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## **Native American Young Adults in their Transition to College, and Persistence Through the First Year**

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Adrian Alexander Rodriguez entitled "Native American Young Adults in their Transition to College, and Persistence Through the First Year." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Psychology.

Brent S. Mallinckrodt, Major Professor

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(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

**Native American Young Adults in their Transition to College, and  
Persistence Through the First Year**

A Dissertation Presented for the  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Degree  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Adrian Alexander Rodriguez  
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I am very grateful to many individuals for guidance and support, and for taking this ride with me. To my major advisor: Dr. Mallinckrodt, thank you for everything you have done to help me reach my goals in this doctoral program. I feel ready to do more, and to be more, in large part because you have inspired me with all that you have done, and how far you keep going! To my research team: Jessy Alva, Ashleigh Barker, Sarah Cook, Samuel Jackson, Alex Lawson, Sara Little, Jada McNeill, Paymun Najmi, Jennifer Nguyen, Shelby Reyes, and Alex Sherry, you all made this possible! I have had some of my best experiences these past four years bonding with you all during our research meetings. I appreciate how actively you partook in this process. Please know that this dissertation is as much yours and a reflection of who you all are, as it is of me. To my dissertation committee - Dr. Miles, Dr. McCoy, and Dr. Shivers: thank you for challenging me to make this a stronger study, and to always be mindful and respectful to the lived experiences of the Native American community. To Dr. Thomas: thanks for a great qualitative class and for helping me to fall in love with this type of research! To my Grandpa Andy, an elder in the Ohlone tribe: I thank you for giving me the idea to get involved with the Native American aspect of my identity. I mostly chose to work with the Native American population as a way to say thank you for all your and Grandma Sally's unending help, support, and foundation. I cannot ever truly repay you, but I love you! As you told me, Grandpa, "Pay it forward!" That is what I will do!!! To my mom, dad, sisters, brother, Eric, and the rest of my family and friends: Thank you for being important people in my lives and believing in me. Most importantly, thank you for loving me! Lastly, to my cockapoo, George: You get on my nerves a lot of the time, but you have been my constant companion. You are loyal in a way no person can be. I love you Georgie!

This dissertation study focused on a mixed-methods exploration of Native American students' perceptions of risks and protective factors as they transitioned to college at a predominately White institution (PWI), and navigated through their first year. Due to low numbers of Native Americans at PWIs, individuals have described feeling invisible, which negatively impacts their ethnic identity development, sense of belonging, wellbeing, and retention in college. Factors involving respect, positive relationships, cultural affirmation, and resiliency are associated with success and retention for Native American students.

A mixed-methods model, guided by grounded theory and principles of social justice advocacy provided a reflection on Native American first time freshmen's perceived concerns related to transition as well as their coping efforts. Selection criteria included: (a) 18 years or older, (b) primary identification as Native American, and (c) enrollment in first semester of college. Eight interviews were conducted during Fall 2012 (September – October). Additional interviews were conducted during Fall 2013 (September - October) for a total of 10 original interviews and 2 follow-up interviews. Quantitative measures included the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale, the Native American Acculturation Scale, and the Bicultural Self-Efficacy Scale.

Results suggested that all participants experienced anxiety during the first month and a half of their first year. No significant relationships between transition anxiety and measures of attachment, acculturation, or bicultural self-efficacy were found. Participants initially utilized established relationships with family and close others, primarily off-campus, to cope with concerns related to transition. As they became more familiar with campus culture through positive interactions with faculty, staff, teaching assistants, resident advisors, and classmates,

participants described becoming less anxious. The reduction in anxiety occurred within their first month and a half on campus. Participants began to seek out academic and student services resources, and to form new connections with classmates, and other peers on campus. These early positive interactions lead to a sense of belonging. Through reflection on these early experiences, participants became more self-sufficient, and resilient. They identified new coping strategies for future concerns. This process also increased interest in further exploring Native American culture for some participants.

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### Background Information

The *transition* to college can be an exciting yet daunting experience for many young adults. College presents for traditional-aged students (18 to 24 years old) an opportunity for autonomy, where identity development is an integral part of adjusting to the demands of undergraduate academic and social life, as well as preparation for a successful life and career after graduation (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). There are many common challenges faced by college students during this transition. Such challenges include, (a) adjusting to the campus culture and environment, and (b) adjusting to separation from family and adolescent friends either by moving away for college, or through the development of changing belief systems or ways of viewing the world that may conflict with how individuals once saw themselves in relation to others. There are also academic pressures, including, (a) the need to develop new study habits in order to succeed academically, and (b) the call to excel in a major that is expected to ultimately lead to a successful career in a related field. Individuals' personal characteristics, support systems, present life happenings, and strategies for effective coping are all important in the successful transition to college (Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995).

Individuals must possess a number of important skills to successfully adjust to college. For example, college students must be competent in navigating the campus cultural environment. They must be able to quickly establish effective relationships with faculty, staff, and students, and get involved on campus in order to develop a sense of belonging (Schlossberg, 1989). They must reexamine their individual identities in the context of what they are experiencing and learning in college, and ultimately reestablish themselves as more autonomous but interdependent beings within the campus community, their families, and society. If they do not

possess these skills initially, individuals must develop them quickly in the initial months on campus. 2

According to retention theory (Tinto, 1993), students come to college with innate characteristics that influence their commitment to academics. However, their level of commitment increases or decreases depending on how connected they feel to the academic and social aspects of the college environment. In order to fully integrate, individuals must be able to embrace the values and beliefs of the faculty, staff, and peers on campus. *Traditional students* are considered to possess the tools of *cultural capital* necessary to do well if they apply energies appropriately (Engle & Tinto, 2008). For this study, we have defined traditional students as White, heterosexual males of middle to high socioeconomic status, Christian faith, and at least one parent who has earned a bachelors degree or higher.

One example of cultural capital is the ability to connect socially with others. The establishment of positive relationships is important in the social, and psychological growth, development, and positive health of young adults (Whalen & Lachman, 2000; Wise & King, 2008). High quality relationships in adulthood contribute to positive self-esteem and morale, are reciprocally supportive, provide solidarity, and help individuals to cope with transitions and life stress (Bagwell, Bender, Andreassi, Kinoshita, Montarello, & Miller, 2005; Hartup & Stevens, 1999; Roberto & Scott, 1986; Stoller, 1985). In contrast, low quality friendships have been associated with negative psychological health, depression, and physical illnesses (Bagwell et al., 2005; Barnett and Gotlib, 1988; Nezlek, Imbrie, & Shean, 1994; Picardi, Caroppo, Toni, Bitetti, & Di Maria, 2005).

Students who possess values that they perceive to be in conflict with the majority of other campus members often have feelings of isolation, and experience academic difficulty or

problems adjusting to college, together with feelings that they do not belong on campus 3  
(Schlossberg, 1989; Tinto, 1993). This lack of *belonging* can ultimately lead students to drop out of college. For Native American students in particular, the reality of low numbers of other Native American students, faculty, and staff on most college campuses leads to a feeling of invisibility, and thus a lowered sense of the self as integrated into campus life and culture (Haynes, 1997). This strong sense of feeling different than others and not belonging in college for Native Americans shapes their *ethnic identity* development, and is associated with low attendance and graduation rates for this population as a whole (Ballew, 1997; Haynes, 1997).

### **Identity Development and Bicultural Self-Efficacy**

In addition to these generalized issues, college *students of color* experience stress related to their ethnic minority status, especially when attending predominately White institutions (PWI; Wei, Liao, Chao, Mallinckrodt, Tsai, & Botello-Zamarron, 2010). This concept, known as *minority stress*, has been shown to have a direct effect on the psychological wellbeing and *retention* of students of color in college (Wei et al., 2010). Students of color in particular, must determine how their ethnic identity fits into their overall identity in the broader context of campus culture (Mcalpin, 2008; Watson, 2009). David, Okazaki, and Saw (2009) suggest that students of color must possess *bicultural self-efficacy* in order to navigate the regular interactions they must necessarily engage in with faculty, staff, and peers of the dominant culture on campus. Factors such as respect, friendship, and the inclusion of culturally competent curricula have been shown to lead to success and retention for Native American students in college (Ault, 2009). Therefore, it is important to consider what factors relate to positive ethnic identity development, bicultural self-efficacy, and relationship building during college for this population, as well as how *campus agents* can be proactive in facilitating such growth and development.

The development of a positive ethnic identity is an important task for all individuals to 4 achieve during college (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). In countries where different ethnic groups co-exist, such as the United States, it is important for people of color to have pride in and feel that they belong to an ethnic group (Aboud & Doyle, 1993). Because people of color in the United States have less social and institutional power than the dominant culture, they may aspire to embrace their ethnic identity as a way to avoid assimilation or the feeling of “disappear[ing] into the mixture” (Aboud & Doyle, 1993, p. 47). A secure sense of one’s own ethnic identity is important because it supports individuals’ openness to accept others’ ethnic differences (Aboud & Doyle, 1993).

### ***Ethnic Identity***

Ethnic identity “is a set of self-ideas about one’s own ethnic group membership” (Knight, Bernal, Cota, Garza, & Ocampo, 1993, p. 105). Ethnic identity is an important part of the self-concept, and is influenced by normative socialization processes as well as one’s status as a person of color (Knight et al., 1993). People of color experience the socialization process differently than individuals of the dominant American culture (Knight et al., 1993). Their families and community shape their living skills, behavioral competencies, and values. However, in addition to the impact of their own cultural environment, the dominant culture also shapes ethnic identity for people of color (Knight et al., 1993). In order to successfully adjust to life within a predominately White, euro-centric society, people of color must be able to acculturate to this Westernized culture. The *acculturation* process shapes their ethnic identity (Knight et al., 1993).

Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936) define acculturation as “those phenomena which result [when] groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups” (as cited in Cuellar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995, p. 278). Research has found a relationship between acculturation and individuals’ psychological, behavioral, and physical health (Cuellar et al., 1995). Behaviorally, it affects one’s verbal behavior, language, customs, food, and one’s chosen form of cultural expression, for example one’s preferred musical taste. Affectively, it shapes how a person feels about aspects of her or his ethnic identity, and the meaning she or he attaches to her or his life and to symbols. Cognitively, it shapes one’s ideas of gender roles, thoughts and feelings towards illness, and fundamental values (Cuellar et al., 1995).

Acculturation can be viewed as an “interactive, developmental, multifactorial, multidimensional process” (Cuellar et al., 1995, p. 279). The acculturation process begins at an early age for people of color, and is shaped by the ethnic diversity of their neighborhoods, their interaction with non-ethnic children in society and at school, and the images they receive from the media (Knight et al., 1993). Individuals’ ability or inability to acculturate or adapt to the dominant culture has an impact on their comfort level with their own ethnic identity, the quality of their educational experiences, and their overall mental health (Knight et al., 1993).

***Social Interactions***

While people of color as children learn about their ethnic culture through their family’s teaching and childrearing practices, they learn about expectations of society through their peers, teachers, school systems, and the media (Knight et al., 1993). Such nonfamilial individuals may be of their same ethnic identity or of a different ethnic identity, and the values that such



individuals instill upon them may conflict with the values of their own family (Knight et al., 1993). Such conflicting values influence individuals' ethnic identity, which in turn shapes how they behave in agreement with or opposition to their own ethnic culture both at home and in society (Knight et al., 1993). 6

The development of a positive ethnic identity, which is a part of one's social identity, is an important construct in defining one's self-concept (Cross & Cross, 2008). Native American individuals have key life experiences related to their cultural worldviews that shape their racial, ethnic, and cultural identity development (Lucero, 2010; Markstrom, 2011), which can affect their psychosocial development and ability to make connections with others during college.

### ***Rituals***

Certain life cycle *rituals* assist individuals in transitioning from one stage to the next (i.e., from adolescence to adulthood), and greatly affect their identity development (Markstrom, 2011). An understanding of such rituals can be helpful in assisting Native American students in their transition to college, and psychosocial development during college. The possession of tribal membership, and the ability to align with one's tribe, on- and off- the reservation is important in the identity development of Native Americans (Lucero, 2010). Race, ethnicity, and culture are constructs that intersect, and are continually modified across the lifespan (Cross & Cross, 2008; Markstrom, 2011). Therefore, it is important to explore how such constructs influence Native Americans' ethnic identity development in college.

### ***Histories***

For Native Americans, specific historical events, as well as current politics, availability of resources, and living situations shape their self-perceptions in environmental contexts (Haynes, 1997; Lucero, 2010; Tafoya & Roeder, 1995). Coerced acculturation, oppression,

removal from homelands, and genocide over the past 500 years, have led to constant change in <sup>7</sup> the cultures and languages of Native American people (Leonard, 2009). A qualitative study on mixed-blood Cherokee individuals found that participants' identities were shaped by many factors including, (a) living in environments with low visibility and numbers of other native people, (b) patriarchy, (c) loss of language, (d) Christianity, (e) socioeconomic status, (f) shame, (g) media, and (h) curriculum (Haynes, 1997).

Research suggests that development of positive ethnic identity in relation to the realities of historical and political events and influences is important in positive mental health outcomes for adolescents of color (Newmann, 2005; Phinney & Kohatsu, 1997; Schulenberg, Maggs, & Hurrelmann, 1997). For example, a study by Newmann (2005) found that Native American adolescents with low-levels of ethnic identity development were more impulsive, and possessed the highest interpersonal vulnerability as compared to their peers in the study who were classified as *conformist* (positive ethnic group affiliation and relationship view; but also moderate social anxiety) or *post conformist* (high agency, social competence, identity achievement; but also psychological distress and family conflict). Thus, the concept of ethnic identity is important for Native Americans as they enter college, where they will be required to form new relationships in order to build the necessary support systems to be successful.

### **Retention and Persistence for Students of Color**

For *non-traditional* college students, including students of color, *validation* from campus agents, such as faculty, student affairs practitioners, counselors, and related others positively impacts their sense of self-worth and ability to connect to campus (Rendón, 1994). Feeling acknowledged and valued in the campus community is of utmost importance for people of color in a multicultural society (Brayboy & Morgan, 1998). Research on retention in general and for

students of color specifically underscores the importance of campus support systems in student 8 success (Palmer, Maramba, & Dancy, 2011). For example, Ortiz and Santos (2009) found peers to play a vital role in the exploration of ethnic identity for students of color in college. This sense of support from campus sources, as well as community, tribal and family members has been found to be crucial for Native American students' success (Korkow, 2009).

### **Attachment Relationships**

An additional concept that literature is beginning to explore is the concept of *attachment* to one's culture, specifically for Native Americans. Individuals develop internal working models of relationships through their childhood interactions with family members that shape how they form relationships with others as adults (Bowlby, 1973/ 1980). Attachment theory has been shown to strongly predict secure relationship formation with others (Schneider, Atkinson, & Tardif, 2001). Those who are unable to establish close, supportive relationships are more likely to develop clinical symptomatology (Sullivan, 1953).

### ***Attachment and People of Color***

Attachment theory has been developed by Western researchers who primarily studied attachment relationships amongst Westernized individuals, although some research was done on attachment relationships between parents and children in non-westernized countries (Ainsworth, 1982; Bowlby, 1973/1980). The dimensions of attachment based on this Westernized approach have been criticized as mislabeling minority individuals as being more anxiously attached than their White counterparts based on their greater familial interdependence (Harwood, 1992; Nogales, 1998; Posada, Carbonell, Alzate, & Plata, 2004; Waters, Hamilton, & Weinfield, 2000; White, 2004). In other words, how individuals define secure attachment may be relative to each cultural group. Another layer to this is the extent to which individuals ethnically identify with

their culture. Highly acculturated people of color may identify more with Westernized American culture than with their own ethnic culture, whereas people of color with low acculturation may more strongly identify with the cultural identity of their ethnic heritage (Cuellar et al., 1995; Gutiérrez, & Yeakley, 2000).

### ***Relationships with Parents***

Parental influence has a lasting impact on individuals from childhood through adulthood (Sherman, de Vries, & Lansford, 2000). According to attachment theory, children build internal working models of relationships through their interactions with their parents that shape how they form extra-familial relationships as adults (Berlin, Cassidy, & Appleyard, 2008). The quality of individuals' primary attachment relationships creates expectations about the nature of extra-familial relationships (Dwyer, Fredstrom, Rubin, Booth-LaForce, Rose-Krasnor, & Burgess, 2010). Individuals seek out others who will fulfill relationship needs in similar ways to those of the primary attachment figure(s). They do this to maintain a sense of familiarity and order in their various relationships (Dwyer et al., 2010). Growing up in a warm, sensitive family is highly associated with the development of a secure attachment through adulthood (Sherman et al., 2000). When securely attached adolescents become stressed, they are more likely to reach out to their family for support rather than engaging in negative coping strategies. Insecurely attached individuals are more likely to avoid seeking interpersonal support because of their issues with trusting and seeking help from others. Individuals who have inaccurate representations of their distinct relationships with others (i.e., romantic partners, family, friends) are more likely to encounter relationship difficulties.

