of one’s behaviors. In the advising role, as in the teaching role, learning about a student’s culture requires dialogue with that student. Advising a student cannot be a one-way process which is dominated by the faculty telling the student what one must do to graduate. This process obviously displays disrespect towards the student.

Assumes intrusive advising role. The second point of the second triangle communicates that the instructor acting
as an advisor must assume a proactive role in connecting the student into the college and university system. The advisor needs to seek out the student and plan meeting times to discuss not only curriculum planning but also adjustment processes, survival needs, learning needs, and social support systems. The advisor should share the potential adjustments that students may experience as they move through the learning process and educational system. This functions as effective anticipatory guidance. Thus, the advisor approaches the student in a holistic manner.

After the first contact, the advisor needs to establish an open-door policy with the expectation of frequent and informal contacts by Native American nursing students. The advisor should recognize that oral communication may be an important channel for Native Americans in accessing information and resources. The advisor should be one of those key communicators during the student's educational experience.

Provides accurate data and resources. The third point of the triangle identifies the advisor's responsibility to provide accurate curricular information that will allow the student to complete the curriculum in a realistic time frame. This time frame is negotiated by the faculty member and the student. It takes into consideration all the aspects that affect the student's successful completion; a relevant needs assessment must be completed. Likewise, the
advisor should have knowledge of support programs and services that connect with areas of the assessment, and should communicate this information to the student in a timely, warm, responsive manner.

When an instructor becomes aware of cultural diversity and gains knowledge about different cultures, an acceptance and respect for students of these cultures may develop. This respect may naturally evolve into behavioral change. These changes may include assuming the initiative to engage the student in dialogues about their learning needs and the provision of accurate information and resources.

**Institutions: University and College of Nursing**

The properties identified under this core heading are the responsibility of the University, College of Nursing, or both. These five properties are interactive with the properties of the instructor and the individual. They support the growth and adaptation of the student and provide resources to the instructor. Thus, both are able to practice behavioral expectations and assume or maintain their roles.

**Discussion of Properties**

*Provides access to a variety of financial resources.*

Financial assistance is essential for the Native American who aspires to complete a degree in higher education. One
of the issues in this property relates to having assistance from financial aid officers in completing financial aid paperwork accurately and in a timely manner. These university financial aid officers should be friendly, approachable, and readily accessible. The second issue is having a variety of financial resources. The officers providing assistance need to be aware of the most current financial opportunities available to the Native American student. These opportunities should include grants, scholarships, work study programs, and loans that may give special consideration to the student's heritage. The university should consider the development of foundation resources that focus only on the needs of the Native American student.

The College of Nursing advisors need to develop their knowledge base or become acquainted with financial aid officers that work effectively with Native American students. They also need to identify mechanisms that provide quick access to financial sources in emergencies. This may require the development of a fund just for this purpose.

The University and College of Nursing need to assume an active role in revising the processes and rules for accessing federal money resources. As the informants noted, confusing forms, a full load of credits, limited years to
complete, and the repayment system are not responsive to their culture and adult learning needs.

**Provides Native American advocate for educational issues.** The Native American advocate is committed to assisting the student’s transition into the Euro-Anglo educational system. This advocate should create an open, informal atmosphere with high visibility. Informants did not support the idea that this advocate must be a Native American. Instead, it was apparent that being Native American discouraged some students from utilizing the advocate because of the tribal affiliation. What is essential is the presence of acceptance, respect, and the ability to share. This advocate would intervene in issues that students were having difficulty resolving, such as course enrollment problems, emergency health and survival situations, and accessing resources. The advocate’s knowledge of the system and its processes or governing policies is key to functioning effectively in this role. Because the university would employ this person, the advocate would also be a resource to all faculty and advisors.

**Provides a variety of culturally sensitive support groups, programs, and services.** The provision of culturally sensitive services is necessary to the Native American nursing student since these services are integral to their
adjustment, progression, and completion. Informants identified problems related to alcoholism, family violence, survival, and socialization. Informants also described their experiences with cultural racism when seeking and utilizing assistance. Clearly, they recognized the need to continue accessing support programs that deal with their issues in a culturally relevant manner.

However, for this to occur, the providers of services have a professional responsibility to (a) become aware of and deal with the biases, stereotypes, and assumptions that undergird their professional behavior; (b) become aware of the culturally different client’s values and world view; and (c) develop appropriate interactive strategies that take into account the social, cultural, historical, and environmental influences of culturally different students (Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 1993, p. 243). These requirements are not all that different from the expectations of an instructor to create a culturally relevant and responsive learning environment. Only when these responsibilities are met by the professional can the student begin to experience a non-discriminatory environment which will support success.

Provides environmental space that supports socialization and community. The Native American nursing graduates consistently spoke of the social nature of their culture. The social support of their spouse, children,
extended family, and other Native American students was identified as the strongest enabler that supported success. Informants spoke of married housing and the Indian Club as two environments that allowed them to meet this need for socialization and create substitute extended families. Students could gather in these spaces and connect with their people and culture. These connections fostered the development of groups that helped resolve emotional, social, academic and survival problems. The presence of these spaces permitted the establishment of their cultural community and the reduction of cultural discontinuity.

Creates flexible planning and offering of educational programs. The College of Nursing program needs to provide a curriculum that permits a student to complete in a variety of ways. If the advisor approaches planning by first assessing the needs of the student including their total obligations, learning styles, support resources and perceived deficits, the advisor will discover with the student the curriculum plan that works for the student. Flexible alternatives will reduce the stress of being locked into one pattern without viable options if failure occurs.

The informants were uniformly clear that flexibility did not include the reduction of standards. Rather it meant recognizing they lived in the real world with significant obligations. These obligations are present while they are in the student role. Advisors and faculty should recognize
that course objectives can be met in a variety of creative methods. The students, as adult learners, can be involved in this creative process.

Each of the five institutional properties interact with the core variables and their properties. Without the institutional properties the instructor will not be able to effectively assist the Native American student in transition, progression, and completion. With them Native American nursing students will be more successful in enacting their seven properties.

**External Influences**

The external factors identified in this model are enablers that exist beyond the scope and control of the institution, instructor, and individual. However, these properties affect the ability of the Native American nursing student to succeed, the behaviors enacted through the instructor's roles, and the planning of the institution's programs.

**Discussion of Properties**

**Adequate primary and secondary educational programs and systems.** The adequacy of the primary and secondary educational programs and systems affects the students' ability to transition into the required work of higher education. Informants most often criticized their
preparation in math and sciences and the barriers established by counselors in accessing them. Some informants discussed choosing a particular secondary school because it had a better reputation, higher standards, and more options in course offerings. The fact that it had fewer Native Americans in the school was also identified and related to being a better school. Not all Native American students have this option.