Secure attachment is vital to the formation of peer competence, as securely attached individuals have stronger social skills and are more willing to approach others (Sherman et al., 2000). According to Mallinckrodt (2000), childhood attachments largely shape adults' abilities to effectively communicate with others, and the health of their relationships with others. Individuals with secure attachment styles have been found to develop stronger social skills, build more positive relationships with others, and be more effective problem-solvers (Hamarta, Deniz, & Saltali, 2009). Kobak and Sceery (1988) found that college students who are securely attached to their parents are more likely to report greater social support from peers. Allen, Moore, Kuperminc, and Bell (1998) found that securely attached adolescents are more accepted by peers. Such individuals are more likely to feel secure with, close to, and seek help from their friends, and such relationships are characterized by less conflict (Lieberman, Doyle, & Markiewicz, 1999).

While secure attachments have been shown to lead to positive health and mental health outcomes for adults, there is little research on adult attachment as it relates to individuals of non-western ethnic groups (Parade, Leerkes, & Blankson, 2010; Steinburg & Fletcher, 1998). The few studies that exist do not look specifically at connections between attachment and acculturation in the formation of relationships in young adulthood for this population, and additionally suggest that attachment relationships may vary by race and culture (Harwood, 1992; Broman, 1993; Montague, Magai, Consedine, & Gillespie, 2003; White, 2004; Bercerra, 2007). Therefore, the westernized concept of attachment may not accurately describe relationship formations for Native American students.

The ability to form and maintain positive and supportive relationships during college is <sup>11</sup> important in students' development of a sense of membership and belonging to campus, which ultimately influences their retention. Because relationships with faculty, staff, peers, and other individuals are vital to student success, it is important to investigate the schemas individuals bring to college that facilitate their ability to establish positive relationships with others. Attachment theory is important because it explains how secure attachments are related to positive health and mental health outcomes for individuals (Parade et al., 2010; Steinburg & Fletcher, 1998). Lopez and Gormley (2002) examined how adult attachment style during the first year transition to college relates to self-confidence, coping, and distress patterns amongst students. They found that students who possess a continued secure attachment style across their first year in college are more self-confident in their social interactions with others, in particular in their confidence to attract romantic partners as opposed to their peers with stable insecure attachment, or only slightly stable secure attachment. Those individuals with stable secure attachments were also better at overall problem coping.

These findings suggest the importance for Native Americans to develop secure attachment relationships with others during college, because attachment figures are individuals one would be compelled to turn to in times of stress, for support and protection above all other individuals (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). In order to mitigate the feelings of marginality and isolation in the new campus environment, Native Americans may benefit from the ability to form positive relationships with others. Accordingly, it is important to explore how attachment and acculturation interconnect and influence each other as they work to shape Native American students' ability to form healthy connections with others as they transition to college.

In their qualitative study of three Native American families, Christensen and Manson (2001) found that parents brought the effects of their childhood experiences into their parenting approaches with their own children. Once therapists helped parents to identify potentially maladaptive patterns in parenting interactions, these primary caregivers were then able to positively adjust their parenting styles with their children. Healing from the emotional scars related to past negative familial or cultural experiences was important in the establishment of a secure attachment identity for these Native American parents. However, the authors' caution that current attachment theory, as measured by instruments such as the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI; George, Kaplan, & Main, 1985) does not fully capture what attachment might look like for Native American individuals (Christensen & Manson, 2001). For example, in Native American families, there may be multiple caregivers responsible for a child, while the relationship with the parent(s) might be insecure, the relationship with an older sibling, aunt, or grandfather for example, might be more securely based. Therefore, it is important to further investigate how culture shapes the construct of attachment for Native Americans when exploring how they enter into multiple attachment relationships with others (Christensen & Manson, 2001).

An additional concept that literature is beginning to explore is the concept of attachment to one's culture, specifically for Native Americans. A study by Enos (1999) examined Pueblo culture and communities, and found that attachment, culture, and identity are important constructs that influence Pueblo students' attachment to their tribal community, attachment within the Westernized education system, and how they reconnect with their community after complete schooling. The author asserts that such individuals may develop strengths from their tribal communities that assist in their transition to school, and from school upon graduation.

Another study by HeavyRunner-Rioux, Aislinn, and Hollist (2010) found that attachment to tribal community in addition to attachment to family, and peers, may influence social learning and lower substance use for Native American youth. Therefore, the exploration of attachment to both immediate and extended family, culture, and tribal affiliation are also important concepts to explore. 13

### ***Attachment and Culture***

Researchers have examined attachment and different cultures (Rothbaum, Weisz, Pott, Miyake, & Morelli, 2000; Rothbaum & Kakinuma, 2004). *Culture* has been found to have an influence on human behavior (Blacher, Shapiro, Lopez, Diaz, & Fusco, 1997), such as the ways in which families express their feelings towards each other and how they construct their attachment style (White, 2004). Additionally, how different cultures view the expression of emotions can shape how the culture defines secure attachment (Becerra, 2007). Harwood (1992) asserts that in order to correctly understand attachment for different cultures, one must look at attachment using an “emic” perspective or one that is specific to and shaped by people of each particular culture, including the indigenous meaning systems that shape such attachment behavior.

### **Ethnic Identity Development During College**

Exploring the effects of ethnicity is relevant for college populations because choosing an ethnic identification becomes especially significant for young adults as they enter college (Ortiz & Santos, 2009). The fact that individuals are required to select a racial/ethnic label when they register for college triggers for many the process of exploring their ethnic identities (Ortiz & Santos, 2009). Additionally, other students of color and White students can pressure or influence individuals to pick an ethnic identity during college. Students of color in particular can find it



difficult to find an ethnic label that fits (Comas-Diaz, 2001). Specifically, Native Americans 14 are often mistaken as members of other ethnic groups, which impacts “how [they] experience their ethnic identity and whether they are forced to “claim” a given ethnic self-identification” (Ortiz & Santos, 2009, p. 135).

College students who establish a stronger sense of ethnic identity describe feeling more confident as they face different obstacles in life (Ortiz & Santos, 2009). This suggests that a positive ethnic identity is related to one’s positive mental health. Acculturation studies suggest that individuals who become more acculturated are better able to adapt to and interact within the dominant culture (Zayas & Solari, 1994). Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, and Gurin (2002) explored the effects of classroom diversity and informal interactions on educational and democracy outcomes for students of various ethnic groups in college and university settings in the United States. They found that efforts to diversify college and university populations such as affirmative action are vital to increasing access to higher education for larger numbers of students.

Additionally, it was important to create opportunities for diverse students once at the college or university to be exposed to, engage in conversations with, and participate in activities and experiences with people of other ethnic groups and diverse backgrounds while attending college. Such opportunities to interact with diverse others were important in the cognitive, academic, and social growth and development of all ethnic groups in college. Gurin et al. (2002) call for student affairs administrators and educators to structure opportunities in- and out-of-the-classroom that allow students to “leave the comfort of their homogenous peer group and build relationships across racially/ethnically diverse student communities on campus” (p. 363). This will prepare students to live, interact and engage with others in democratic, civic-minded ways once they graduate and enter as professionals into society (Gurin et al., 2002).

Rendón (1994) asserts that validation is crucial in the retention and success of students of color at colleges and universities. According to Rendón (1994), validation can occur both in and out of the classroom and must be initiated by agents such as faculty, staff, and current students as *early* as possible in a student's college career. Non-traditional college students, including students of color need encouragement, support, and to feel their identities and experiences are valuable on their college campuses. Non-traditional students who are validated by campus agents are more likely to get involved on campus, which increases their *persistence* through graduation. 15

### **Resiliency**

The transition to college can be difficult for Native American students. Some researchers exploring Native American identity development during adolescence, young adulthood, and through college have examined these variables through the lens of a concept known as *resilience* (Ambler, 2003; Cameron & turtle-song, 2003; Grandbois, 2009). Resilience refers to the ability of an individual to cope with stress, recover and persist after a particular setback, and return to a state of normalcy (Masten, 2009). For Native Americans, the development of resiliency has been linked with awareness and acceptance of culture (Leonard, 2009). Native Americans as a people have experienced unique and devastating traumas, ethnic cleanings, and genocide (Hall, 1999 in Grandbois, 2009). As elders in this ethnic group are seen as the wisdom keepers among tribal members, they play a key role in the development of resiliency for this group. Grandbois (2009) found resilience to be related to and shaped by the traditional culture and worldview of Native American elders.

Resilience not only serves to help Native American college students cope with transition problems, but it may also help them avoid other problems, such as substance abuse, which can be

a significant problem for Native American adolescents (Galliher, Evans, & Weiser, 2007). A 16 study by Ambler (2003) found that some Native American college students have been able to succeed in spite of high rates of poverty and drug use within their community, due to cultural resilience, a concept that examines the relationship between family life, and family involvement in campus events with student success at tribal colleges. The relationship between connection to culture, and tribal affiliation, especially where individuals have access to tribal elders (Grandbois, 2009) may be important in Native American young adults' development of the resilience that is needed to resist pressures toward substance use, and to successfully navigate through higher education.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Current literature suggests that the transition to college and persistence through graduation can be challenging tasks for many individuals. Students of color in general, and Native Americans specifically, have been found to face additional stressors related to their ethnic identity which can affect their ability to do well in college (Ault, 2009; Ballew, 1997; Haynes, 1997; Korkow, 2009; Mcalpin, 2008; Rendon, 1994; Watson, 2009; Wei et al., 2010). Individuals' readiness for the academic and social challenges of college is often contingent upon the support they feel from individuals on- and off-campus are critical components in her or his ability to adjust to the campus environment, establish. Researchers have used both quantitative and qualitative research methods to identify factors from infancy through young adulthood that support or impede Native Americans' ability to succeed in college.

Attachment theory and ethnic identity research suggest particular variables that may be risks or protective factors for college persistence, but empirical investigation of these variables for Native American students is lacking. Based on the western conception of attachment,

securely attached Native American students, with a strong sense of ethnic identity, and a cultural resiliency to adjust to various barriers and setbacks, would be able to access the necessary internal and external resources that student development literature suggests aid in success during college. In contrast, those Native American individuals who lack resources and coping skills may have a more difficult time adjusting to and completing college. In addition, some individuals may have access to certain resources but lack others that are associated with success in college. For example an individual could be securely attached, but lack a strong sense of ties to her or his ethnic identity. Though securely attached, feelings of invisibility may keep such a Native American individual from fully connecting to campus and persisting through graduation.

The present study aimed to examine the experiences of Native American students in their transition to college, and journey through the first year, with a focus on identifying risks and protective factors for persistence. With this study, we sought to engage in dialogue with first year Native American students at a PWI in order to learn directly from them, how their lived experiences, expectations, and perceptions might shape their ability to successfully transition to college and persist in their first year.

### **Research Design**

A mixed-methods research approach was utilized to explore how variables such as attachment, resilience, acculturation, and bicultural self-efficacy relate to Native American students' perceptions of the risks and protective factors related to their transition to college. A mixed-method approach draws from quantitative and qualitative designs and incorporates features of both to allow researchers to answer research questions in a way that otherwise might not be possible. Mixed method studies allow researchers to use personal interpretations to make

sense of quantitative findings (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The qualitative portion of the investigation into Native American college student retention provided a glimpse into how these individuals made meaning of their experience as incoming college students, and provided a voice for a population who may feel invisible at a PWI (Morrow, 2007). This approach was especially appropriate for this population because narrative interpretation of experiences and story telling are important aspects of Native American culture (Cheshire, 2001). A qualitative approach that drew upon the cultural strengths of story telling allowed us to glean a more complete view of the factors that influence Native American students' retention in college. The quantitative data was used to contextualize and further interpret the participants' responses in relation to factors such as their attachment style, level of acculturation to Native American culture, and perceived bicultural self-efficacy. By ascertaining the risks and protective factors during transition as perceived and experienced by a group of incoming Native American students, we hoped to develop a more holistic view of Native American student development in college, and to identify how to best assist in their transition to college and persistence through graduation.

We adopted a grounded theory analysis of the qualitative data. The grounded theory method uncovers a theory of how a phenomenon of interest takes place that is grounded in data (Hanson, Creswell, Clark, Petska, & Creswell, 2005), which in our study were the words of the Native American students. Although there are different ways to conduct grounded theory analysis, for this paper, we will be following the guidelines developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990). The Strauss and Corbin (1990) approach requires data to be analyzed through three phases of coding: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Following these coding exercises in sequential order is vital in becoming able to understand and re-envision what the data says. In order to develop a theory of Native American students in their transition to college,

this approach required us to break down data, analyze the interconnectedness of different categories of data, and finally reconstruct the data in new ways.

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### **Social Justice Framework of This Study**

With this study, we sought to provide a platform that gives voice to Native American students entering college at a PWI. In order to understand how we have come to select the methodology that we feel most adequately provides for achievement of this goal, we feel it is important to explain how we understand our roles as social justice advocates. Our position as a social justice advocate directly informed the choices we made in selecting this research topic, the types of individuals we sought to empower through this research process, and the care through which we made sense of and interpreted their words. The following paragraphs describe the primary investigator's standpoint as a social justice advocate, and how he believes this shapes his privilege and responsibility to conduct this study in a caring and affirming way. Research team members also endorsed this standpoint:

Being social justice advocates means working to minimize the power differentials that keep oppressed groups from having say, and working to support the structural changes that provide for these individuals the opportunity to live experiences that are representative of how they want the world to be. Working to eliminate the systemic, societal structures that reinforce power inequalities will inherently provide those in oppressed groups the opportunity to begin to recreate the system, in a better way.

Social justice work is incremental, as evidenced through the reform movements (Fouad, Gerstein, & Toporek, 2006; Toporek & Williams, 2006). It cannot all happen at once. An important aspect of this delicate process is learning how to navigate the balance between deferring to what the community we are working with wants, while also acknowledging our own

limitations in helping them in certain situations or in certain ways. It is crucial is to go to the 20 community first and assess their needs, including how one's research interests might be aligned with their needs, or if one's personal interests might be detrimental to the communities' experiences in any way. As Toporek and Williams (2006) suggested, this helps secure the position of the community as a driving force in research and intervention. With our study, we took an initial step to build a connection with the community of Native American students entering college, and identifying from them what they might need in order to persist in college through graduation.

It is vital as social justice advocates that we work to embrace and develop intersectional perspectives in terms of methodology (Shields, 2008/2014). While we can attempt to wash out the differing effects of a researcher's identity on how participants interpret and respond to questions, doing so limits our accuracy in understanding why a participant says what they are saying. For example, a woman of color can conduct the same research as a White male. While standardization measures aim to ensure the minimizing of differences that these researchers' gender and ethnicities might have on participant responses, the inherent similarities and differences in gender and ethnicity of the researchers and participants impact how the participants see the researcher. Accordingly, this can influence how participants envision many aspects of the study, including its strength, intelligence, and importance (Shields, 2008/2014). All of these variables are tied up in our assumptions of color, race, and the intersectionality between them.

Social justice advocacy also involves practicing reflexivity; including, the reflection on who we are, what we bring to the equation, and how our own thoughts, experiences, and biases might impact how we see, interpret, or respond to what participants are saying (van de Sande and

Schwartz, 2011a/2011b/ 2011c). By practicing reflexivity, we can better understand where 21  
our own thoughts are coming from, and appropriately check them in order to fully provide all  
energy and resources to supporting the participants during the research gathering process.

Our job as researchers is not to be newscasters who simply report on what we find  
without reflecting critically on what this research means for the lives of the participants and what  
it says about the social structure that is reinforcing the issues we find (van de Sande & Schwartz,  
2011a/2011b/2011c). Social justice advocates must be helpers and facilitators rather than fixers.  
We must conduct research on groups that tend to be excluded rather than only looking at those  
who possess privilege, because this allows us to better identify how race, class and other  
identities are shaped for all individuals (Cole, 2009). This approach to social justice work helps  
the larger society to better understand themselves through understanding the experiences of  
disadvantaged others, and how social contexts form the differential experiences each of us have  
based on the intersections of our multiple identities.

By engaging in social justice advocacy work through an intersectionality framework, we  
can learn not only about the experiences of oppressed groups, but also about how the process that  
leads to oppression also shapes the lived experience for individuals who obtain various levels of  
privilege based on aspects of their intersecting identities that are seen as having more power in  
society. In order to study Native American students through an intersectional framework, we  
have adopted Cole's (2009) suggestion that researchers seek answers to the following three  
questions: (a) Who is included within this category? (b) What role does inequality play? (c)  
Where are the similarities? It is important to consider the diversity among what may be seen as a  
homogenous group as this reveals hierarchies of power and privilege within the group being  
studied, and helps to identify similar experiences across different groups.



In order to conduct culturally-sensitive research, we cannot merely make educated guesses about what individuals need but rather researchers need to go to them specifically, present our initial ideas, and allow them to construct the route to create effective programming based on their own ideas, talents, and resources. As previously mentioned, the value of supporting the needs of those who are oppressed has a resounding impact not only for such individuals but up the power chain as well. 22

When people who are oppressed are able to advance, it will advance the success of all other individuals (Davis, 1986/2014). With this study, we attempted to better understand the transition to college for students through examination of this process for individuals who are often excluded in research and university planning, Native American students. Therefore, research-with-purpose is how we conceptualized our role in advancing social justice theory to practice by conducting this mixed-methods study. It is not simply enough to highlight needs, inequity, and inequalities, but also to use the information we found to help oppressed groups to do something about this.

### **Reflexivity Statement**

I entered into this study as an individual who identifies in part as Native American, but primarily as Mexican and Black. My grandfather on my Mexican father's side is an active elder in our Ohlone Tribe, and his other son, my uncle, is the leader of the tribal drum circle. While I do not identify as much with my native ancestry as I do with my Black and Mexican ancestry, I have had a lot of exposure and experience with different native tribes through association with my family, and involvement in our family's annual Pow Wow. I have also been shaped by additional opportunities to interact with Native American individuals in social and cultural settings, and to learn about the depth of Native culture through college coursework. For

example, my mentor for the first year of my undergraduate experience was Native American. 23

I also took several Native American Experience courses in undergrad where I learned of the historical lived experiences and plight of Native American people. I also worked at the Native American Cultural Center as a student assistant for a portion of my undergraduate career. I believe that all of these experiences and familiarity with the experience of Native Americans, culturally, in their communities, and as college students impact my understanding of what it means to be Native American, as well as the needs for Native American college students.

Additionally, I have worked in the field of student affairs for over 12 years, progressing from a peer mentor to a professional academic adviser. My positions enabled me direct experience working with first generation, low-income college students, including some who identified as Native American. For six years, I assisted such individuals in their transition to college through my participation in numerous Summer Bridge programs and provision of academic advising services at two different Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) in California. As related to the current study, through my work as a summer bridge counselor, I aimed to make first generation students more familiar and comfortable with the campus and community prior to the start of their first year. In my masters program in Counseling, I also studied student development retention theory, in particular, promoting the educational advancement of students of color.

My research team consisted of 11 individuals whom I interviewed and selected based on their status as upper division students, and knowledge and interest in multicultural psychology and student development theories. I wanted individuals that had a foundation in psychology theories and research design. I also was mindful to construct a team of individuals with ethnic, gender, and other cultural diversity. I felt it important to examine this study through the eyes of

people who have been brought up with varied life experiences as based on how they look and 24  
how they ethnically identify. This was crucial as the aim of our study was to investigate the  
impact of ethnic identity on our participants' transition experiences at a PWI.

Research team members identified as Black/African American (2 females),  
White/Mexican (2 females), White (1 male, 1 female), White/Native American (1 female),  
Melungeon/Native American (1 male), Persian (1 male), Chinese/Vietnamese (1 female), and  
White/Guamanian (1 male). Ten of the research team members were psychology majors, and 1  
a biology major. Over the course of three years, I had 4 research team members at any given  
time, as some graduated or chose to no longer continue as a research member. As our team  
consisted of different genders, ethnicities, cultures, and lived experiences, we all brought unique  
worldviews to this study that likely impacted how we listened to and made sense of the data. For  
example, some research members recalled their own experiences of anxiety as they sifted  
through data on transition issues for participants in our study. I was also mindful that my prior  
education in student development theory as part of my masters program, and six years of professional  
work as an academic advisor for first generation and low-income students have largely shaped  
how I conceptualize student growth and development. Therefore, I needed to be mindful of this  
when constructing the methodology of the study, and in interpreting the data. An important  
aspect of this study was to identify participants' perceptions of risks and protective factors as  
they begin college. We have our own perceptions of transition based on how we have  
experienced the beginning of our college journey. As a research team, my colleagues and I  
regularly discussed how these perceptions might influence what we chose to hone in on, and  
value as important in the participants' transition process. Therefore, as a research team, we took

measures to establish trustworthiness and credibility, which we will further discuss in the Limitations section (Morrow, 2007).

**Participant Recruitment and Selection**

Participants were recruited through an initial email invitation (Appendix A). After approval by the UT IRB, we obtained from Admissions Services a list of 76 names and e-mail addresses for incoming students who self-identified as Native American on their college admissions applications. The invitation to participate was e-mailed to potential participants during their first week of the Fall 2012 semester, and was also sent to a second set of incoming students during the Fall 2013 semester. In this communication, students were invited to contact the primary research investigator by e-mail to find out more about the study if they were interested.

We sent a follow-up e-mail to those students who responded to the initial e-mail. The second e-mail provided further information about the study (Appendix B) as well as an informed consent document (Appendix C). At this point the informed consent document was distributed as an e-mail attachment solely for informational purposes. A signed informed consent document was later obtained at the time of the initial interview for those students who chose to volunteer. The second e-mail to interested individuals included information on the purpose of the study. Students who decided to participate were asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire that they returned via e-mail. The demographic questionnaire was used to gather information on gender, age, tribal membership and/or affiliation, and education level for self and immediate family members. Participant selection was based on the following criteria: (a) self-identify as Native American, (b) traditional-aged incoming college student (18 to 24 years old), (c) currently transitioning from high school to college, (d) not previously attended any community college or

university courses. Participants were awarded a \$20 Amazon.com gift card at the end of the interview. 27

### **Data Collection**

Individuals who were determined eligible to participate in the study based on their responses to the demographic questionnaire were contacted by e-mail. From this list of eligible participants, ten research participants agreed to be interviewed. Interviews took place during the first month and a half of Fall 2013 and Fall 2014 semesters, respectively. Interviews began with a chat for 3-5 minutes to establish rapport, introduction of the primary research investigator, and during two interviews in Fall 2013 a secondary introduction by a research assistant.

As guided by the primary research investigator's social justice standpoint, he began interviews by providing information about his own experience as an undergraduate advisor, doctoral student in Counseling Psychology, and first generation multi-racial student of Native American heritage. We then proceeded with a review of the informed consent document. Participants were given an opportunity to have any questions answered before the taping of the interview began. After we obtained their signed informed consent we provided a second copy of the document for the participants to keep. We began the interview by reminding participants that they were free to decline to answer any question or to stop the interview at any time.

This mixed-method study was focused primarily on qualitative data. However, we also collected some quantitative data to aid in situating our findings. Before the interviews began, students were asked to complete a packet that contained the following measures: the Experiences in Close Relationship Scale (ECRS; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998), the Native American Acculturation Scale (NAS; Garrett & Pichette, 2000), and the Bicultural Self-Efficacy Scale (BSES; David et al., 2009).

concurrently or sequentially, and weight can be given to one form of data over the other (Creswell, 2013). For this study, the instruments (quantitative) and questions (qualitative) were administered within the same interview timeslot (concurrently), however, more weight or emphasis was given to the qualitative data, because the goal of the research was to provide a venue for Native American students to share unique thoughts and feelings regarding their transition to college. The researcher administered the instruments in the packet before beginning questioning in an effort to reduce any undue influence the researcher and/or interview questions might have had in shaping how participants responded to the quantitative items.

After participants completed the packets, the researcher placed them into envelopes, sealed the envelopes, and conducted the question portion of the interview. The research team refrained from scoring the survey packets until after all interviews had been conducted and analyzed. The interviews ranged in length from 45 to 90 minutes. The interviews began with the primary investigator distributing a paper copy of the informed consent document, asking participants if they had any questions, and lastly, obtaining their signed consent. Only after this process and receiving verbal and written consent did we turn on the audio recorder.

Through the semi-structured interview we asked open-ended questions with accompanying probes that addressed the transition to college process as informed by variables shown to be previously relevant for the Native American population including attachment, ethnic identity development, and resiliency theory. The interview questions also provided an opportunity for participants to discuss factors that may be unrelated to the aforementioned variables. We appeared to reach a point of saturation at the eighth interview, but conducted two additional interviews to see if any new information could be gleaned. Thus, a total of 10

interviews were conducted. The interviews took place in a small private research lab room 29 equipped with a white noise generator outside the door to ensure privacy and confidentiality of the participants. Interview data were stored as mp3 files, and transcripts as Word documents in a password protected folder on the desktop of the computer in the lab.

Following the tenets of constant comparison from the Strauss and Corbin (1990) approach, the data collected from initial interviews were evaluated and utilized to revise initial questions in order to fully assess the factors of importance for this population as they transition to college. At the end of the first interview, participants were thanked for their time and given a \$20 Amazon.com gift card as a thank you for their participation. They were also asked for permission to contact them again for participation in a follow-up interview the following Fall semester. Similarly, permission to contact the participants for member check telephone interviews or e-mail correspondence was also solicited. All participants gave permission to be contacted for member checking and to solicit participation in a second interview.

The questions and probes used in the initial interview are shown in Appendix D. After analysis of our first three interviews, we discovered that participants spoke of others' perceptions of their ethnicity, but did not specifically state how they believe others viewed them, ethnically. Therefore, for interviews 4 through 10, we added an additional question: How do you believe others perceive you ethnically? We found that the addition of this question allowed us to better contextualize the impact of others' perceptions of their ethnic identity on how the participants see themselves during the transition to a PWI. Thus, we felt better situated to interpret the qualitative data for interviews four through ten after adding this clarifying question to the interview.



The purpose of the second year interview was to solicit students' evolving perspectives<sup>30</sup> on the risks and protective factors related to succeeding in college. The e-mail invitation indicated that participation was completely optional. As a thank you gift, those individuals who participated in the second interview received an additional \$20 Amazon.com gift card in-person at the end of the interview. In the follow-up second year interview, questions were modified in order to focus on the participants' college experiences over the first year. These questions are shown in Appendix E.

### **Instruments**

#### ***Experiences in Close Relationship Scale***

Attachment style was measured using the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECRS; Brennan et al., 1998). The ECRS is a 36-item self-report instrument that measures the anxiety (18 even numbered questions) and avoidance (18 odd numbered questions) dimensions of adult attachment. The instrument is a highly reliable and valid measure (Wei, Russell, Mallinckrodt, & Vogell, 2007). It has high reliability, with test-retest Cronbach's alpha ratings = .94 for Avoidance, and .91 for Anxiety (Bartholomew & Shaver, 1998). The ECRS consists of questions that require participants to respond using a 7-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). An overall high score on the Avoidance scale indicates avoidant attachment, whereas an overall high score on the Anxiety scale describes indicates anxious attachment. An overall low score on both avoidance and anxiety scales indicates a secure attachment. When compared with other measures of adult attachment, the ECRS has shown criterion validity (Brennan et al., 1998).

The Native American Acculturation Scale (NAS; Garrett & Pichette, 2000) was adapted for use with Native American college students. This instrument can be used to determine the level to which an individual endorses Native American traditions and behaviors. The NAS is comprised of 18 multiple choice items, with each question including answer options labeled 1 (high affiliation with Native American values and beliefs) through 5 (high acculturation to dominant United States culture). Results are calculated by determining the mean score, with scores ranging between 1 and 5. A score of 1 would indicate a high orientation toward native culture, a score of 3 would indicate a bicultural identification, and a score of 5 would indicate acculturation to the dominant culture. Garrett and Pichette (2000) found the NAS to have high reliability with Cronbach's alpha of .91.

***Bicultural Self-Efficacy Scale***

The Bicultural Self-Efficacy Scale (BSES; David et al., 2009) is a multidimensional measure of perceived bicultural self-efficacy. It has been developed using a sample of ethnic minority undergraduate college students at a large Midwestern public university. The BSES is comprised of 26 items, with each question including answer options labeled 1 (strongly disagree) through 5 (strongly agree). The BSES includes the following subscales: Social Groundedness, Communication Ability, Positive Attitudes, Knowledge, Role Repertoire, and Bicultural Beliefs. Results are calculated by determining the mean score, with scores ranging between 1 and 5. Rather than examining the subscales for comparison, we opted to evaluate mean scores on the overall scale to maintain consistency with our approach to scoring the ECRS and NAS. A score of 1 would indicate a high orientation toward culture of primary ethnic identification, while a score of 5 would indicate high acculturation to both the heritage culture and Westernized

American culture. In David et al.'s (2009) report on the initial development of the BSES; they<sup>32</sup> described conducting three separate studies involving college students of color (African American, Asian American, Latino/as, and Multiracial/Others in studies 1 and 2, and Asian American in study 3). Across the three studies, they found positive correlations between bicultural self-efficacy scores and scores on ethnic identity and acculturation measures for their participants. They found high reliability scores for each sub score for all ethnic groups across all three studies. Their findings also suggest that the BSES is a valid measure of bicultural self-efficacy due to its consistent relationship with enculturation, acculturation, identity integration, collective self-esteem, and ethnic identity.

### **Data Analysis**

All transcribers signed a Pledge of Confidentiality before listening to the recordings to protect the privacy of all participants (Appendix F). A research team consisting of the primary research investigator and four undergraduate students was established to complete the transcription, coding, and theming of the interviews. After each interview was conducted, an undergraduate research assistant team member transcribed the audio recording. Each member of the team then listened individually to the audio recording while reading the typed transcript. All transcripts were time stamped and separated into numbered, lined format. Each team member identified any information she or he deemed relevant, wrote down questions and reactions to the interview, and generated a list of important concepts she or he identified in the interview.

As a group, the research team then met to review their independent work, using the audio files and transcripts to identify and reach agreement upon the relevant codes for each portion of a particular interview identified as significant. Once this process was repeated for the first three interviews, the research team met as a group to identify open codes and place them into

categories that began to emerge. Through this group processing of each interview, members 33 shared their feedback and interpretations of the interview data, as well as checked each other's views, and worked through differences in interpretation to agree upon common interpretations of the data. In line with the Strauss and Corbin (1990) approach to grounded theory research, this process ensured the validity of the study through the confirmation that group checking provides. Interpretations that were not consensually agreed upon were discussed, adapted, revised, and subsequently included or discarded. After the first three interviews the research team reevaluated the initial questions and collectively decided that the initial questions need not be altered for use in the remaining interviews (except for adding the following question: How do others perceive your ethnic identity?). After all 10 interviews were conducted, open codes were reviewed and finalized (the codes were either chosen to remain in the study based on our common acceptance, or discarded as we saw fit).

The team then began the process of axial coding of the open codes by placing the respective categories for each set of open codes along a timeline as suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1990). The dimensions of this timeline include (a) antecedents, (b) phenomenon, (c) context, (d) facilitating intervening conditions, (e) hindering intervening conditions, (f) action strategies, (g) interaction strategies, and (h) consequences. This process of axial coding is useful in developing a timeline of events to unveil the process of the Native American student transition to college experience. The research team's goal was to fill each of these categories with open codes chosen earlier, in order to better explore the college transition experience. Although the research team's plan was to interview all participants again early in their second year of college, due to low response to the follow-up e-mails only 2 of the first 8 individuals participated in a follow-up interview.

**A Review of Data Analysis**

The process of transition to college was explored for 10 individuals beginning their freshman year at a PWI. Once we analyzed all interviews we began the open-coding process (see Appendix G). Next, we reviewed the open codes and placed them under respective categories we developed when considering the Strauss and Corbin (1990) model (e.g., antecedents, phenomenon, etc.), and Busby's (2009) approach to situating open codes within developmental categories (i.e., context, process, conditions, consequences; See Appendix H). Our goal was to develop categories into which open codes could be assigned. For example, after reviewing the open codes under the antecedents category, as well as examining relationships between categories (i.e., between antecedents and phenomenon), we developed labels to capture repeated data and/or relationships between different sets of data as informed by our use of the Strauss and Corbin (1990) approach. Our final goal was to identify connections between categories in order to develop a sense of potential causal relationships.