The higher education institution is affected because adequacy of these educational systems controls the number and types of remedial course work that the Native American must take in order to progress. Remedial course work can deplete limited institutional resources.

Likewise, the instructional process is impacted when faculty assume that the student possesses a skill and then find out it is not present. At this point, faculty become responsible for teaching the skill, for providing extra assistance, or for referring the student out of the course. All of these activities consume time and energy and are detrimental to the student’s self-esteem.

Primary and secondary educational programs and systems need to evaluate their instructional and advisory processes for cultural relevance, discriminatory practices, quality delivery, and outcome. They need to emphasize the development of study skills that support the students’ learning styles. These programs should also recognize the
development of the whole person and reinforce the students' confidence in their ability to succeed.

**Society’s lack of tolerance toward discrimination.** This property of society’s lack of tolerance towards discrimination evolved from the informants’ discussion of experiences with discrimination. It is today’s level of tolerance and practice of discrimination that undermines the Native American’s self-concept. A low self-concept and self-esteem is a hindrance to the student’s success. The student’s response to discrimination is anger and withdrawal or anger and assertive action. Both of the responses take energy and time away from their limited supply and goal directed behavior. Discrimination also feeds distrust in the educational environment which further inhibits the creation of a culturally relevant learning environment. All of these hindrances interfere with the Native Americans’ ability to remain focused on their goal. Therefore, society needs to reduce its tolerance of discrimination so it can become more of an enabler to the Native American nursing student. Educators need to work for an informed society that is open to multicultural diversity through their teaching role, professional practice, and members of society.

**Tribal approaches to use and abuse of chemical substances.** This property was recognized as significant to
the future of the Native American people. Informants discussed the personal and tribal implications of alcoholism. The tribes' visual and verbal communication that use of chemicals is destructive to the Native American way was identified by informants as helpful in their maintenance of sobriety. The tribes' support of treatment programs has given many Native Americans the opportunity to begin again and share this new learning with others. The treatment programs also provide the opportunity for Native Americans to learn new coping strategies that can be directed towards the stress they experience during the educational process. The tribal practice of closing off access to alcohol during certain events (e.g., prom night, celebration times) reinforces that the community values the lives of its people. This valuing enhances the Native American's self-esteem and self-worth which are important to accomplishing their educational goal.

In contrast to the supportive tribal processes are the lack of actions or communication within other tribes about the negative affects of alcoholism. This creates the opposite impression that tribal members are not valued or cared for by the tribal community. This attitude adds to the Native American's struggle of becoming educated and valued by the greater society.

Recent federal government policies on self-determination. Informants spoke of the elders and tribal
leaders emphasizing the importance of education. Historically Native American leaders negotiated the provision of educational services in treaties for the exchange of land. Unfortunately, they also gave up their right to control the educational process. Most of these educational programs focused on the assimilation of the Native American student into white man's society. In 1975 the Indian Self-determination and Education Assistance Act, Public Law 93-638, provided for maximum Indian involvement in federally funded Indian schools. The law required that Native American parents participate in the development of special programs for the Indian students. This law also encouraged the establishment of tribal contract schools and the utilization of culturally relevant curriculum materials. In the wake of this movement, "Indian tribes were authorized to apply for charters to build or operate tribal colleges as a continuation of contract schools into higher education" (LaForge, 1996, p. 41).

The first Tribal College Assistance Act was passed in 1978. Besides subsidizing the Indian student by providing money to the tribal college, it also mandates that the majority of the board of directors are Indians and has a philosophy that reflects the intent to meet Indian needs. The continuation of the self-determination movement has finally provided a credible educational environment that permits the Native American to learn within the structure of
their culture. This is the environment that the informants felt would work as a stepping stone from secondary education into higher education. Tribal colleges would allow them to get their "feet wet," become familiar with learning expectations in higher education, and reduce their deficits in a friendly, informal, native environment. Students who utilize these systems experience less dissonance during their transition and feel more prepared to cope with the many challenges of a larger university system. Obviously, the continual support of self-determination and funding to these Native American community colleges is essential to their existence. Without these tribal systems for transition, some students will not succeed in the larger university system.

The external influences that make up the outer boundaries of this model impact the Native American nursing student's ability to succeed. They are identified here as enablers; however, if the opposite exists in society then they become hindrances.

Summary

The four core variables and their properties which evolved from this qualitative study have been presented through a circular model. The boundaries between the core variables, individual, the instructor, the institution, and the external influences are open and permeable, thus
reflecting the interactive and interdependent nature of all four variables and their properties. The properties of each variable identify the necessary behaviors and processes that act as the enablers of success for the Native American nursing student.

The Native American nursing student is at the center of the model. This core variable had the following seven properties: focuses on goal, adjusts culturally, invests in self-evaluation, develops assertive skills, establishes support community, socializes into roles of student and nurse, and masters content. The second core variable in the next circle is instructor. This variable has six properties connected by two triangles. Each triangle has a property that is more significant and is located at the apex. Triangle one consists of practices humanistic andragogical approaches, creates culturally relevant learning environment, and creates low stress flexible learning environment. The second triangle focuses on advising. The three properties are becomes aware, accepts, and respects cultural diversity; assumes intrusive advising role; and provides accurate data and resources. The third circle houses the core variable institutions, University and College of Nursing. This variable has the following properties: provides access to a variety of financial resources; provides advocate for Native American educational issues; provides a variety of culturally sensitive support
groups, programs, and services; provides environmental space that supports socialization and community; and creates flexible planning and offering of educational programs. The final core variable, external influences, is outside the three circles. This variable has four properties: adequate primary and secondary educational programs and systems, society's lack of tolerance towards discrimination, tribal approaches to use or abuse of chemical substances, and recent federal government policies on self-determination. The core variables and their properties in this model represent the interactive enablers that support success in higher education for Native American students.
CHAPTER 6

CELEBRATING NEW UNDERSTANDINGS

Summary

Historically, Native American students have experienced efforts of assimilation by the Euro-Anglo dominate educational system. Culturally relevant education is becoming an accepted concept to some educators but it remains elusive in its application to and its alteration of the predominant classroom culture. Faculty and students who experience congruence between their home or community culture and that of the educational system are comfortable and scarcely aware of this cultural existence (Adams, 1992, p. 5). However, students who have been socialized into a different culture experience dissonance, discontinuity, and even cultural shock. They become painfully aware that their values, belief, and practices are in conflict with many traditional classroom procedures. These procedures constitute a covert or hidden curriculum: the "how" of teaching as distinct from the "what." Besides the hidden curriculum that requires cultural adjustment and is perceived as unsupportive, the barriers of financial need and inadequate academic preparation continue to hinder the successful completion of the Native American student in
higher education (Adam, 1992; Cotera, 1988; Guyette & Heth, 1984; Layton et al., 1990; Miller & Seller, 1985; Pottinger, 1990; Scott, 1986; Wells, 1989a, 1989b; Wright, 1991).

In this decade, nursing has become acutely aware of the need for the presence of minority groups in health care systems. Nationally it is recognized that minorities are underrepresented in the health care professions but are overrepresented in the health problem areas (Rosella, Regan-Kubinski, & Albrecht, 1994). Native Americans have a proclivity for diabetes and heart disease (Hanley, 1995). Such chronic problems, their complications, and treatments require sensitivity from the health care provider towards the client's cultural practices. Also, providing for the holistic needs of the client requires education in health promotion, prevention, and nursing intervention. Since baccalaureate education in nursing focuses on these areas, it is an appropriate fit for the Native American student.

Nurse educators need to determine factors, processes, and variables that support transition, progression, and completion of the Native American nursing student in a baccalaureate program (Simpson, 1980). Studies have focused on the barriers that Native Americans experienced and have made recommendations focused at their elimination. The purpose of this study was to identify key factors and enablers that hinder or support successful completion of the Montana State University, College of Nursing (CON) program
by the Native American student. This supported the creation of recommendations that will increase the retention and completion rate of the Native American nursing student at Montana State University.

A qualitative approach was chosen for this study because it supports the discovery of reality as it exists in the minds of the informants, which is their personal frame of reference (Guba, 1978). Acknowledgment of multiple realities allows the inquirer to identify similarities or themes and differences. This provides a rich description of the phenomena under investigation. Grounded theory methodology was chosen since it is a systematic approach to the collection and analysis of qualitative data and generates an understanding of social, behavioral, and psychological phenomena (Patton, 1990; Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). Also the conceptual framework of symbolic interactionism fits this methodology (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). The tools for data collection were semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Six open-ended questions were used to stimulate free responses from the participants about what motivated them, their perceptions of their educational experience in the College of Nursing, what helped or hindered their success, how they dealt with hindrances, and what recommendations they have for the CON. Demographic questions were also asked for the purpose of developing a group profile of the informants.
In order to achieve the purpose of the study, this researcher located Native American baccalaureate nursing graduates from 1986 to 1995 who were listed in chronological order by the Center for Native American Studies. The total number of graduates considered for this study was 32 Native Americans. This researcher began by contacting the most recent graduates on the Indian Club list. Six of those graduates could not be located. One graduate did not show up for the scheduled interview. A total of 18 Native Americans were interviewed before the categories were saturated. Once the saturation occurred the remaining seven graduates were not contacted. Two of the 18 nursing graduates were already registered nurses. One had graduated from an associate degree program, and the other had graduated from a diploma program. They were graduates of MSU--Bozeman, College of Nursing's R.N. baccalaureate program. All informants were females. They were from seven different reservations and represent 12 different blood quantum configurations. Fifteen graduates were interviewed in person and three were interviewed by telephone. The latter occurred because two of them resided out of state and one was on vacation when this researcher was in that part of the state. All interviews were taped and transcribed for analysis.

Constant comparative analysis was utilized throughout the data collection process and after collection was
completed. Data from the interviews were compared for similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These data were coded and compared to find relationships, causes, contexts, contingencies, covariances, conditions, strategies, and consequences (Glaser, 1987). Codes were grouped into categories and these were collapsed further into significant core variables and their properties. Memo writing and continual interaction with the data generated questions that suggested a need for further exploration. As analysis continued, variables and their properties emerged into a model. The last three informants were asked to give feedback on this model after their interviews. Additions and changes were made on the model. These informants were able to verify the visual representation as a "fit" with their perceptions and experiences.

Discussion of the Findings

The model that emerged form the data analysis visually represents the findings of this study (see Figure 1). The terminology used is all positively stated, including the hindrances, because the model represents what supports success. These enablers that support success provide the information that baccalaureate nursing programs can use to increase retention of their Native American student population.
The core variables that emerged from data analysis were individual Native American nursing student, instructor, institutions, including the University and College of Nursing, and external factors. The informants identified seven properties that fit the individual and enable successful completion of the educational process. The following are these enablers: (a) focuses on goal, (b) adjusts culturally, (c) invests in self-evaluation, (d) develops assertive skills, (e) establishes support community, (f) socializes into roles of student and nurse, and (g) masters content. These properties interact with the three other core variables and their properties. They do not stand alone nor do they autonomously create success.

The second core variable is the instructor. This term refers to any faculty member that acts in the roles of teacher and advisor. The six properties identify instructor behaviors perceived by Native Americans as enablers to their success. The six properties are divided into two sets of three properties. Each of the sets of three properties is connected by a triangle. Each triangle has a behavior that is key to the existence of the other two behaviors. The following explains the two triangles:

1. The first triangle’s most significant property is "practices humanistic andragogical approaches." This property provides a philosophical framework for the second property, "creates a culturally relevant learning
environment." The natural progression of these two properties is the third property, "creates low stress, flexible learning environment."

2. The properties in the second triangle present necessary behaviors for the advising role of an instructor. The most significant property is "becomes aware, accepts, and respects cultural diversity." Once these behaviors are in place the faculty member will recognize the need to "assume an intrusive advising role" in response to the student's cultural differences. Also out of respect for the Native American student the instructor "provides accurate data and resources." An underlying prerequisite to this triangle of properties is that the faculty member will engage the student in an interactive dialogue that assesses the student's learning needs related to cultural diversity.

The third core variable is institutions—including University and College of Nursing. Analysis of the interviews clearly identify five properties that are necessary supportive behaviors from these institutions. These five properties are as follows: (a) provides access to a variety of financial resources; (b) provides advocate for Native American educational issues; (c) provides a variety of culturally sensitive support groups, programs, and services; (d) provides environmental space that supports socialization and community; and (e) creates flexible planning and offerings of educational programs. These five
properties directly and indirectly impact the individual’s enablers that support success.

The fourth core variable that emerged as a finding from the data analysis is external influences. It is limited to the four properties identified by the informants as hindrances or enablers. However, in this model the properties are all approached from a positive perspective. The following is a listing of the four properties which impact all three levels of the model: (a) adequate primary and secondary educational programs and system, (b) society’s lack of tolerance towards discrimination, (c) tribal approaches to use or abuse of chemical substances, and (d) recent federal government policies on self-determination.