Once we completed placing open codes into categories that were reflective of both the Strauss and Corbin model (1990) and Busby's (2009) model, we began the axial-coding process, in which we collapsed similar open codes into new categories that we named to represent similar open codes. Our axial code labels and associated lines where open codes appeared on each participant's transcripts are found in Appendix I.

We engaged in weekly memoing throughout the data analysis process (Appendix J). According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), memoing is an important component of a grounded theory review of data. Through memoing we were able to highlight how we made decisions regarding analysis of the data, to identify insights we gained, and to notate questions that arose

throughout each aspect of the analysis process. With this information, we were able to provide a rationale for the emergence of the theory. These processes were intended to significantly increase the rigor and validity of the findings (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The last phase of qualitative data analysis involved our development and labeling of the selective codes. We developed the selective codes by examining and transforming our axial codes in to new sequential categories (as labeled by numbered boxes in Figure 1) that represent the developmental flow of our theory. The selective code names are indicated on the boxes within Figure 1. Our reinterpretation of the qualitative data as depicted by arrows can be seen in Figure 1. We developed these themes through the group process of interpreting and renaming the selective codes in a way that describes our interpretation of the theory of transition for these Native American students.

After the creation of a visual representation of the model shown in Figure 1 and initial description of results, we began member checking. We contacted participants through e-mail (Appendix K), and asked them to review the results, including their overall impressions, thoughts of our use of their quotations, and thoughts on whether our process model (see Figure 1) accurately depicted their transition experiences. In individual e-mails, we provided each participant with her or his pseudonym for the study. This enabled participants to identify which of their quotes we used. It also allowed them to view our interpretations of all findings, including the similarities and differences between their responses and those of other participants. We provided members with the open codes for their individual interviews for review as well. We gave participants a three and a half week timeframe to respond (3/11/15 – 4/3/15).

By the time the deadline expired, we heard back from five participants (Barbara, Eduardo, Heather, Ignacio, and A-ris). Of the respondents, Heather asked that we change her

ethnic identification to Native American and Caucasian. Eduardo asked that we change our 36  
open code regarding the support he obtains from his grandparents, as he felt the initial wording  
was “a bit harsh”. Once we completed reevaluation of our findings based on member feedback,  
we revisited the relationships between the themes we developed during the selective coding  
process. Based on member checking, we did not need to make any changes to Figure 1.

In Figure 1, we used arrows to show the sequential order of this process, as well as to  
show how some events might lead to more than one outcome. Through this process, we aimed to  
reconstruct the data in new ways. Specifically, we attempted to find the meaning in each event,  
and between events in order to identify the central concept, and piece everything together as a  
reflection of and in support of the central concept. In reviewing each piece of our figure of  
transition, and reflecting on the connection between each component (i.e., each box in Figure 1),  
we solidified our interpretation of the theory of transition for these participants, which we will  
describe in detail in the remainder of this chapter. Although the quantitative surveys were  
administered to participants at the onset of the interview session, we waited to calculate and  
interpret survey results until after we completed our analysis of the interviews, and developed  
our theoretical model. We did this because we were most interested in providing the platform for  
participants to voice their realities. We viewed the survey measures as an additional means of  
gathering data with which to understand the participants, but did not want the scores of such  
measures to diminish from, or alter our analysis and interpretation of the qualitative data in any  
way. Therefore, we refrained from revisiting these survey packets until after we felt satisfied  
with our model of transition, including our integration of feedback from member checks into our  
final product. We used the survey results primarily to support the qualitative findings through  
situating of data. Thus, we gave higher priority to the qualitative interview data

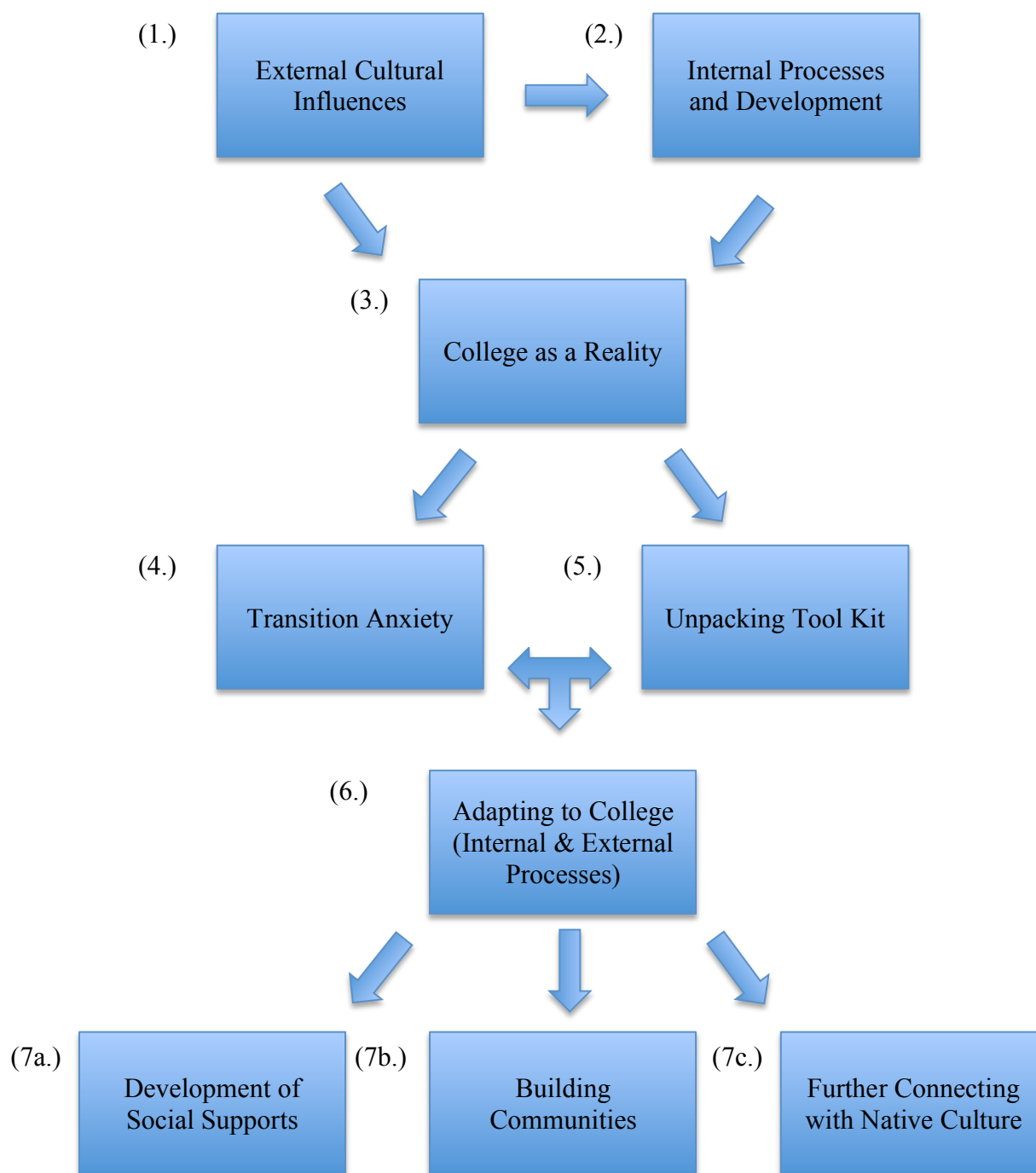


Figure 1. Theory of Transition



(Hanson, et al., 2005). A sequential exploratory mixed-methods design was used to integrate 38 the two types of data. This type of mixed methods approach is beneficial for “exploring relationships when study variables are unknown” (Hanson et al., 2005, p. 229). To further elaborate, the findings of the surveys for each participant were used to help give further insight into participant statements after interviews had been analyzed (transcribed, coded, and themed) and developed into our model of transition. The demographic data and survey scores for each participant are located in Table 1. In addition to providing survey scores, we also ranked the order of participants’ attachment scores, acculturation level scores and bicultural self-efficacy scores from 1 to 10 as seen in the numbers in parenthesis that follow each score for each participant in Table 1. On the attachment subscales, participant order ranges from 1 (secure attachment) to 10 (anxious or avoidant attachment). On the acculturation scale, participant order ranges from 1 (high Native American acculturation) to 10 (high acculturation in primary identity). On the BSES, participant order ranges from 1 (least bi-culturally competent) to 10 (most bi-culturally competent). Participants were identified by a pseudonym in this table.

We used the survey scores as additional contextual data to provide a fuller picture of each participant’s profile as she or he began the transition to college process. Thus, our review of the quantitative data, which occurred after our analysis of qualitative data, did not directly impact the development of our model of transition (Figure 1). However, once we began reviewing quantitative data, we did make notes in our weekly memos of when survey scores differed from qualitative statements for participants. We reflected in our memos on what this might mean in terms of our views on the validity of participants’ statements. We then checked-in as a group on

Table 1. Demographics and Survey Scores

	<i>Age</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Ethnic Id</i>	<i>Diverse H.S.</i>	<i>ECRS</i>		<i>Native Amer. Acculturation</i>	<i>Bicultural Self-Efficacy</i>
					<i>Anxiety</i>	<i>Avoidance</i>		
A-ris	19	Male	More than one	2	3.44 (6)	1.16 (10)	4.90 (9)	3.92 (5)
Barbara	19	Female	More than one	2	1.83 (10)	2.50 (7)	4.10 (5)	4.00 (3)
Candia	NA	Female	More than one	3	3.27 (7)	3.20 (3)	4.10 (5)	2.69 (10)
Desiree	18	Female	Native American	2	2.10 (9)	3.10 (4)	2.80 (2)	4.77 (1)
Eduardo	18	Male	More than one	1	4.39 (2)	3.00 (5)	4.60 (8)	3.58 (6)
Frank	19	Male	More than one	4	4.22 (3)	1.69 (9)	4.50 (7)	4.27 (2)
Georgina	18	Female	More than one	3	2.60 (8)	4.90 (1)	4.00 (4)	3.38 (7)
Heather	18	Female	Native American	4	4.72 (1)	2.33 (8)	3.90 (3)	3.12 (9)
Ignacio	18	Male	More than one	2	3.89 (4)	2.67 (6)	4.30 (6)	3.15 (8)
Jasmine	19	Female	Native American	1	3.61 (5)	3.33 (2)	2.50 (1)	3.96 (4)

*Note:* **Diversity in High School:** scores range from 1 (quite diverse) 2 (considerably diverse), 3 (some diversity), 4 (not very diverse)

**ECRS Anxiety and Avoidance Attachment:** range 1-7, higher scores = more anxiety or avoidance

**Native American Acculturation:** scores range from 5 (other primary identity) to 1 (Native American primary identity), 3 = identification with both primary and Native American cultures

**Bicultural Self-Efficacy:** range 1-5, higher scores = higher bicultural self-efficacy

\*Numbers in ( ) represent rank order from highest to lowest on ECRS and Bicultural Self Efficacy, and most to least identification with Native American Acculturation scales

the biases we have as individuals that might make us doubt the authenticity of the qualitative 40 data when it differed from quantitative scores. We discussed our biases and concerns as a group in order to develop a consensus for how we could honor participants' responses in ways that kept our own biases in check when there were inconsistencies between what was said by participants and how they scored on the instruments. The survey results were also used in the discussion section to help strengthen the individual and collective responses of the participants.

Eduardo, and Heather, who partook in the second interview during the fall semester of the following year (2013), were also provided with a new survey packet, which they completed just prior to the second interview session. As with the first interview, they completed these items prior to the qualitative portion of the interview. Their responses to these quantitative instruments were kept sealed, and scored and analyzed after we compared qualitative data from first to second interviews for these individuals. The qualitative and quantitative responses of those individuals who participated in a second interview were analyzed for changes in their perceptions of risk and protective factors over time from first to second year. Do to few participants return for second interviews, we did not create a separate table to represent their new scores. We did however discuss how these two participants' scores on the quantitative instruments changed (or did not change) in comparison to the qualitative data from their first to second interviews. Any changes in survey scores that we felt should be noted are described within our analysis of variations within these participants' interview data from year one to two.

In the following section quotes from participant interviews are presented to highlight the essence of each theme in the overall transition theory. The data from those who participated in both sets of interviews were also cross analyzed to see how participants' perceptions of risk and

protective factors changed over time from first to second year. In the next sections we will 41  
describe in detail the grounded theory model shown in Figure 1.

### **Overview of Theory**

We identified several external and internal processes that facilitated for these participants the decisions to attend college, and shaped expectations for being academically successful. The participants described experiences of being initially anxious in the beginning weeks of their first semester in college. However, they soon discovered that adjusting to campus life, including the vastness of the university, expectations of professors, and building connections with peers was not as difficult as they first imagined. When difficulties arose, they identified resources to help them adapt to the college environment.

Participants initially sought out multiple external resources to aid them in anxiety management during the transition. These external sources included parents and siblings, extended relatives, pre-college friends, romantic partners, tribal and community members, and church members. In these early weeks (first month and a half of the semester) of the transition process, seeking support from those with whom the participants have established relationships was very important.

As participants became more familiar with campus culture during these early weeks, they also began to seek out people on campus, including instructors, tutors, members of organizations and sports teams, and residence hall roommates for help as issues arose related to in-the-moment happenings on campus. This included seeking clarification on instructor expectations, finding resources to help with writing and other skills, and utilizing the budding connection with familiar others in their living spaces to feel more comfortable. Through the utilization of external resources, they were able to feel more connected to campus, and focus more fully on their

coursework. With anxiety reduced, they began to also reflect on internal skills for combating 42 future difficulties. Because of this process, these individuals developed social support groups and became a part of various on- and off- campus communities. They also uncovered a greater desire to learn more about and connect with their Native American culture.

## **External Influences**

### ***Family Involvement and Tribal Identification***

In order to understand the motivation for the participants in their pursuit of college, it is vital to examine the context in which they came to make the decision to go to college. Growing up in families where prior members have obtained a college degree was important. The idea of college as a reality was handed down verbally and emulated observationally from parents, grandparents, and older siblings to the participants. A majority of participants in this study were likely to know someone in their immediate family who attended college. This experience provided a considerable advantage compared to many other students of color, including Native American participants in prior studies, regarding the difficulties they might face when transitioning to college (Ault, 2009; Ballew, 1997; Haynes, 1997; Korkow, 2009; Mcalpin, 2008; Rendon, 1994; Schlossberg, 1989; Tinto, 1993; Watson, 2009; Wei et al., 2010; Whalen & Lachman, 2000; Wise & King, 2008). Table 2 lists participants' ethnic identification. Two participants (Desiree and Jasmine) identified solely as Native American; the remaining eight (Aris, Barbara, Eduardo, Frank, Georgina, Heather, and Ignacio) endorsed either dual primary ethnic identity membership, or identified as multicultural (Candia).

To reiterate our previous assertion, these participants' identities as Native Americans, some with multiple ethnic identities, and all with membership in families where they were not the first in the family to attend college makes this subset of the Native American population distinct from

other Native American participants, and students of color in general, in many research studies 43 of college student development. Additionally, for some participants, membership with registered tribes provided many incentives and access to college preparation, admission, and undergraduate services that (a) do not reflect the social and financial realities of many other students of color, and (b) create a unique system where being registered in one's tribe provides additional avenues for making college a reality, regardless of how one identifies primarily (i.e. White, or White and Native American, or Native American, or multicultural, and so on).

This reality for these participants runs contrary to experience of students of color in much of the prior student development literature we reviewed (Ault, 2009; Ballew, 1997; Haynes, 1997; Korkow, 2009; Mcalpin, 2008; Rendon, 1994; Schlossberg, 1989; Tinto, 1993; Watson, 2009; Wei et al., 2010; Whalen & Lachman, 2000; Wise & King, 2008). Desiree highlighted the relationship between parental expectations and the availability of tribal support:

*"The whole time, my mother said 'I don't care what you do. I don't care where you go, but you're getting an education.' ...[Desiree added] Cause there's so many people in Cherokee that get free college and don't even go. It's crazy."*

Participants, six of whom (A-ris, Barbara, Candia, Desiree, Ignacio, and Jasmine) were securely attached on the ECRS scale (i.e., their scores for both anxious and avoidance dimensions fell below the mean score for the measure) all spoke of the importance of their family's role in relation to their preparation and decision to attend college. Eduardo, Frank, and Heather who reported anxious attachment on the ECRS, and Georgina, who reported avoidant attachment also spoke of the important role of their family in relation to college. Therefore, we considered family influence to be important influences in all individuals' educational decision-making, regardless of attachment style. While eight participants endorsed a primary ethnic identity that was not solely Native American, all but 1 of the 10 scored high on the Bi-Cultural

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Self-reported Ethnic Identification</i>
A-ris	White, or White and Native American
Barbara	Canadian, Irish and Native American
Candia	Multi-racial, multicultural, or Black and Native American
Desiree	Native American
Eduardo	Canadian or Canadian Indian
Frank	White, and then a little bit Native American
Georgina	Dutch and Native American
Heather	Native American and Caucasian
Ignacio	White and Native American
Jasmine	Native American

#### Self-Efficacy scale.

Candia, who identified primarily with a non-Native American ethnic identity, was the only individual with a low bicultural self-efficacy score. Thus, all but one participant, regardless of primary ethnic identification, felt they could comfortably navigate both in their primary ethnic group (Native American, or White and Native American, or Black and Native American/multicultural) and the dominant culture at the university.