The findings also present a group of common behavioral characteristics that are descriptive of these Native American graduates. These characteristics are (a) verbally assertive when the situation required this behavior, (b) goal-directed focus and behavior to become a baccalaureate nurse, (c) strong determination to complete which was supported by a variety of coping strategies, (d) motivated to improve themselves and their existence, (e) accepted and respected the diversity of other cultures.
cultural diversity (Pottinger, 1990; Scott, 1986; Wright, 1991).

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the data analysis of the six interview questions completed with 18 informants. The model that emerged through the use of constant comparative analysis is also a guide to the discussion of the conclusions. It should be noted that these conclusions are delimited to Native American nursing students attending a baccalaureate program of 500 or more students in a university of approximately 10,000 students in a predominately rural state. The 18 informants were able to answer each of the questions without difficulty and expanded their information when relevant clarification questions were asked by this researcher.

Motivation

Native American students can complete a nursing program of rigor and high quality if the student is motivated. Significant motivating factors provided support and energy to the Native American graduate's goal-directed determination. Advisors need to assess with the students their motivating forces and how they maintain their level of supporting energy. Advisors should also proactively engage their Native American students in establishing their
educational goals and objectives and identify mechanisms to achieve them (Yurkovich, 1994).

Barriers

In addition to the common barriers that all new students experience there are significant additional barriers that hinder program completion by Native American nursing students in higher education. These barriers are inadequate preparation in math, science, and study skills. Their preparation in English language skills was occasionally mentioned as a barrier. This probably fits with the fact that all the informants identified English as their primary language. The College of Nursing should be concerned and question why the Native American nursing graduate population does not have representation from the traditional bilingual student group.

Most high school counselors who worked on the reservations or in predominantly Native American schools were considered barriers because they hindered the students' ability to access college track courses and in some cases denied them access. These counselors were perceived as ineffective in their role, their ability to assist students in program planning, and their provision of information about college programs and requirements.

Inadequate financial resources were also a barrier to the students' admission, retention and completion in higher
education. Financial aid was essential to their attendance in college. Also, barriers produced through complex paperwork and federal regulations and policies added to the issue of inadequate dollars.

There were three other categories of hindrances that interfered with the Native American students’ success in nursing and must be acknowledged by the University and CON as significant student issues. These hindrances were intrapersonal struggles, interpersonal processes, and extrapersonal environmental interactions.

Students dealt with all these hindrances by using a variety of intrapersonal coping strategies, by utilizing interpersonal and extrapersonal support resources in the university, college and community, and by remaining determined to complete their goal. All of these adaptive actions should be encouraged by faculty and supported by culturally relevant university services.

Cultural Conflict and Transition

It can be concluded there is a university culture that is narrow and inhibits learning for students from diverse cultures. To succeed in higher education programs Native American students had to bridge the gap between Native American culture and the dominant Euro-Anglo culture of the university system and resolve cultural conflicts. Students
who attended tribal or community colleges before attending MSU had less difficulty making the transitional adjustment. In an attempt to understand why cultural conflict exists in the educational system, it is important to recall that the academic norms, assumptions, and values derive from "aspects of European culture shared by 19th- and 20th-century European immigrants to this country" (Adams, 1992, p. 5). Many of them have a shared common history and, consequently, a shared understanding of the educational culture. In describing the traditional, Euro-Anglo educational culture, Adams (1992) stated:

This academic culture is narrow in that it rules out nonverbal, empathic, visual symbolic, or nuanced communication; it neglects the social processes by which interpersonal communication, influence, consensus, and commitment are included in problem solving; it overlooks the social environment as a source of information, together with observation and questioning as information-gathering methodologies; it ignores the values and emotions that nonacademics attach to reasons and facts. And this traditional academic culture is also exclusive in that it privileges those whose families, home communities, and prior schooling are congruent and who accordingly understand, whether or not they accept, the implicit values and behaviors. (p. 6)

It becomes obvious, based on these perceptions of the Euro-Anglo educational system, that Native Americans and other social groups not familiar with this culture would perceive the traditional classroom setting as impersonal, competitive, nonsupportive of their learning process, and incongruent with their cultural values, beliefs, and practices.
Good teaching and healthy educational environment give equal attention to content and process. This equal attention reduces the potential for cultural conflict. Cultural conflicts are present because there exists the lack of sensitive transcultural communicators within the educational setting and because teachers are focusing more on the "what" of education versus the "how" (Adams, 1992) or content versus the process. Adams notes that faculty and students who have home and community environments congruent with the traditional college environment are unaware of the discord this environment creates for other social groups. The lack of awareness of cultural influences on the educational environment perpetuates the perception that the environment is culturally neutral and that teachers are preserving academic standards when in fact they are transmitting an unexamined culture (p. 7). The discomfort and struggles of the minority groups are making the educational system aware that this is no longer acceptable.

Adams (1992) noted that, "All roads to multicultural classrooms lead back to the college teacher" (p. 15). More explicitly she stated that all roads lead to the instructor's flexibility of teaching repertoire and his or her readiness to draw on a variety of teaching styles for several purposes. Adams (1992) identified the following purposes:
First, a variable, flexible repertoire of teaching strategies enables college teachers to match the cultural styles of students from targeted social groups in their college classes. Second, because such teaching is effective teaching, it can match individual learning differences among traditional students as well. Third, a college teacher’s repertoire of flexible and variable teaching strategies exemplifies for all of his or her students the multicultural value of reciprocity rather than the monocultural expectation of acculturation. . . . A mixed repertoire enables all students in a college classroom to experience an environment that equalizes cultural styles rather than requires minority cultural styles to give way and acculturate or adapt to the dominant mode, maintaining thereby the cultural edge of students from the dominant culture. An environment of cultural equality teaches from strength to strength and facilitates the development of several cultural styles and skills not in the repertoire of any one learner. . . . Finally, active engagement in collaborative learning enterprises fosters student-to-student and student-to-teacher experiences across cultural differences, establishing a better basis for mutual understanding and trust. (p. 15)

Informants shared that some of the instructors used a variety of teaching strategies during their educational process which fit with their learning styles. Thus, the first purpose was being met by some instructors. The second point, effective teaching can match individual learning differences among traditional students as well, was not part of this study. The last two ends, establishing cultural equality in the classroom and engagement in collaborative learning enterprises, were not met by faculty. The students were clear that discriminatory behaviors were present and their culture was less valued than the dominant culture in the learning setting. In some situations there was overt
communication that elimination of their Native American culture was necessary to be successful.

It can be concluded that cultural differences created conflict because of the approaches used by faculty in responding to the needs of the Native American students. These approaches and the faculty role are culturally and contextually based (Hardy & Conway, 1988). Faculty’s lack of understanding of these differences placed the informants in uncomfortable situations that expected culturally incongruent behaviors.

Learning Styles

Native American graduates agreed that listening, observing, and doing were the most utilized learning styles. These styles are congruent with the findings of other researchers and authors (Adams, 1992; More, 1989; Swisher & Deyhle, 1989). The informants recognized that material connected to clinical settings or applied to actual experiences was retained better. This fits with one of the principles of andragogy; adult learners prefer immediate application of their learning to their experiential world. Informants also recognized that incorporating the white culture into their study groups helped them bridge the gap in classroom communication and practices. Graduates also spoke to what did not work. Instructors who used only lecture supplemented by textbook readings made learning more
difficult for the Native American student. Based on her research with Native American women at the University of Utah, Macias (1989) states, "Indian difficulty with lectures and readings is most probably the result of transitional language and vocabulary problems, rather than reflection of a cerebral or sensory preference" (p. 47). She further states that the deficit may also be due to reduced use of this type of language in the home and community. Professional language needs to be taught to the student. These perceptions add credibility to these findings. Native American nursing graduates had to learn and adjust to the professional language of the University and CON.

Priority Setting

Faculty need to become more familiar with adult education trends and focus on empowering the student instead of controlling the learning process. Perceptual differences that exist between Native Americans' cultural values and the teacher's focus created conflictual processes for graduates when setting their priorities. The family and survival were central to decision-making processes during the informants' education. Completing content through rigid predefined methodology was perceived as central to the teacher's behavior. This also supported the instructor's ability to control the learning process. Fellenz and Conti (1989) state:
Trends in adult education and cognitive psychology that advance the understanding of the individuality of learning experiences and that promote learner self-knowledge and control of personal perceptions and judgements provide for potential empowerment of the individual. An appreciation of one’s learning style, the development of strategies that promote learning, and insight into metacognitive processes enable people to exert control over learning processes and outcomes. Awareness of the assumptions and value sets developed over time together with procedures for thinking critically about issues loosen those bonds that inhibit interaction with the reality being faced. Such insights and skills, which can be categorized as learning how to learn, give power to the individual learner. (p. 23)

Faculty need to encourage students to exert control over their learning process and support the process of learning how to learn. This type of faculty behavior will better prepare the student to face the challenges of nursing practice.

In summary of these conclusions, it should be noted that similar themes were expressed by the informants. Informants were not insistent that their needs could only be met by Native American staff, faculty, or students. Their needs focused more on their desire to be accepted and respected by the white dominant culture and that the educational environment display sensitivity towards cultural diversity. They wished to have their values, beliefs, and practices perceived as equal to the dominant Euro-Anglo culture of the educational system.
Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to make recommendations that will increase the retention and completion rate of the Native American nursing student in a baccalaureate program. Previous studies that have made recommendations focused in retention and completion of college students have not focused exclusively on nursing students. Also, implementation of such recommendations have not increased the numbers of nursing students completing at Montana State University. In fact, during the last six years the numbers have decreased. In 1989 four Native American nursing students graduated. However, in 1995 only two Native American nursing students graduated (C. Johnson, personal communication, December 2, 1996). Based on the developed model and the recommended changes that emerged from the 18 interviews, the following recommendations summarize these suggestions and present ways they may be implemented.

University

Universities exist to provide an environment that supports the personal and intellectual growth of an individual. To accomplish this goal these institutions of higher learning are expected to provide to students quality academic programs, an integrated social and academic life, a culturally sensitive environment and support resources (Pottinger, 1990; Scott, 1986). Montana State University
needs to commit to the role it has in the state of Montana as a land grant institution that exists to serve its citizens including Native Americans. This commitment to the Native American needs to be apparent through its outreach services, its distant learning programs, its allocation of resources, and its investment in culturally relevant studies, programs, and services.

The following are recommendations directed toward the University system:

1. The University needs to develop an open, informal, and responsive environment in all their service and support oriented offices, especially the financial aid office. This recommendation fits with Hall's (1986) statement that universities need to "pay more attention to the role of nonacademic staff and how their interactions with students can be made more beneficial" (p. 15). These service areas need to recognize that the system is overwhelming and foreign to the Native American student. The staff in these service areas need to be educated about cultural differences through workshops or inservices. Their display of cultural sensitivity, friendliness, and ready assistance to these students supports their retention in higher education.

2. It is recommended that the University reduce the student numbers of each course section so the students may experience a less overwhelming and foreign environment. Reduced numbers in the classroom creates the potential for a
more personal educational process. This supports the reduction of anxiety and cultural dissonance that occurs in the large impersonal lecture halls. An alternative to reducing student numbers is assisting faculty in developing teaching strategies and methods that increase personalization of the educational process.

3. The University must actively recruit Native Americans into their teacher training degree programs. These teacher training programs should role model and support the development of teaching skills that are culturally relevant. These programs need to work cooperatively with reservation school teachers to create new collaborative efforts in preparing culturally sensitive educators. The external influence of inadequate primary and secondary educational preparation can be altered by well educated and committed Native American teachers serving these systems. The University needs to acknowledge that this is part of their role as a land grant institution; serving the needs of its state populace.

4. The University could require each college and school in the system to evaluate their faculty’s level of understanding of the concept of culturally relevant educational environment. With this information, these colleges and schools should plan programs to enhance the faculty’s understanding and integration of this concept. This would decrease the discriminatory practices experienced
by the informants in other departments during their educational process.

**University and College of Nursing**

The following are recommendations that need the collaborative efforts of both the University and College of Nursing:

1. It is recommended that the University and College of Nursing plan annual meeting times with the student counselors working in secondary education systems on and near the Indian reservations. The meetings should accomplish two purposes: (a) communicate the latest entrance requirements for college bound students, and (b) provide feedback on the presence of their former students attending the University system. The purpose of this recommendation evolves from two needs: (a) Native American students need adequate preparation for higher education and (b) the need to alter the perception that Native American students do not succeed in higher education.

2. The University and College of Nursing need to actively participate in career days in high schools and tribal colleges. Thus, Native American students will receive the message that they are recognized as viable students for higher education. This also provides an opportunity for students and family members to ask questions and obtain information on financial assistance, housing, and
support resources. Tribal elders should also be invited since they are resources for advice and counsel to the tribal youth. The more the elders are prepared with information the better the opportunity for the youth to develop accurate understandings.