In order to better understand the relationship between culture and how one's family sets the tone for what is expected from an individual in terms of education, it is important to examine how the family has interpreted their conceptualization of education as related to success. Family dynamics and parenting strategies are informed by cultural affiliation, but can manifest

differently in each family unit. Therefore, in addition to examining culture in general, we also 45 examined how implications of cultural values translated into parenting and parental expectations regarding education. For Eduardo, who had the third highest score of primary identification as other than Native American, (see Table 1) and sixth highest bicultural self-efficacy score, the pursuit of college was an essential part of the parenting he received from early on in his life:

*“...I've learned, from a very young age, to absolutely love knowledge. I love most things, but learning is... Learning is something that I cherish most... Umm, as far as education goes, they [family] certainly stressed the importance of going to college. Umm, not only from a standpoint of being able to uhh, achieve more in life after going to college, but also simply for knowledge's sake.”*

Eduardo, who identified himself primarily as Canadian or Canadian Indian, was raised to see education as fun and rewarding. Because the 10 participants had family who attended college before them, they were more likely to consider college as a natural part of the educational process. The reasons for attending college varied, including the love of learning, to be successful, and to be able to provide for the family. Although the motivations to attend college varied, participants in general received messages from family that obtaining a college degree was possible and important. Heather summarized this reality:

*“It's always been really important...I'm not the first person to go to college, but I'm the first to go directly from high school to college.”*

While these participants were indoctrinated with the understanding that college was a central part of life, and a given; Candia, who appeared securely attached on the ECRS, learned through her relationship with her mother not only about the role of college as a natural next step, but also as a way to ensure one can provide for the family:

*“...My mom...she basically has been my single parent like she's been the most out of each of my parents she's been the most participating and I've lived with her all of my life and...she's the main one that I always spend time with and she also graduated from the [university].”*



Even those parents who did not attend college until later in life viewed education as a necessary part of ensuring success. Thus, such participants' decisions to attend college were related in part to their parents' realization of the importance of college in life success. Georgina, who appeared avoidantly attached on the ECRS, remembered college as not being a focus early on in her life, but becoming important during her high school years, when her parents pursued higher education themselves. She recalled receiving clear messages from her family that furthering her education was essential to her ability to take care of herself:

*"...It didn't become until later when they were both still in school [college] and doing, you know, work, that I felt like that stress of 'You're going to college, you're getting an education' Cause yeah, when I was younger, it wasn't as much of a stress. I mean good grades were, but once I got into high school and a little bit later into high school it was 'Start making a plan (Georgina) you know, gotta figure out what you're doing with your life, and still have to do well in school. But it never- it became very important, for sure.'"*

### ***Cultural Benefits of Native American Identification***

The cultural benefits associated with identification as Native American varied from instilling a sense of pride to the availability of financial resources as a result of tribal membership. On a continuum of cultural benefits, with one end of the spectrum being only internal pride and the other end being only financial resources, the participants fell on either end, or encompassed some position near the middle (i.e. where they might receive both internal and external rewards as part of their Native American identification). While the participants who are registered members of their tribes discussed specific tangible resources related to academic support, those who were more removed from affiliation with their tribe, or who did not know much about their tribe also described being aware of their Native American heritage as important. It was something they carry with them as part of their self-understanding. For those individuals who received tangible support as part of their tribal membership, benefits included college preparation services and availability of advisors to help with the admissions process,

admission application waivers, and tuition waivers upon being admitted to college. Some 47 individuals received laptops and other forms of technology to aid with academics. Additionally, some individuals receive monthly allowances from their tribes for everyday living expenses. Therefore, there were multiple reasons to identify as Native American, be they internal, external, or both. A-ris, whose acculturation score was most reflective of a non-Native American primary ethnic identity, illustrated how for him, embracing his Native American identity provided both internal reward and the possibility for financial support. As a side-note, he subsequently became a registered member of his tribe during the year between his first and second interview. This quote is from his first interview, Fall 2012:

*“Honestly being, being able to call yourself Native American is umm I mean it’s kind of special ‘cause not many, not many people...know which tribe, or can’t, can’t directly trace it back, umm, like I can. Umm, I think it’s its, beneficial to be able to actually trace it back specifically, and like register with your tribe, there’s benefits there within the tribe. Umm like Chickasaw nation has several benefits especially for college students...yeah there’s scholarship opportunities, especially for graduate school, umm, and I don’t know I haven’t looked into it a whole lot, like I said I haven’t been officially registered yet, but within my family my cousins and all them have so they’ve been able to benefit from a lot.”*

### ***Perceptions***

Another important external force that shaped how Native American individuals in this study saw themselves and believed others saw them is the perceptions of others. How others view them is related to how the participants made sense of their own ethnic identification. For some participants, the thoughts and questions from others about who they are have led these individuals to develop frustration at not being seen for who they are, and also feeling the need to explain their culture to others in order to be understood. Some participants described being burdened by what they viewed as their inherent responsibility to educate others about who they are, and about their culture. Others saw being Native American as a tool for making connections

with others. They conceptualized their Native American identity as something that made them different enough to bring something new to the table when meeting new people on campus. 48

The cultural perceptions from others have had both positive and negative impacts on participants in their journey to the first semester of college. For Candia, who endorsed some racial/ethnic diversity in her high school (see Table 1), the difficulty others had in pinpointing her ethnic identity led to some negative experiences in elementary and high school:

*“And so like there were times whenever I was younger, to where like I would be taunted because I was because I was different because I was like part Black and part White but I also had other stuff and they were just like well most, I mean little kids are little kids and like if you're different they're just going to- it doesn't matter how you're different you can have a red spot on you and they're just like "You're different! I can't play with you!"”*

These experiences made her at times feel ostracized from different groups, and may have been reflected in her low bicultural self-efficacy score. She described feeling bothered that others could not accept that she did not fit neatly into any particular box. These external cultural perceptions ultimately facilitated her desire to identify a way to view herself that she could then describe to others in a way that she thought might make sense to them. An individual with secure attachment, as reflected on the ECRS, Candia described resolving this conflict by embracing a multi-racial ethnic identity, because this fit both internally and when describing herself to others:

*“So I kinda just consider myself kind of multi-racial and then also that . . . everyone's like 'Ok. Are you Black?' 'No.' 'Are you- like are you Mexican?' 'No,' 'Are you Indian?' 'Not from India-' (laughter) 'Like are you Native American?' 'And I was like, 'Partly.' Then they're just like, 'So-what are you?' And so like they would always get really confused since I never really identified myself as just being just Black or just White or just Spanish or like just like part of the Polish ancestry or just Native American. So to them, it really confused them when I like spell out like all this stuff and they're just like, 'Ok. All right. I don't know how to call it. I don't know what to do with all this information, but okay, we got an answer.’”*

(identifying primarily with Native American culture) (see Table 1), grew up on a reservation prior to attending the PWI. For Desiree, being around others who were not of Native American culture was a new experience. She quickly realized that others off- the reservation lacked knowledge of her culture and her ethnic identity as part of that culture. She described having an awakening the first time she encountered others off- the reservation. She recalled speaking with different individuals who had little to no frame of reference for what her life was like. Their questions surprised, and greatly bothered her:

*"I never realized how big of a deal it was until I like go out of the reservation and people have no clue like, about Indians... and some of the questions are horrible. They're crazy like, "Oh, do they know that you left the reservation? Are they mad?" I'm like, "No! We can leave! It's ok!" Just people don't know that much about Indians, so it's kind of crazy."*

Her encounter with this cultural perception of others created for her an expectation for how others might treat her as she began her first semester of college.

All participants in their early weeks of college, described having some level of thought about what it might mean to be Native American in this new environment, and considered how they might share this aspect of their identities with others as they began to make connections on campus. Thus, these prior experiences around family expectations and cultural perceptions were important in shaping how the participants viewed themselves as members of Native American culture when first transitioning to the campus environment.

Although some participants spoke of the pressures and difficulties they experienced related to others' lack of knowledge of Native American culture and misinformed perceptions of Native people, other participants saw the disconnect between their culture and how others see them as a way to positively shape others' perceptions of this community. For example, Heather

described embracing such misperceptions of others as opportunities to portray a positive

50

image of members of her ethnic group:

*"I would like to say that it [Native American identity] gives me a unique viewpoint on certain things, so... Like, someone who isn't well acquainted with people of my ethnicities would look to me and see me as a model for that. And they could look at me and say, "Oh, well they're nice people, they're wonderful people!" cause I'm wonderful! [laughs] So I would like to say that it makes me a model."*

Heather, who reported moderate scores on acculturation and bicultural self-efficacy measures described having concerns over whether lack of knowledge about Native American culture might negatively impact others' understanding of Native Americans, or lead to stereotypical viewpoints. She saw the possibility of misperception as a call to inform others about her culture. Whether she felt compelled more by internal passions or in order to better ensure she could make meaningful connections with others, her work as a teacher of her culture is directly related to her prior interactions with the cultural perceptions of others.

Working on preconceived notions of how others view Native Americans, Eduardo, whose acculturation score suggested more non-Native identification, and whom obtained a moderate bicultural self-efficacy score, described using his ethnic identity as a reference point for making connections with others. He described drawing from what he believes are their understandings of his culture in order to build relationships and expose others to who he is:

*"For example, the Native American association with nature, that is certainly very strong, and so I have actually brought up that I am Native American online several times as, not necessarily as proof that I know more about the environment, but to simply... set that my values are coming from somewhere, and that generally puts you in a stronger position when you, when you are debating something, because people realize that you have, not just political leanings but also an ethnic leaning, an ethnic background."*

### **Internal Processes and Development**

The external experiences of cultural group membership and family influence shaped for participants their decisions to attend college, and experiences in interactions with others within

and outside of their cultural group prior to the transition to college. How the participants 51 developed their sense of who they are in relation to the self and others bridges the link between external experiences and internal processes that prepared them for the beginning of college. Participants informed that how they see themselves, and how they believe others see them and subsequently treat them, are both directly related to their perceived ethnicity. How they were initially treated based on how they present phenotypically, and how people's treatment toward them changed after participants ethnically identified themselves to others impacted participants' sense of self.

### ***Ethnic Identity***

Participants represented a diversity of ethnic identification. Although we targeted only individuals for this study who identified as Native American based on their college admissions applications, the individuals self-selected whether or not to participate in the study. Thus, participants represent a variety of ethnic identifications. As previously discussed, Desiree and Jasmine identified as Native American, while A-ris, Barbara, Eduardo, Frank, Georgina, Heather, and Ignacio identified as White and Native American. For example, A-ris explained,

*“Um, White with, or White and Native American.”*

Candia preferred to use a definition that she felt was more inclusive in terms of her multiple identities:

*“Most of the time I identify myself as like I guess you could say like multi-cultural or multi-racial since um my dad is Black and Native American and my mom, her grandmother is from Spain. Or not her grandmother, her mother is from Spain. So my grandmother is Spanish and that my grandpa uh is has like Polish ancestry. So I kinda just consider myself kind of multi-racial...”*

While participants varied in how they ethnically identified, they all described Native American (or Canadian Indian for Eduardo) identification as a part of this label.

Some of the participants identified cultural beliefs related to their Native American identities as shaping their world-view. On the internal end of the spectrum, participants' described how being Native American has strengthened their sense of self. Eduardo stated specifically:

*"My ethnicity is something that I draw a bit of pride from. "It's something that I draw values from."*

Participants who endorsed multiple ethnic identities saw being a member of more than one cultural group as itself a unique experience that positively impacted their world-views. For example, A-ris, who obtained the second highest acculturation score (more non-Native American ethnic identification), and a moderate level of bicultural self-efficacy, described his White and Native American identity as shaping his values and how he sees himself in relation to others:

*"It [White and Native American identity] helps me, helps me keep track of myself and, to some extent, keep my self-worth at a healthy level. I have all sorts of other, other things that do that for me as well, but umm, that's always been something that's helped me keep my uhh, my self-worth and identity straight."*

Similarly, Georgina, whose acculturation score suggests slightly more acculturation toward non-Native American culture, and a moderate bicultural self-efficacy score, described the process by which she makes sense of the world as influenced by the diversity of her ethnic identity.

Specifically, she sees being a member of more than one ethnic group as providing her with a richer understanding of life:

*"I think it (multiple ethnic identification) just gives a broader perspective on everything. If you, you know, you come from a family that's all like Dutch, that's a very narrow-minded way to see things. So when you come from kind of different backgrounds it definitely helps to see other people and other things, different than you would as just, maybe like from one ethnic kind of group."*

As members of families who supported continuing one's education for success moving forward, these participants developed an internal drive to do well in school. This drive was also important in the motivating role it played in preparing the participants to pursue college after high school. In possessing an academically oriented working style, participants were able to excel in their studies during high school, which led to their exposure to resources such as college scholarships that not only created opportunities to attend college, but also placed expectations on them to do well in college to maintain these financial supports.

### **College as a Reality**

Being members of their Native American cultural groups was important in being eligible for tribal services that facilitated the ability for some participants to attend college. For others, tribal resources were not available, such as for those participants who were not registered members of a tribe, or whose tribe did not provide such incentives to attend college. While such resources were not available for all participants, all described the role of family in shaping their decisions to attend college.

Once participants got to college, they encountered different and new realities that placed multiple pressures on them. The college environment provided many new settings that required participants to get acquainted with new places as a part of the transition to college process. Most participants moved from home to live on campus in the residence halls during their first semester of college. This move was influenced by participants' desire to become more independent. However, they also found it important to attend a university relatively close to home so that they could have access to their parents as needed. Desiree, who was securely attached on the ECRS, highlighted this:



*“...Part of the reason I came here was because it's far enough to get away from the house, but yet it's close enough to where if I did need them, then they could be here for me.”* 54

There are many aspects of the college setting that provided for a change from what participants were used to beforehand. The sheer largeness of the campus, and number of people in attendance was a new experience. Eduardo, who was the second most anxiously attached person on the ECRS, captured this:

*“... It's a big step going from, going from high school to a campus this size.”*

There was difficulty in a number of environments at the university that shaped participants' experiences. Living in the residence halls, attending larger sized classes, and being around a large amount of new people, all while missing home and past friendships set the stage for the development of concern over how individuals would navigate this new terrain. The need to adapt to these new challenges led to anxiety for participants during this transition process.