3. The University and College of Nursing need to plan an orientation week or summer session just for Native American students (Layton et al., 1990; Wells, 1989a, 1989b; Wright, 1991). The focus would include financial aid sources and processes, a visual introduction to the university's support resources, and an opportunity to connect with their college advisor. The primary purpose would be to help them become comfortable with their social group and actually make connections within this critical mass of students. Organizations and the faculty could also use this orientation week for the introduction of peer mentorship. This orientation process would support the reduction of cultural dissonance or shock.

4. The University and College of Nursing should explain the system's nuances or covert practices and values, the hidden curriculum, to Native American students (Adams, 1992). The explanation could include difficulties and processes required in obtaining housing or child care. Then facilitators should move the discussion to where to get their questions answered and how to recognize and cope with the conflicts generated from the Euro-Anglo culture of the
educational system. This can begin on career days and be completed during orientation days. It should be done before the beginning of the semester, which is a time for dealing with many other new adjustments. The cultural conflicts that emerge from hidden cultural nuances can become roadblocks to the Native American's educational transition and completion. Overt acknowledgement of these nuances with the provision of support services increases their potential for success (Adams, 1992; Guthrie, 1963; Kramer, 1974; Spindler, 1987; Yurkovich, 1994).

College of Nursing

The following recommendations focus on roles and expectations that the informants directed to the College of Nursing:

1. It is recommended that the College of Nursing commit to recruiting and retaining Native American students by providing dedicated resources, staff, and clinical placement slots. Because of the cultural shifts in the population accessing health care, it is important to have multicultural health care providers who are sensitive to the diverse cultural needs of the patients. The Native American is a significant part of this multicultural population.

2. The College needs to maintain frequent contact with the pre-nursing advisors in the tribal colleges. The goal of these interactions is to communicate that the College of
Nursing is open, respectful, and responsive to the needs of their pre-nursing students and that the CON has a vested interest in supporting the pre-nursing advisors' ability to complete their roles effectively. Therefore, the purpose of the contacts would be to update advisors and pre-nursing students on changes in course requirements, establish visual connection with pre-nursing students, and begin to discuss issues that may arise when these students transfer to the MSU—Bozeman campus. These exchanges will also educate nursing faculty and administration about the learning needs of the student and provide the opportunity to understand the cultural differences in health care services on the reservation. This contact can be accomplished through traveling to the site, conference telephone calls, or interactive video. The personal contact is preferred since this demonstrates respect and is an honoring of the Native American advisors and students.

3. The College of Nursing must develop an assessment form that can be mailed to the student after admission has been granted by the University or after the student sends a petition form for upper division nursing to the College of Nursing. The assessment needs to request information on their culture, survival needs that are perceived as an issue, previous work experiences in a health care setting, learning styles and strength, their goals, motivators for attendance in higher education and nursing, previous
attendance in colleges or universities, sources of financial assistance, anticipated credit load per semester, and their perception of a support system. The contact from the CON with pre-nursing advisors and students should assist and support the student in developing thoughtful answers for this assessment. These data could then be placed in the student’s file and be used as a beginning point for student advisor interactions or reviewed with the student during orientation week. The advisor can use these data to assist the students in reducing situational and institutional barriers (Cross, 1981). It can be reviewed by faculty to determine the learning styles present in their classroom. The data can also be used in assigning students to their College of Nursing advisors. Finally, the assessment form will provide research data to the CON on the nature of the Native American population; for example, traditional, blend, or non-traditional Native Americans. This assessment process will not only be useful in planning for minority social groups but for all the student population.

4. The College must identify and appoint a faculty member who is an advisor to and advocate for all Native American students while attending classes in lower division nursing on the Bozeman campus. Besides acting as a role model, this faculty member should be sensitive to the students’ culture by establishing an open, informal, personal, supportive, and interactive environment and should
be committed to the needs of this student group. These findings are similar to Conti and Fellenz’s (1988a) research identifying teachers’ actions that influence Native American learners. This advisor would create flexible curricular plans for Native American students. As a Native American advisor, he/she needs to be familiar not only with the nursing curriculum but also with relevant services in the University. This familiarity would include having connections with staff in service areas such as financial aid and housing for the purpose of direct referral. Also, the Native American nursing advisor would need to recognize that oral communication of resources, services, and significant processes, such as pre-registration and placement procedure, is the most common method of transferring information among the Native American nursing student population. Thus, investing in the establishment of a communication network among the Native American students should be part of the advisor’s role. On upper division campuses, advisors should be appointed who have similar characteristics as indicated above and be committed to this student group.

5. The College of Nursing needs to establish a focus in the University’s Foundation that provides financial resources for students experiencing fiscal emergencies or need money for educational equipment. Besides having available funds, the college needs to make accessing these
dollars a quick and non-demeaning process. Assisting with extra financial requirements reduces the pressure incurred by meeting the costs of basic survival.

6. It is advised that the College of Nursing collect research data on Native American students who enter the nursing program but do not proceed to upper division nursing because of grades. Student slots in the clinical settings are controlled because of limited clinical agencies. Therefore, the process to obtain a clinical position promotes competition among the students. The student must have a GPA of 2.5 and have enough priority points to access upper division clinical course work. Competition is not part of the Native American’s cultural behaviors. Also, these students are adjusting to many other expectations and a new cultural environment while attempting to make high enough grades for a 2.5 GPA. The College needs to determine if the 2.5 requirement is culturally discriminatory toward the Native American student because it controls their entry into the nursing major. The College of Nursing should also determine if bilingual Native American students are present in this system and why they drop out of the College before completion. The College also needs to assess how long the students have been in the University and if they have attended other educational programs at the beginning of transition into higher education. All three factors affect the student’s preparation and ability to adjust to the Euro-
Anglo educational culture. Hindrances in their adjustment affect their ability to succeed.

College of Nursing Administration and Faculty

The following recommendations require action from the College of Nursing administration and faculty. The informants recommended that the faculty develop their awareness of cultural diversity in the classroom and recognize how this diversity affects the learning process, the enacting of the teacher's role, and the choosing of instructional approaches. In essence, instructors need to create a culturally relevant learning environment. In order to accomplish this, two processes need to be completed by the CON and faculty.

The first process is the faculty's recognition of the contrasting cultural traits and the development of respect for these differences in their classroom setting. This process of recognition fits with the premise that new knowledge can lead to changes in attitude and then behavior. Based on the contributions of Corey, Corey, and Callanan (1993) and others (Eble, 1988; Lowman, 1984; Galbraith, 1990; Gilliland and Reyhner, 1988; McKeachie, 1986; Seaman & Fellenz, 1989; Villegas, 1992) the following recommendation is made for the purpose of beginning change in the faculty's present perception of and limited approach to multicultural educational environment.
It is recommended that the CON sponsor and organize a workshop on cultural diversity and culturally relevant learning environments. This workshop would include the use of adult learning principles and involve several phases to reach the desired purpose. The first phase would be assessment of the faculty's knowledge base. The organizers of the workshop would develop an assessment tool that includes key concepts related to culturally relevant education and adult educational principles. They would request faculty to complete this tool before the workshop. Analysis of these data would direct the amount and type of information that would be shared with the faculty.

The next phase would be assisting faculty's preparation for the workshop. Faculty would be given articles to read before the workshop that are focused on their deficit understandings and on different culturally based learning styles. Preparation would also include the completion of a values clarification tool, thus heightening the awareness of their personal culture and setting the stage for open discussions on differences.

The third phase of planning the workshop would include demonstrating sensitivity towards the practices of the culture under study. The workshop should begin with a prayer led by a Native American spiritual leader or a tribal ceremony that honors all those attending and requests the presence of the spirit to guide the learning process. This
would demonstrate respect for the Native Americans, share in their cultural beliefs and practices during the workshop, and expose faculty to a different cultural experience.

Organizers would plan the format to include presentations and panel discussions by Native Americans that function in the roles of medicine man, educator, tribal counsel elder, health care provider, and health care recipient. A variety of different tribes should be represented so cultural differences related to beliefs, values, learning styles, teaching methods, and ceremonies can be presented and discussed.

After the panel presentations the format would include question and answer sessions with the panel members cycling through smaller faculty work groups. This would permit the development of a more personal rapport between the two cultural groups.

As an approach to further the change process in faculty, task oriented groups of six to eight people would be formed to discuss questions focused on evaluating the presence of a culturally relevant curriculum and adult educational strategies. The questions would be generated from the results of the faculty survey and a review of literature. Also it may be helpful to contrast transcultural nursing principles with culturally relevant education. The questions would help faculty identify the educational processes that represent barriers to the Native
American student, as well as assist in recognizing the strengths of the program.

After exploring what is congruent with the needs of multicultural social groups, the faculty would be asked to identify the processes, policies, and educational strategies that need to be altered to meet the definition of a culturally relevant curriculum. Faculty would also recommend time lines and groups of people that would create the needed changes and plan their implementation. The accomplishments of all work groups would be shared with all participants of the workshop.

The final phase is evaluation of the workshop. Organizers need to develop a form that requests feedback on the workshop meeting the personal objectives of the participants and the stated purpose. Faculty should also be requested to suggest future topics and activities that would continue to build on their present understanding.

Support resources and people need to be provided during this process to assist faculty in their change process. These support people need to be empathetic toward cultural diversity, familiar with transcultural nursing, and knowledgeable about adult educational principles.

As noted by Miller and Seller (1985), change in curriculum and education is a process not an event and it happens to individuals. Change involves the individual in a social process of learning and the development of new
meanings, skills, and attitudes. Furthermore, implementation of change can involve questions related to one's values, ethics, and professional responsibility. Effective implementation is often difficult because it occurs within a complex environment "where pattern and structures that have been developed over long periods of time often run counter to the thrust of new programs" (p. 13). The transformation position focuses on change as promoting growth and movement towards harmony in the environment rather than the exertion of control. This approach is congruent with the Native American way and identified by informants as often absent in the present educational environment. The format recommended for the workshop is meant to begin the growth movement of change by personal learning, social transformation, and establishing a sense of control over the process by the faculty group.

The second process that informants recommended to faculty is the development of an understanding of Native American approaches to learning and the development of teaching methodologies that support their learning styles. There is debate in the literature today regarding the existence of differences in learning styles within the Native American culture (Adams, 1992; Crow, 1993; Conti & Fellenz, 1988b; Macias, 1989; More, 1989; Swisher & Deyhle, 1989; Thompson, 1995). More (1989) states, "Differences in learning style occur frequently but are not found with
sufficient consistency to suggest a uniquely Indian learning style" (p. 15). Conti and Fellenz (1988b) found that there was no single distinct learning style among their Native American sample. However, they did determine that consistency in instructional delivery produced the best learning outcomes. Other authors support the premise that there are some common approaches to the learning process that instructors need to be aware of in the development of teaching methodology.

The following are recommended approaches and methodologies that assist the Native American student:

1. Faculty provide to the Native American instruction on the culture of the college classroom and expected student role behaviors. Instructors need to be aware that Native Americans are raised in an adult oriented culture. The social culture of their family and community influenced their cognitive and behavioral approaches to learning. Thus, the following processes or behaviors may be exhibited by the Native American students in the classroom: Listen to and observe the teacher without asking questions, give no direct eye contact with the teacher, demonstrate elder respect towards the teacher, communicate very little through nonverbal responses, use peers to access answers to their questions (Gilliland & Reyhner, 1988; Sanders, 1987; Villegas, 1992), work effectively in a group cooperative mode, learn privately with self-testing before demonstrating
a skill, understand new material better through visual connections, and prefer global presentation of new material versus the analytic, sequential manner (More, 1989; Swisher & Deyhle, 1989).

Anderson and Adams (1992) support these perceptions by identifying the Native American as a relational learner and field dependent. These presentations by the Native American student can be in direct conflict with the processes of "analytical learners, who tend to match the traditional teaching mode of higher education" (p. 22). Instructors and advisors must assume the responsibility of assisting the Native American in recognizing cultural differences and conflictual processes that hinder the students' progression and determine appropriate ways to accomplish resolution.

2. Given the understanding of the influence that culture has on the Native American's learning process, instructors need to recognize that a "full range of instructional strategies should be employed in the classroom" (Anderson & Adams, 1992, p. 24). Informants identified that a variety of teaching approaches in some of the courses had been very helpful to their learning process. Swisher and Deyhle (1989) and Gipp and Fox (1991) also support the need for the use of multiple teaching methodologies. Bennett (1985) encourages teachers to know their own teaching and learning styles and determine how far they can stray from these strengths and preferences and still be comfortable. She cautions teachers to build
classroom flexibility slowly, adding one new strategy at a time. Her encouragement to use all modes (visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic) when teaching concepts and skills is compatible with Cazden and Leggett's (1971) suggestion that teachers plan for multisensory instruction. (as cited in Swisher & Deyhle, 1989, p. 10)

Even if there is debate in the literature over the existence of different learning styles among Native American student groups, there is some consistency supporting the need to use multiple teaching strategies as the approach to meeting the learning needs of this diverse population.