### **Transition Anxiety**

There was an overall sense of unknown that triggered a foreboding about what to expect as this journey began. The uncertainty over what to expect that was present in the months and weeks prior to college progressed during the first few weeks of freshman semester into anxiety over how to adapt to the newness of campus's size, classroom structure, student population, and overall cultural flow of day-to-day happenings. Candia, who has a secure attachment score on the ECRS, but the lowest bicultural self-efficacy score, described entering into the college setting with anxiety over the daunting university class size and continued to experience this anxiety during her first few weeks in classes:

*“I have a couple of really big lecture hall classes, that was one of the things that frightened me the most whenever I thought about coming here I was like, ‘Oh, my Gosh I'm going to be in a giant lecture hall and I'm not going to understand what's going on*

*there's going to be so many people and the teacher's not going to have time to answer my question'.* " 55

The theme of anxiety was present amongst all participants, regardless of attachment scores, bicultural self-efficacy or level of acculturation. This suggests anxiety is a very common element in the transition to college process for these participants. A-ris, who was securely attached on the ECRS, came from a moderately diverse high school, and possessed moderate bicultural self-efficacy illuminated this consensus:

*"I think like any other freshman I was nervous to come to a new big place like this."*

The anxiety over adjusting to the reality of college pervaded numerous aspects of the individuals' transitions. It was in part influenced by what participants have heard about what to expect in college from their peers. Ignacio, whose scores on each of the aforementioned dimensions were very similar to A-ris, highlighted how the opinions of others related to his initial worry about adapting:

*"[I was] really nervous cause everyone said college is way different than high school, it's a lot more work."*

A-ris and Ignacio's statements suggest that anxiety was a salient experience not only for those with insecure attachment styles, but also for securely attached individuals. Even those who were exposed to ethnic diversity in school settings before college were challenged to navigate the newness and unfamiliarity of the campus culture. Anxiety increased as participants encountered many more people in class that they were used to. Candia captured this common sentiment:

*"And so I was worried about that since I've never had to cope with that like I've always had really small classes and I didn't know how I would transition to that..."*

However, while the transition experience did manifest in uncertainty over what to expect, and how to adapt, it was often not as difficult as participants' anticipated. The newness of the college environment triggered anxiety, but it also facilitated an acute awareness of what was

making the transition process easier and more manageable. This newfound awareness for 56 what helped to reduce anxiety involved repeated early interactions with people and resources that aided in coping. Heather, who was anxiously attached on the ECRS, and possessed a moderate bicultural self-efficacy score captured how familiarity with what to expect eased her anxiety:

*“I guess I thought that it would be a lot harder than it is? It's not really hard.”*

Participants reported that their concerns about not being able to adapt diminished quickly over the early weeks (first month and a half) as they fell into routines, and were better able to predict what to expect from their environment. Ignacio, who scored as securely attached on the ECRS described:

*“It is a lot more work [college coursework], but now that I've kind of gotten into it it's not as bad as I thought it would be. It's a little easier than I thought it.”*

The anxiety remained present, but diminished in intensity. For example, Desiree, who was second most Native American identified, with secure attachment style and the highest bicultural self-efficacy score described being:

*“...Not as nervous as I was when I first got here.”*

Repeated exposure to the flow of academic expectations helped to reduce anxiety. Worries were quelled as rhythms were established. Candia, who possessed the lowest bicultural self-efficacy score, but was also securely attached on the ECRS, captured the power of becoming familiar with one's setting:

*“I found out that most of the time that within the first month everyone showed up so the class is really busy, but now not everyone shows up and so there's room and the teachers, how I said like they do stop and I can ask them questions and they're fine if we ask questions and they're fine if we send them emails and that they really try and help us with passing the class.”*

As both a response to anxiety, as well as a separate adaptive step to beginning the college journey, participants sought out existing relationships both to combat the nervousness triggered by unfamiliar settings, and as resources to help more effectively situate themselves in this new environment. In this sense, participants discovered the power of their relationships with others as a way to combat anxiety, and also as the map to navigate change. They learned how to quell their anxiety by reflecting on what has worked for them in past experiences. This process involved identification of family and friends, both for anxiety management and as guides. For some participants, having parents who attended college provided guidance and familiarity that helped them with the transition process. Candia recalled her mother's ability to help with anxiety related to beginning college:

*"I remember when I first started here and I was like 'I don't know where this building is and I don't know where my class is and I'm going to get lost and I'm going to be late!'" And she's like 'Calm down.' She's like, 'It's right over here. I remember cause I was on campus.' and she's like, 'Don't freak out'."*

In addition to direct help, participants' parents also provided support by encouraging them to reach out to others on campus. In this sense, parents also helped individuals to develop their own sense of autonomy by encouraging participants to reflect on how various campus agents might be of help with different issues. Some parents were directly involved in this process, such as Heather's, who was anxiously attached on the ECRS:

*"Definitely a positive support [parents], cause they're like always encouraging me and if I need help with something, if they can't help me, then they'll like, try to find somebody who can help me, so they're definitely a positive support."*

Whether it was family, friends, or other individuals within their church, tribal, or neighborhood communities, participants described how helpful it was to feel that someone would be there when they needed help. This peace of mind, brought by the understanding that there

were others they could go to for help was especially important in the early weeks of transition, 58 when participants had not yet established many significant connections on campus. For Eduardo, who received an anxious attachment score on the ECRS, turning to his family and friends had been very important, because he had not yet developed close connections on campus:

*“Generally, I’ve turned to my [pre-college] friends and, and still my family if I need help on something... and I haven’t developed any strong relationships with many of the uhh, staff here at UT, so... My friends and family are pretty much what I turn to.”*

As illuminated by Eduardo, who identified his high school as being equally diverse in terms of different racial groups, having established friendships with people before beginning college was important as meeting new people was not easy:

*“I would say that one of the things that always, always bugged me a little bit was ... Not only the size of everything, but the fact that, that even in classes, it’s so... hard to find people, meet people once in a while”*

Maintaining prior friendships provided a sense of safety and familiarity that participants were able to utilize to combat the feelings of isolation and being lost in the newness of such a huge university campus. Heather, who identified with Native American and Caucasian identity, possessed the highest anxiety score on the ECRS, and described her high school as not very ethnically diverse, identified her relationship with her best friend from junior high as a key source of support during the transition to college:

*“I turn to...my best friend, ... We’ve been friends since 8th grade, so that’s like... 5 or 6 years. ... we’re really close, but we’ve always gone to different schools since like, 8th grade, so like for 5 years now, we’ve been at different schools but we’re still really close and we talk a lot. I don’t want to say she can offer me the best advice, but she’s just somebody I can call to talk to, cause she listens good.”*

The physical nearness of such individuals also aided in the transition, especially when those individuals were attending the same campus as the participants. Having the closeness of an existing friend as a roommate, the fact that the person is of the same ethnic identity, and that this

person was already familiar with campus was of particular benefit for Desiree who identified 59 primarily with Native American identity, possessed a secure attachment style, and described her high school as moderately diverse:

*“It helps because I know my roommate...she's a sophomore...and she's also a Native American, so she has kind of helped me and showed me the way around here.”*

As Desiree described, the benefit of pre-existing friendships played an integral role in not only easing feelings of loneliness but also in helping with navigating the campus in those daunting early weeks of school.

As previously introduced, in addition to the direct support from parents and established friends, participants also reflected on the comfort that came from learning about their family's experiences in college before attending themselves, as a way to identify what they might do themselves to aid in reducing anxiety and confronting obstacles. This sense of having someone to reference was extremely important for all participants. In addition to parents, siblings who attended a university previously were also of great value. A-ris, in reference to managing his transition anxiety, exemplified this experience:

*“I have an older sibling who's a junior in college, so I saw how she transitioned...so it was comforting...and I was more excited than I was nervous.”*

In response to the expectations imposed by this new reality called college, participants grappled with the interconnected risks and protective factors associated with their existing relationships.

It is very important to note that all individuals in this study described their expectations for college as partly influenced by their internalization of the expectations imposed by others. Every participant in this study had family members who attended college before them, which is likely related to their preconceptions about what they might encounter as they began their first semester.

Therefore, knowing others who have been to college uniquely influenced these participants' expectations and provided coping resources that might not be available from other sources for students of color who are the first in their family to attend college. For the individuals in this study, relationships with others were a source of anxiety, as others fueled thoughts of how college would be. Relationships were also a source of security, as participants utilized their connections with others as a way to adjust to the demands of their new environment. Therefore participants in this study described having connections with family members who had college experience as a mixture of coping advantages, but also related to creating higher anxiety imposed by family expectations. What is key here is an apparent early tendency to rely heavily on support from others more than internal resources.

### **Adapting to College**

As participants began to find ways to manage their anxiety, their journey in the first semester of college became smoother. This reduction in anxiety appeared to develop between one and 1.5 months into the first semester. In order to maintain this ability to manage stress and anxiety, participants continued to rely on external sources for support, but also developed and implemented internal techniques to manage stress and deal with issues as they arose. This adaption process arose partly in response to the anxiety demands triggered by beginning college. No longer did participants need to only rely on past relationships or reflection on what others might do when faced with dilemmas. Now, participants were able to identify when to seek out prior relationships, or when to reach out and form new connections with people and places on campus as a response to new needs. This ability reflects the development of a tool kit that encompasses both external and internal resources in response to the demands and expectations of the first semester.

As part of the adjustment process, participants described becoming more comfortable seeking out not only familiar people but also new individuals to assist with their varied needs. This included their ability to identify which person might best help with particular needs. At times participants might go to friends, classmates, or roommates for support. At other times, family might be the preferred resource. For more immediate academic concerns, they sought out campus agents (Rendón, 1994) such as current professors and staff in different support service departments.

We previously mentioned that 6 of the 10 participants obtained secure attachment scores on the ECRS, while 4 obtained scores that suggest insecure attachment styles. With regard to continued reliance on family for help as the semester progress, all participants, regardless of attachment style, described the importance of going to family for help with coping challenges as they arose. Two anxiously attached individuals (Frank and Heather), and a securely attached individual (Candia) specifically identified their mothers as the primary person they would go to for support when issues arose. We found this important to mention because no other family member was cited as frequently. No matter, the attachment style, mothers for three participants were primary go-to support figures. Other participants spoke more generally about their confidence in reaching out to both parents when issues might arise, which Barbara reflected:

*“My immediate family [parents and siblings] is very positive. They help me get through it, cause... [laughs] Yea, we're all really close with each other though, and I go to talk to them about anything, so... it's positive.”*

It is important to note that 1 of the 10 participants, Georgina, described reticence over reaching out to anyone during setbacks. She received an avoidant attachment score on the ECRS, and identified more with a non-Native American primary culture. However, even though she



indicated her introverted nature as a reason for not knowing whom to turn to, she also

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identified her parents as the most likely individuals she would reach out to for support:

*“I’d probably say something [about a concern in college] to like my mom and dad, not someone on campus, or anyone like that.”*

In addition to family members, participants also indicated that they would contact friends for particular needs. This included seeking out existing friendships, and budding new friendships. Long-term friends, romantic partners, new roommates, and peers in class were all identified, as individuals whom participants would seek out should any issues manifest. It was particularly helpful for two participants to attend college with people they knew and were friends with beforehand. A-ris, who obtained a secure attachment score on the ECRS, depicted the added benefit when past relationships continued to develop within the current college context:

*“I have several friends that are of the upperclassmen that I went to church with or church camp with um, um, friends that I went to high school with all came up here, um and I have a girlfriend here who is a sophomore, so, I have several people I can turn to.”*

For educational concerns that became present as time progressed, participants described reaching out to faculty, staff, other students, departments and other resources on campus for concerns that were immediate and required academic and student support services. Participants came to realize that professors could be sources of support as informed through participants’ regular interactions and observations of these teachers in classes and office hours. Candia and Georgina – despite differences in ECRS attachment scores -- both spoke highly of how their interactions with faculty members helped them adjust to the demands of college, and made them feel more likely to reach out to professors in the future. Candia reported:

*“Our teachers, like they do like take the time out and they will stop lecture and they will answer questions and I can email them and they answer all my emails relatively within the same day.”*

In addition to faculty, participants mentioned counseling services, writing services, 63  
student support services, and residence hall advisors as additional sources of support.

Relationships with campus agents and peers were especially helpful for Heather as she adapted to college. She described utilizing support services specifically designed to assist students of color in navigating college, and spoke very fondly at the opportunity she had to receive support from multiple and varied sources. She also hinted at interest in establishing a relationship with an upper-division student to obtain further peer-based support. When asked about whom she would reach out to for support, Heather indicated:

*“I'm in the Minority Achievement Program, so my mentor, umm; I ask her a lot of questions actually. And ... My RA in my residence hall... and [...] I guess that's all. And umm, maybe an older student who would know something about it. If I could encounter somebody like that, I would ask them.”*

### ***Internal Processing***

Participants continued to approach others, including family, friends, and now also campus agents when faced with dilemmas. However, in order to manage their anxiety, they also focused inward in order to successfully adapt to the first semester. Participants developed this inward leaning to assist with solving problems as they became more acclimated to the campus climate. Initial anxiety prompted all participants, regardless of attachment style, level of acculturation, or bicultural self-efficacy to seek out familiar others. After repeated interactions with campus and others in those early weeks, participants developed the assuredness to also rely on internal coping resources. A-ris described being dealt a blow early in the beginning of his first semester. Due to not making qualifying marks, he lost the athletic scholarship he was to count on for financial support. He integrated the process of seeking others for support and turning inward to identify what he must do to move forward:

*"I worked hard to be able to, to pass that [physical fitness requirement] and so failing 64 it was um, was (pause) it was (pause) disappointing."*

He reported being satisfied with his response to this setback:

*"I think I took it well, um, I met with the people in charge and um, and explain what happened, and uh in response I've, I've worked harder to ensure that I pass that next time and...I'm taking it more seriously."*

Participants engaged in a reflective experience that we have identified as *internal processing*. Through this additional process of reflecting that occurred after they felt more comfortable on campus, they identified new ways to confront future issues. Once they managed initial anxiety they also began considering how they responded in the past to prior setbacks.

Candia reflected on how learning from her past actions will help her in the present:

*"Well I think it definitely helps me to be able to learn from one thing and then if I see it again to not get stressed out and freak out because I see it again. And then just like 'Oh my gosh I don't know what to do'."*

She reported that this awareness would be especially helpful when she encounters future stressful situations in college. Another illustration of this theme of engaging in internal processing is represented by Heather's approach to everyday decision-making:

*"If I have the time, I try to think through everything. Like, I weigh all my options and then make my decision."*

Desiree reported being very anxious as she began college. Even though her secure attachment scores on the ECRS, and high bicultural self-efficacy score suggest she might have an easier time to adjust, she continued to feel anxious. However, having a Native American roommate who could show her around campus was very helpful. Her statement also reflects the potential importance of peer mentorship, especially for individuals like Desiree who identifies primarily as Native American. It is not merely having others to count on that provides for a successful transition. Participants have shown that it is the meaning they make of these

relationships, how they internalize support from others, and their ability to turn that into self- 65 motivated action that ultimately ensures success. Desiree described the development of her ability to do this as *balance*. After an initial setback early in the first semester, she described relying on her roommate and then turning inward for guidance, which resulted in a successful transition:

*“When I first came to the university, I came in as an athlete, and I was on the softball team. And that didn't work out too well with balancing everything, so... I think where I started out having to balance everything and working out and doing everything that, it's kind of easier now... cause I feel like I have all the time in the world.”*

### **Outcomes**

The end result of this developmental process of transition to college for these Native American students appears to be threefold. For these individuals, the opportunity to attend college was a reality due to having family who attended college beforehand, and for some, aided by the financial support of individual tribes. Not all individuals identified primarily as Native American. They also varied in terms of how associated with and knowledgeable they were about their Native American heritage. However, participants shared an important dependence on people they knew before college, be they family, friends, elders in the tribe, or members of the community to help them steer through the initial anxiety they developed in response to beginning their first semester. Beginning the journey through college brought anxiety, but also enabled participants to reflect on the external and internal sources of support they might turn to in order to be successful. Because of this adaptation process, participants made gains in three areas: (a.) solidifying social support, (b.) becoming members of communities, and (c.) further connecting with their Native American identity.

A key skill that participants developed was a greater awareness of whom they can turn to in the future for support with difficulties. Leaning on people they knew before college helped with initial adjustment to college life. Once they felt more established, participants began to branch out, testing the waters with professors, campus staff members, and peers in classes and residence halls to see if they might obtain similar help and comfort. Their ability to find support with individuals in their more immediate college environment, especially with matters related to academics and campus life, furthered their trust of these people as individuals they can turn to in the future.

Participants relied on both prior relationships (i.e., those with family, friends, and in their tribes), and new connections (i.e., roommates, classmates, peers on campus, faculty and staff). Thus, they were in the process of developing a secure base of support with which to explore the campus. While some participants entered with secure attachment, and others with insecure attachment, all 10 individuals became more ready to rely on themselves while also feeling assured that they can turn to others when needed.

***Building Community***

Participants described after getting adjusted to the first few weeks of college their actions to become more involved either on in campus or local communities. The organizations, clubs, and programs were different for each participant. For example, A-ris joined both the Native American Student Association (NASA) and the ROTC military cadet program on campus. Eduardo developed friendships with members of his engineering major, and joined an outdoors club and climbing club to meet others who might connect with his appreciation for nature that he feels comes from being part Native American. Heather described the Minority Achievement

Program members as her community on campus, and Ignacio at interview time was in the process of pledging to a fraternity. 67

Other participants made important connections off-campus that provided for them a sense of community. Candia, a single parent, described reaching out to her wonderful neighbors for support with babysitting, and needs related to her child as they arose. For Candia, the support of the neighborhood she lives in is integral for her ability to do well in college. Frank found support in members of the firefighters association where he volunteers. He described the intense demands of the job as responsible for forging the close bonds he has developed with the other firefighters. He also described his current church family as another important source of community. Whether on- or off-campus, these participants continue to value the important role of others in their success and progress. It is difficult to pinpoint the specific relationship between being Native American and parents who attended college on these participants' continued reliance on others for support and a sense of community. However, maintaining and forging new connections with others seemed to be very important for these individuals as they transitioned to college.

### ***Further Connecting with Native Culture***

Every participant in this study identified his or her ethnicity as Native American. However, some participants acknowledged more than one ethnic identity as primary. Still, they all endorsed being members of Native American culture. Accordingly, one might surmise that they believe they have insights as part of that identity that would be helpful to share as part of the interviews of their transition to college experiences. While the primacy of Native American identity varied amongst participants, an important outcome for many individuals was the

development of further interest in their Native American culture during their first months at college. 68

For one participant who developed the desire to learn more about his culture, the perception of not being Native American enough kept him, at the time of the first interview from doing so. While he wanted to become more involved, he felt limited both genetically, and with regard to finding other people like himself. Eduardo elaborated:

*“If I had more Native American blood or had, I guess, knew more Native Americans, I would I would participate in their you know cultural activities.”*

It is important to note that this desire to learn more about his Native American identity prompted Eduardo between the first interview in fall 2012 and second interview in fall 2013 to become a registered member of the Chickasaw tribe. It is important to note that his acculturation score changed from 4.6 to 4.2 from the first year to second year. This suggests he became slightly more Native American acculturated during the first year of college. His bicultural self-efficacy score also changed from 3.92 to 3.73. This suggests that during the first to second year, he became slightly less competent at simultaneously navigating the differences between his own ethnic identity and the dominant ethnic identity.

Another participant, Georgina, described the importance of reconnecting with extended family including aunts, uncles, and cousins at tribal Pow Wows. She described her reconnection with family and culture at the Pow Wows:

*“[It’s] very cool to see it again [tribal Pow Wow] as like as being older and like kind of understanding more”*

Georgina found meaning in revisiting tribal Pow Wows with her extended family. She elaborated on the role this experience has in shaping how she wants to integrate her Native American heritage in the raising of her future family:

*“It means a lot to me. It's something, I think it's important and like I would definitely want my children to know what factors kind of contributed to me. I mean, it's important. And I think it's important just to be aware of what it is and definitely know it.”*

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Other participants spoke of joining the Native American Student Association, or seeking out other Native American students on campus as important ways to further explore their cultural heritage. The transition to college provided the opportunity for participants to adapt to anxious feelings by reflecting on past relationships, cultural heritage, and prior tools of resiliency in order to navigate the first year of college. Because of this, they became more aware of their strengths, and found meaning in how their Native American heritage relates to, and might further their growth in college.

### **Relating Quantitative to Qualitative**

The primary focus of this study was to provide a platform where Native American students could voice their thoughts and concerns as they transitioned to their first semester in college. Therefore, we considered the quantitative data including scores on survey instruments as secondary, using them mainly as additional information to help contextualize participant responses. We found it important however to examine the quantitative data to see if anything came up for us. Specifically, we looked to see if we could find any connections between participants, and/or relationships between scores on different instruments. We were mindful to not draw conclusions, nor attempt any statistical analysis with such a small pool of participants. However, as a research team, we identified some relationships that we deemed worth noting, as this helped us make sense of the qualitative experiences of the participants. Tables 3 and 4 list these observations:



<i>Themes</i>
Native American-identified participants were securely attached
Only participant with low bicultural self-efficacy was non-Native identified (primary)
3 male participants were anxiously attached; 2 female participants were avoidantly attached; 1 female participant was anxiously attached
2 participants who attended non-diverse high schools were anxiously attached

Table 4. Analysis of Quantitative Data x Qualitative Data by Participant

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Findings</i>
A-ris	Secure attachment score & described comfortably reaching out to people  Moderate bicultural self-efficacy score & described both cultures as important
Barbara	Secure attachment score & described regularly seeking out people
Candia	High acculturation score toward non-Native identity & described weak identification with Native culture
Desiree	High acculturation score toward Native identity & identified as Native American  Secure attachment scores & describes strong, positive relationship with immediate family
Eduardo	Moved from anxious attachment to secure attachment from 1 <sup>st</sup> to 2 <sup>nd</sup> year & described initial difficulty making friends, which became easier in second year

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Findings</i>
Eduardo	Moved from anxious attachment to secure attachment scores from 1 <sup>st</sup> to 2 <sup>nd</sup> year & described initial difficulty making friends, which became easier in second year
Frank	<p>Low Native acculturation score &amp; identifies mostly as White</p> <p>Anxious attachment score but describes self as not emotionally attached</p>
Georgina	<p>Avoidant attachment score &amp; described difficulty reaching out to people on campus</p> <p>Low Native acculturation score but described multi-racial background as being an advantage</p>
Heather	Anxious attachment score but reported not feeling significantly nervous about reaching out to others or adjusting to campus
Ignacio	<p>Secure attachment scores &amp; reported going to multiple groups for support (family – immediate and external, fraternity, peers)</p> <p>Low Native acculturation score but describes being very involved in Native American activities</p> <p>High Native acculturation score but feels others see him as White</p>
Jasmine	No observations reported

The purpose of the present study was to use a grounded theory mixed methods approach to discover the coping resources and challenges for Native American college students in their transition to college. In conducting this research from our social justice standpoint, we placed most emphasis on providing a qualitative platform for students who identify as Native American to voice their thoughts and feelings related to the transition. Placing more emphasis on qualitative rather than quantitative aspects of this study was a decision guided by our social justice values, and by being mindful of, and guided by the strength of the storytelling approach in the Native American community. With this framework as our guide, we focused our efforts on the development of questions and selection of measures that might provide an opportunity to glean from the participants' stories their perceptions of the potential risks and protective factors for their persistence. Our desire to identify such factors was fueled by our understanding of the realities for students of color in general on college campuses. We wanted to understand how Native American students might experience such realities, and to find out more about their needs so that this knowledge can support their transition to college. Ultimately, we sought to engage in dialogue with first year Native American students at a PWI in order to learn directly from them, how their lived experiences, expectations, and perceptions shaped their perception of their ability to successfully complete the first year of their undergraduate career.

#### **Findings of this Study in the Context of Previous Research**

Prior literature suggests that a number of factors are important in ensuring a successful transition to college. Schlossberg et al. (1995) found that not only the characteristics of people, but also their ability to cope with current life events, and the existence of support systems are important for a successful adjustment. We found each of these factors plays a role in the

transition process for our participants during their first semester. Tinto's (1993) Retention 73

Theory suggests that students bring with them innate characteristics that influence their ability to succeed. For our participants, attending college was a well-established possibility because each had family members who attended college beforehand. A study of Latino men in college found that family role models who paved the way for success through education were of great importance to the success of these men (Cerezo, Lyda, Beristianos, Enriques, & Connor, 2013). Just as parents guided the path for those Latino men to attend college, the participants in the current study also internalized parents' views of college as an expectation, and important in success. The participants each came from family and/or tribal environments that supported this next big step. In Crosby's (2011) qualitative study, Native American participants described family support as the single most important factor in their academic success. They also identified parents and extended family as deserving credit for their success. Taking such findings into account, it makes sense that when the participants in the current study began to encounter challenges in their first few weeks that they turned to family and close friends for comfort, support, and guidance.

Amber (2003) found that Native American student success is related to cultural resilience, a concept that includes a relationship between family life, and family involvement in college life. In the current study, participants came to college with such a mindset that Tinto (1993) suggests is an essential component in student retention.

In the early weeks of the first semester, individuals must quickly develop meaningful connections with faculty, staff, and other students on campus in order to feel that they belong (Schlossberg, 1989). The participants in our study were less likely in those first few weeks to seek out new relationships on campus. Rather, they preferred to return to family and friendships

from before college to deal with setbacks and anxiety. As with our study, Crosby (2011) also 74 found that Native American students described their family as creating expectations for what they should expect to encounter in college. Thus, turning to these sources of knowledge for guidance with concerns at the beginning of the college journey assures that Native American students can obtain the proper empathy and advice.

Although prior relationships are helpful, student development theory suggests that eventually individuals need to also establish meaningful connections with new individuals on campus. For example, Palmer et al. (2011) identified campus support systems as vital in retention for students of color. More specific to our population, Korkow (2009) suggests that support for Native American college students comes from a combination of campus sources, community, tribal, and family members. The participants in the current study were initially more apt to contact community members (i.e. church, neighbors), tribal members, family (parents, siblings, and extended family), and existing friendships (romantic partners, high school and neighborhood friends) for support in those first few weeks of their beginning semester in college. Thus positive bonds to family, friends, and tribe should be established in advance of beginning college.

Research on relationships for young adults suggests that positive connections with others are important in one's social and psychological growth and overall health (Whalen & Lachman, 2000; Wise & King, 2008). Individuals who do not yet have the skills to establish new connections must learn to do so quickly when they begin the college transition (Schlossberg, 1989). In order for students to more fully integrate, they need to embrace the values and beliefs of faculty, staff, and peers on campus (Tinto, 1993). In general, individuals' race, culture, and

ethnicity continually intersect, and are often modified throughout life (Cross & Cross, 2008; 75 Markstrom, 2011).

Based on self-report data for the NAS in this study, 8 of the 10 participants received high scores of acculturation toward a different primary ethnic identity. Students of color with high acculturation tend to identify more readily with Westernized American culture (Cuellar et al., 1995; Gutiérrez, & Yeakley, 2000). Beginning with our fourth interview, we started asking participants how they believe others perceive them ethnically. The prior three participants were not asked this question, but identified with White as part of their ethnic identity (A-ris, Barbara) or multicultural (Candia). Of the remaining seven participants, two endorsed sole Native American ethnic identification (Desiree, Jasmine), while five identified in part with White identity (Eduardo, Frank, Georgina, Heather, and Ignacio).

Of the participants with White identification who were asked how they believe others see them, all indicated that others perceive them to be White. Native Americans are often taken for members of other ethnic groups (Ortiz & Santos, 2009). This impacts how they experience their ethnicity on campus, and often pressures them to claim a particular ethnic identity. Finding a label that fits can be very difficult for students of color (Comas-Diaz, 2001). This calls to question whether embracing membership in the dominant culture, especially for those participants in the current study who can pass as members of that culture leads to a more successful transition.

Several features of the PWI that was the setting for our research may have led participants to feel more compelled to identify with a dominant culture. There were only 66 incoming freshman who identified as Native American during the first year of our study. In the second year, only 10 new Native American-identified freshmen joined the university. This is

important to consider when examining why the 10 participants who chose to participate in our 76 study might initially have found more comfort in returning to off-campus relationships they were familiar with in order to adjust. Haynes (1997) suggests that for Native American students, the low numbers of other students who are like them leads to a sense of invisibility and lowered sense of self as an integrated member of campus life and culture. Participants did not specifically state feeling isolated due to race, but all identified as Native American. Thus, the low chance of interacting with another person of their own cultural background while at a large PWI might have made for an isolating experience, as students discovered the limited amount of people who are ethnically like them within the campus community.

Students of color have the task of deciding how their ethnic identification might fit within their larger identity on campus (Mcalpin, 2008; Watson, 2009). Seven of the 10 participants in this study identified in part as White, some labeling White as their primary ethnic identity. Two identified as Native American, exclusively. The remaining student identified as Native American and African American/multicultural. Even amongst these participants who self-identified as Native American, and self-selected to partake in this study of Native American college student transition, only two participants solely claimed a Native American ethnic identity.

In light of research on the need for students of color to determine where they fit in within the larger campus community (Mcalpin, 2008; Watson, 2009), it is important to consider how comfortable participants felt to consistently claim their Native American identity as they acclimated to college. From the time they first self-selected Native American on their admissions applications, and subsequently received our e-mail request for participation, they had about a month and a half of campus interactions with others before we conducted the interviews.

Many students of color must become bi-culturally competent in order to successfully navigate 77 interactions with faculty, staff, and peers of the dominant culture on campus (David et al., 2009). Perhaps the participants in our study found that by embracing a label and identity that was more reflective of the larger culture (White) or perhaps at least more familiar (Black or multicultural) they could better fit in. For example, Candia described how she began referring to herself as multiracial/multicultural after becoming frustrated that others could not make sense of her diverse ethnic heritage. Knight et al. (1993) describe the importance of acculturation for people of color to adapt to Westernized society. This in turn shapes their ethnic identity. Perhaps adapting for some participants meant almost exclusively embracing that part of their ethnic identity that is aligned with Westernized values.

### **Adapting to College**

#### ***Attachment***

In the transition to college, every participant initially reached out to familiar individuals they knew beforehand to help deal with new obstacles. Six of the 10 participants (A-ris, Barbara, Candia, Desiree, Ignacio, and Jasmine) were securely attached on the ECRS scale, while 4 were insecurely attached (Eduardo, Frank, Georgina, Heather). Securely attached individuals are more likely to reach out to family for support as opposed to engaging in negative coping behaviors (i.e. drinking, self-harm; Sherman et al., 2000). Insecure individuals are more hesitant to reach out to others due to issues with trust. For the participants in this study, 9 of the 10 described having positive relationships with their immediate family (parents, siblings).

Although we cannot conduct a statistical analysis of attachment style and support seeking due to the low number of participants in this mixed-methods study, it is important to note that each participant initially turned to a familiar other at the beginning of college. Some participants



described feeling more comfortable going to a friend, while others went to parents, or siblings.<sup>78</sup>

It seems that regardless of attachment style, all participants found some security in turning to someone they knew beforehand. This was one of few studies to investigate attachment style for Native American individuals using the ECRS, but it should be noted that Westernized measures of attachment may not accurately describe how Native Americans form connections with others (Harwood, 1992; Broman, 1993; Montague et al., 2003; White, 2004; Bercerra, 2007).

When individuals were able to establish a routine, they became more comfortable with campus, and with expectations of professors. This sense of security may have reduced the need of students in this study to rely on prior relationships for support. Candia, Desiree, Heather, and Ignacio each elaborated on the importance of becoming familiar with the flow of campus life including predicting classroom interactions and understanding expectations of professors as helpful in reducing anxiety. Lopez and Gormley (2002) found that students who maintained continued secure attachment across their first year of college were more confident in their social interactions and better at coping with problems. We only captured a snapshot of attachment style with our study. It would be interesting to see how stable secure attachment remained for the participants through the first and second semester and from first to second year, for all participants. Specifically, we are interested in examining if insecurely attached individuals developed a more secure attachment style as they became more familiar with the campus environment. While we cannot specifically relate secure attachment with increasing ability to manage anxiety, for all students, getting used to the new environment allowed participants to take new risks and meet new people.

When participants became more comfortable in the new university setting, they described taking more opportunities to seek out support from people on campus, including professors, teaching assistants, staff, classmates, and roommates. This ability to overcome difficulties, in this case the anxiety invoked by a new setting has been found to be of particular importance for Native American young adults (Galliher et al., 2007). One way that participants described developing comfort in interacting with others was through observations. For some participants, seeing how other students approached professors, and witnessing the faculty responses made them feel that these individuals might be easier to connect with than previously thought.

Rendón (1994) found that proactive support from campus agents validates students of color and increases their likelihood of getting involved. The participants in our study did not specifically endorse campus agents reaching out to them as making them feel more connected. However, through the participants' own efforts to reach out to faculty, as well as staff in places such as the counseling center and writing center, and with residence advisors, they developed a better sense of belonging. Participants in the current study identify as members of a student of color group (Native American). However, most also have a different primary identity, which for most is White. The act of proactively reaching out to campus agents for support is more aligned with a traditional student profile. The individuals in our study in many ways are a hybrid of traditional and non-traditional populations. This might explain their increased ability to seek support from others on campus while also identifying with a non-traditional ethnic label.

### **Situating Findings within Students of Color Literature**

Although our participant population does not completely align with student of color identification, we found many important similarities between the findings for our participants,

and findings of other research on students of color. Our sample is not a complete representation of the profile of Native American students (because only two of our participants identify primarily as Native American). However, our self-selected sample is comprised of participants who felt their Native American identity is salient enough to warrant participation in this study. Since our goal is to provide a platform where individuals can tell a story that has not been told, these findings became even more meaningful after we discovered that we had the opportunity to explore a unique subset of the Native American community. This allowed us the opportunity to attempt to make sense of the similarities and differences between these ten participants as related to their ethnic identification. It also required us to attempt to understand the participants' transition process within the larger student development literature.