To assist nursing faculty incorporate more culturally relevant teaching strategies and behaviors into their classroom and clinical teaching environments several approaches with rationale are recommended. The first set of recommendations relate to the instructor's personal presentation. Instructors should present themselves in an open, friendly posture that permits them to admit to mistakes and freely use humor during the teaching process (Galbraith, 1990). This openness supports the development of trust and encourages a dialogue focused on the learners' needs and feelings and facilitates giving student feedback. The rationale for these recommendations is that the Native American student is socially oriented, often field dependent, and responsive to an informal nurturing environment.

The next recommendation relates to the instructor's approach to new material. The instructor needs to begin
presentations of new material with an overview of the concept, therefore providing the student with advance organizers. The rationale is that many Native Americans have a relational style of learning and use global processing.

This next set of recommendations focuses on teaching methodology. Faculty should use variable methods. The most effective teaching methods are structured discussion and work groups, collaborative learning projects, group testing, lectures with the use of visual aids, verbal processing of thoughts, and role playing. These methods fit with the identified learning styles of auditory and visual, support the student’s preference for cooperation versus competition, and permit ready application of new concepts and content.

Clinical and laboratory activities offer different learning experiences to the student and teaching opportunities to the faculty. The following recommended approaches focus on the clinical and laboratory settings.

The first recommendation is that faculty use a discovery mode of teaching. In the college lab the faculty could present the general principles underlying a skill and then have the student group problem-solve how to perform the skill. The instructor could then demonstrate recommended approaches while the students critique the process and outcome of each performance. Other relevant clinical methodology includes open lab time to practice new skills
without formative evaluation, available computer-assisted instruction (CAI) and interactive video discs (IVD) that support application of content, and planned observational time with experts. The rationale for these methods is that Native Americans may be field dependent and use global processing. These students may be more comfortable observing a behavior and practicing it privately before performing in public. They may not use a trial and error approach to new skills.

The final point recommends that faculty encourage Native Americans to communicate their intuitions, feelings, and hunches. This shows respect for this way of knowing. Native Americans may demonstrate a relational style of learning and exhibit improvisational and intuitive thinking.

These recommended classroom and clinical teaching approaches and attendance at the cultural workshop assist faculty in meeting the recommendations made by the informants. Faculty should then be more skilled in facilitating the student's recognition of and adjustment to the multiple cultural messages of the nursing curriculum and educational environment. Support of this adjustment enhances the student's ability to complete their degree.

Native American Student

This researcher recommends to Native American students that they enter the educational system with an awareness
that they will experience cultural dissonance and that they must be open to the process of change. They need to recognize that bridging the cultural gap will be as important to their success as making passing grades. These students should consider beginning higher education programs in community or tribal colleges to assist the bridging. Native American students need to acknowledge that they must become interactive partners with their peers, the instructors, and institutions to be successful in higher education. The recommended increase in interaction between the high school and tribal colleges by the University and College of Nursing may facilitate the creation of these awarenesses.

The findings and recommendations from this study reinforce the present perception that the issues surrounding retention and completion of the Native American student are complex and multivariant (Gipp & Fox, 1991; Layton et al., 1990; Pascarella, 1982; Wright, 1991). The individual, instructor, institutions, and external forces enact significant behaviors and roles in the educational process that impact successful degree completion by this student group. Removal or reduction of the interaction between these four core variables affects the educational process by creating hindrances that interfere with the student’s success.


Select Committee on Indian Affairs. (1990). Nursing shortage: Hearing before the Select Committee on Indian Affairs, Senate, 101st Cong., 2nd Sess. 9 (testimony of Kathleen Long).


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM
Research Consent Form  
Summer 1996

An Agreement to Participate in an Interview

You are invited to participate in a study focused on defining what was helpful and what hindered your educational experience at Montana State University--Bozeman, College of Nursing. I am a Doctoral student at MSU in the Department of Education and this research is my dissertation. I am also a nurse educator, and have an invested interest in assisting Native American nursing students in their learning process. If you decide to participate, I will ask you a series of questions related to your experience in the College of Nursing's program, what were enablers/factors that supported completion, and what were factors that hindered completion. During the interview I will take notes and tape record the conversation. You may choose to not answer any of the questions asked you. Also you may end the interview at any time without a reason and without risking the relationship you may have with Montana State University and the College of Nursing. The interview will take approximately one to one and a half hours.

There will be no compensation for your participation. The benefit is providing important information that can be used to facilitate the educational process of the Native American nursing student. There is minimal discomfort and risk involved with the interview process. The only risk is the time involved in meeting with the researcher for the interview.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will be coded, thereby remaining confidential. At no time will your name be identified. All tapes will be erased after transcription. The transcribed material will be coded and stored in a locked file by the researcher. All results will be reported as group information only.

Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You will be offered a copy of this form to keep. If you have any questions, I will be very happy to answer them before, during and after your participation in the study.
You may contact me at:

Eleanor Yurkovich, MSN, RN
Great Falls, Mt. 59405
Phone Number: 455-5618

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and I can withdraw at any time without giving a reason. The procedure has been explained to me. I understand that the information gathered in this indicates my willingness to participate in the study.

__________________________________________  __________________________
Signature of Participant                      Date
APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS FOR RESEARCH INTERVIEW
Questions for Research Interview

Date___________ Location_________________ Code_________________

1. What motivated you to go into nursing at MSU, CON?

2. Describe your educational experience in the College of Nursing.

3. Were there events or parts of this learning process and experience that helped you to succeed?

4. Were there events or parts of this learning process and experience that hindered your success?

5. How did you deal with these hindrances?

6. What recommendations would you make to the College of Nursing that you think would benefit the Native American student beginning in the nursing program at MSU.
DEMOGRAPHICS:

Birth Place____________________________________________

High School attended____________________________________

Dominate culture in High School__________________________

Colleges attended________________________________________

Numbers of years in each college___________________________

Your age when you began in the College of Nursing_________

Your age when you completed (Date of Graduation)___________

Did you stop out of the educational process? yes ___ no____

If you did, what was the reason for this?

Do you consider yourself to be a traditional Native American?

Yes_______ No__________

If so, what makes you think that you are?
(e.g., bilingual, participate in ceremonies, live on reservation)

Do you consider yourself to be non-traditional Native American?

Yes______ No__________

If so, what makes you think you are?