### ***Family, Friends, and College***

Herndon and Hirt (2004) explored the relationship between Black students with their families, focusing on the factors that lead to college success. Their participants turned to those who can provide emotional support during times of stress. Family provided continued emotional, social, moral, and financial support. In their study, as well as the current study, family was a significant influence on participants' pursuit of college. Participants in the current study, and Black students studied by Herndon and Hirt were more apt to manage emotions by turning to familiar others, often times, family to cope with issues related to the new campus environment. Herndon and Hirt also found that support for Black students comes in the form of kin-like relationships with peers at college that leads to a sense of community. Participants in the current study also described the importance of feeling connected with roommates at the residence halls and peers in other social settings as making them feel they belonged at the PWI.

Harris, III, and Wood (2013) reviewed literature on student success for men of color in 81 community colleges. They focused on African American and Latino populations. Similar to the current study, they suggested that family members, peers, and community members were important influences in the success of these male students of color. The participants Harris et al. interviewed described believing that they could be successful in college due to the influences of such individuals. This is consistent with our findings that family members were foundationally important in introducing Native American students to the benefits of college. In contrast to our study, Harris et al. found that for men of color, increasing interactions with faculty at community colleges led to distrust and feelings of discomfort. The men described being treated rudely and often ignored by faculty. A key experience that helped participants in our study to manage anxiety was the ongoing observation of and interactions with professors who treated them with respect. Because this helped our participants to begin relying less on prior relationships, positive interactions with campus agents appear to be an important bridge. Such interactions allow individuals to turn to the self and new relationships for coping resources as they become more secure on campus. The study by Harris et al. suggests the difficulty in for students of color in connecting with campus agents when they are not well received.

### ***Forming New Relationships on Campus***

The participants in our study began to take more initiative to seek out help and make social and academic connections on campus within their first month and a half of college. Crosby (2011) found that interacting with faculty outside of the classroom and getting involved in campus organizations was important in helping Native American students feel connected to their school. Participants in the current study described the benefits of feeling well received by professors and teaching assistants that they sought out for help with academic concerns.

Additionally, they described the importance of being able to approach staff in student affairs departments and peers in the residence halls. 82

Some participants also became involved in ethnic organizations such as the Minority Achievement Program, and the Native American Student Association. They described membership in these groups as integral to becoming more connected on campus. This is consistent with research by Cerezo et al. (2013) regarding the important role of a campus family in the success of Latino men in college. Participants in that study identified ethnic organizations and multiethnic fraternities as beneficial. Involvement in these types of organizations appeared to be helpful for the Native American participants in the current study as well.

Because making such connections with different people and organizations on campus helps to ensure continued transition success, it was important for participants in our study to develop the will to take new risks; try new things; meet new people. Herndon and Hirt (2004) found student clubs and organizations to be examples of social support networks that helped Black students achieve academic success. In the current study, Eduardo, one of two participants who returned for an interview in the fall semester of the second year, embodied this finding. He described having a difficult time feeling connected at his previous residence hall, and upon moving to a new hall, was able to connect with peers within his major. They studied together in the residence hall and developed closer friendships as a result. In line with Astin's (1984) theory of student engagement, Eduardo actively sought out organizations like a rowing club and nature club in order to connect with more like-minded individuals. He reported that by getting involved in these different ways, he felt more connected to campus in his second year, and to his Native American culture. An additional highlight to Eduardo's journey was his process of registering

with his tribe. He described becoming a member between his first and second year in college 83 as very helpful in making him feel more connected to his Native roots.

An element we found to be missing in current literature is also a limitation in our own study. The studies we examined do name or discuss in detail the internal processes that bridge use of prior relationships and creation of new relationships to help with adjustment. The findings of various studies suggest how making connections with others is important, but do not fully explore how the growth and development in the individual, her or his increasing ability to manage emotions and cognitions leads to finding strength and support by reaching out to new others.

We also have shown how the type of individuals participants feel comfortable to reach out changes as they become more comfortable in their campus environment. However, we did not fully investigate how thought processes change, or how anxiety is reduced through familiarity and positive interactions with new others. Therefore, we believe this internal process happens, but are limited in our ability to report on exactly how it works. In our study, we examined transition to college for individuals who self-identify as Native American, but eight of ten participants also endorse another ethnic identity. Seven reported that they believe others see them as White. Additionally, no participant in our study was first generation to attend college. Therefore, in some ways it is difficult to compare the results of our findings to literature on students of color, or White students. There is a lack of intersectional research that represents the unique identities of the individuals in this study. As social justice advocates, we were honored to uncover and present information on the college transition process for this subset of the Native American community that is not a readily researched group.

There are several limitations that we find important to note as they relate to our interpretations of the findings. First, our participants are not a representative sample of all Native American students transitioning to college. We chose to explore the transition process for Native American students attending a PWI. Therefore, we are missing information on Native American students attending tribal colleges, community and junior colleges, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), and at other non-PWI campuses. Our goal was to look specifically at PWIs, but in doing so we limited the applicability of our results to the general Native American college student demographic.

Additionally, the lists we obtained from the admissions office included only those freshman students who self-identified as Native American on their college admissions applications. There may have been students who embrace a Native American identity but did not identify this on their admissions applications. Thus, the admissions list may have not provided the most complete representation of the Native American freshman student population at the PWI. Therefore, our solicitation of potential participants was not as broad as would be ideal. Of the individuals who chose to participate in our study, only two identified solely as Native American.

Over the course of the two years we conducted interviews, only 76 incoming freshmen identified as Native American on their admissions applications. One reason for such low numbers in relation to the incoming freshman class in total might be a lack of Native American students enrolling at this PWI. Another reason might be a hesitation amongst Native American individuals to self-identify with this ethnic label, particularly at a PWI. We highlighted in our review of the literature the history of exploitation of Native American people. In particular, this

population may have reluctance to participate in research studies due to negative experiences 85 when prior researchers have left them feeling vulnerable or unsatisfied after the studies ended. If Native American individuals attending a PWI felt unsure about the ramifications of sharing this aspect of their identity with others, we would have a difficult time making connections with them. This might explain why only 10 of the 76 individuals we reached out to through e-mail decided to participate in our study.

These 10 individuals may have differed in important ways from the 66 who were contacted, but decided not to participate. Certainly the 10 students we interviewed were most strongly predisposed to participate in studies with goals like ours. They may have been more cooperative, more self-disclosing, and more trusting of persons like researchers who in some ways represent the institution of the University. Of the 10 participants we interviewed, only 2 identified solely as Native American. Seven others identified in part as White, and another as Black and Native American, or multicultural. Due to the variety of ethnic identification, we cannot directly relate prior research on Native American individuals to this population. For example, seven participants believe others see them as White. Therefore, we asked participants about their culture and personal experiences, being mindful to note if any of their concerns related to transitioning to college might relate to adjusting to a campus setting where Native American students are not a dominant cultural group. The way the participants experience transitioning to a PWI is likely shaped in part by how others see them, how they believe others see them, and as a result, how they interact with others at the university. We had the privilege of meeting with and uncovering information on the experiences of these 10 individuals who assert Native American as a part of their identity. However, because we did not exclusively interview



participants who identified only as Native American, we were unable to situate our findings comfortably amongst previous literature on student development for Native Americans. 86

Another limitation of the study is the primary investigators' role as a graduate student, and representative of the university. The primary investigator self-identified in part as Native American, and described to participants at the start of the interview how his own Native American heritage informed his interest in the study. However, he was also a researcher, conducting this study for his benefit. Freshman students getting acquainted with university culture might not have had much exposure to researchers and research studies. Therefore, even though they were given an informed consent document, they might have been suspect of how their information would be used. They also might have felt uncomfortable being face-to-face with the primary investigator during interviews. If they were concerned with they would be perceived, they may have been cautious with their responses.

Members of the research team change over the course of this three-year data analysis period. Four research assistants participated in analysis of data for the first 8 interviews, conducted in Fall 2012. During the second year of analysis, those researchers stopped out, and four new research assistants joined. Three participants of the second-year research team assisted in conducting the two new interviews during fall 2013, and two follow-up interviews. They all assisted with further analysis of data for that year. In the third year of data analysis, one researcher from the year-two team remained. Three new members joined. This third wave research team assisted in transcribing and analyzing remaining data, as well as formulating of our working theory/Figure 1. It was beneficial to have new minds each year to assist in making sense of the data. However, this can also be seen as inconsistency in our ability to truly understand how the experiences of the participants should be synthesized into a theory of

transition. One of our research team members in year three expressed this concern in her memos.

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An additional limitation is our use of the BSES as a quantitative measure. Members of our third wave research team found issue with questions of the measure, suggesting the measure poses bicultural self-efficacy as an either/or dichotomy. They described it not accurately representing an individual who might identify more fully with one ethnicity, but also hold a strong tie to another ethnicity that they are not as immersed in. One of our team members felt this scale inaccurately measured her own experience identifying as predominately White but also embracing her Latina heritage as important.

We also did not follow the established protocol for interpreting the results of this measure. Rather than evaluate scores on subscales, because we only had ten participants, we scored this scale in the same way one would score the NAS. We went through each question on the BSES and identified the bipolar dimensions each question refers to. We felt that by identifying a mean score, we could consider scores above the mean as reflecting of higher bicultural self-efficacy, and scores below the mean as representing lower bicultural self-efficacy. Due to our concerns over what the BSES is actually measuring, and our non-standard approach to deriving and interpreting scores, we are including these results but with caution and reservations. Thus, we are not as confident in including this measure as a useful quantitative tool for our study.

Another limitation relates to scope of what we were actually able to explore. We envisioned this as a study of transition and persistence through the first year for Native American students. Our initial intent was to interview a cohort of individuals once in their first year, and once again in their second year to see how their perceptions of risks and protective factors related

to transition and persistence may have changed. However, only two participants returned for a<sup>88</sup> second interview. It was helpful to gather this new information. Yet, due to a low return rate the second year, it became difficult to construct a concrete theory to explain the overall cohort development from year one to year two. In actuality, we only gathered a snapshot of the participants' thoughts around transition and persistence at the one and a half month point of their first semester at a PWI. We are using our findings to predict how participants may cope with future obstacles. Because we only had two returning participants, our study is most accurately an investigation of transition to college for students who are in the early weeks their first semester, and not of their experience over the first year. While we find our results helpful in understanding the start of these participants journey, we are limited in our analysis of their development over the first year of college.

The final limitation we will discuss stems from potential biases of the researchers, values, and life experiences that provide a lens through which all of our data were viewed. It was important for us to consider how such biases might impact how we interpreted the data, particularly the words of the participants. The primary investigator considered his ethnic identity, involvement with Native American culture, and student affairs employment as potentially impacting his interpretation of findings. In addition, the research team members reflected on their own ethnic identification and transition experiences as they might relate to their interpretation of the data.

To establish trustworthiness and credibility, we each wrote reflexivity statements at the start of the research experience, and engaged in weekly individual and group reflection through memoing and discussion afterward (Morrow, 2007). In the reflexivity statements we considered how our knowledge of Native American culture, and our own transition to college experiences

might influence what we expected to find in this study. From then on, we engaged in individual memoing, and participated in ongoing discussions at weekly group meetings regarding the issues that came up for us when interpreting the participant data. We continued discussions until all group members had the chance to provide input, and only moved forward after reaching agreement for how to work through our biases and be respectful toward the experiences of the participants. Therefore, our findings represent our sincere efforts to reach cohesive group agreement and practice genuine sensitivity to the Native American community. 89

### **Implications of Findings**

Our research team returned to the results, considering the impact of the limitations on our overall findings. We reflected on what our findings mean in terms of recommendations for campus agents. We initially developed individual suggestions, and during two weekly meeting sessions, synthesized them into a coherent list. Of course, the recommendations we have developed are contingent upon future studies confirming our findings. In many ways, ours is a pilot study, (a) in our pursuit of a qualitative exploration of Native American students' perceptions as they start college, and (b) an attempt to describe the transition to college profile for a set of individuals who are not only students of color, but also share many elements of a traditional student profile. We are situating our findings somewhere between the literature on students of color, and those of more traditional students (as defined earlier in the study). We hope this might lead to additional explorations of the transition process for individuals that more readily exist as a hybrid between established definitions of traditional and non-traditional students.

The results of the current study did not suggest any significant relationship between attachment style as measured on the ECRS and participants' description of reaching out to others to cope with transition anxiety. Therefore, attachment style does not appear to be related to whether a student feels comfortable or not to approach individuals, such as professors, staff, and peers for help. Because Counseling Centers are equipped to assist students in dealing with issues including managing anxiety and acculturation difficulties, they are well-positioned to address student retention problems, perhaps especially for those who endorse multiple ethnic identifications. Findings of this study suggest that the NAS quantitative data was consistent with how participants described their cultural identification in narrative interviews. Thus, the NAS might provide staff psychologists with useful data about clients' acculturation.

Participants in the current study initially reached out to familiar others, including family, friends, tribal, and community members whom they had established relationships with prior to beginning college. While this was helpful for these participants, the majority of them, though living on campus, also described having family nearby. Other students might not have such easy in-person access to existing relationships. This might impact their initial ability to cope with anxiety, and keep them from continuing to acclimate to campus life. Staff psychologists can use this information to develop outreach efforts to help Native American students better cope with anxiety in the first few weeks of college. Perhaps students will more quickly move toward making new connections and relying on their own strengths if they are assisted in these efforts by outreach programming.

Participants described feeling more comfortable on campus the more they came to see their faculty and teaching assistants as approachable. They also described feeling less anxiety about the large lecture-size classes, and demands of coursework after they developed a frame of reference for what to expect. One participant in particular described how he felt even more connected after he moved in to a dorm with peers that were in his major. They bonded over study sessions. These findings suggest that student affairs professionals should help students make these initial important connections as they begin college. Services might include workshops on effective interaction in large class settings, and how to approach professors and teaching assistants in-and-out of the classroom. Such workshops may be targeted to freshmen in early weeks of the semester, be interactive, ongoing, and specialized for different majors and colleges. This would provide students an opportunity to meet and interact with other individuals in the same major. There can be solidarity in going through the same experiences with others. If students cannot contact established supports, as readily, they will be more likely to connect with people who are familiar with their major-related concerns, and over all adjustment needs.

In our team discussion on the implications of the findings, we established that organizations and campus agents that help students connect with peers are very important. Note that participants in this study seemed reluctant to take advantage of services specifically designated for students of color, but seemed much more comfortable accessing services generally available to all students. Only three participants described reaching out to ethnic specific campus organizations. One of these three participants described hesitation over accepting support services based on her ethnicity. Seven of the 10 participants described themselves as White in addition to Native American, and believe others saw them as White.

Student affairs professionals who develop transition and first year programs should consider 92 what this means for people of color at PWIs. Participants in our study were less likely to identify solely as Native American, and largely did not approach campus services geared toward students of color. This calls into question the impact of identification with the dominant campus culture on one's ethnic identity development, especially for people of color.

Student affairs professionals might consider several approaches to proactively reach out to such a population. One possibility is to hold an open house the first week of classes where members of a variety of major-related, ethnic, cultural, extracurricular, and other types of clubs and organizations can introduce themselves to incoming students. Academic advisors, residence hall advisors, peer mentors, tutors, and other campus agents can encourage students to attend this open house and explore clubs/organizations they might not know exist. Additionally, students can see the diversity within the current membership of such groups. It might also help to introduce students to begin dialogues about race and culture, and the meaning of one's culture during life in college. These freshman orientation workshops should be offered in the first two weeks, as this can ignite the process of self-exploration regarding the values people bring with them to campus based on their varied identities.

### ***Academic Advisors, Professors, and Instructors***

Results of this study suggest that the instructors of introductory courses that first year, first-semester students are likely to take hold a critical position to assist with the transition to college for students such as those who participated in this study. Maintaining regular office hours, reaching out to students of color, holding additional study sessions, and taking a supportive interest in students can be crucial, as suggested by some of our interviews (e.g. Candia, Desiree, Heather, and Ignacio). Infusing multicultural content into social science

courses taught in the first year can help students recognize themselves and their own struggles 93 in the materials.

Finally, our findings point to the crucial role that academic advisors can play in the retention of Native American students. Participants suggested they became better adjusted when they were connected within their major department. Academic advisors can assist students with exploring the opportunities related to their major. Through meetings with advisors, students may further reduce anxiety by solidifying their choice (Brown & Strange, 1981). This may also help students to feel more connected to campus in general. Academic advisors can also provide major-related workshops to help students further discriminate between different major options. Involving current majors in the workshops will help students connect with individuals that have firsthand experience and a wealth of insight to provide to help students solidify their major-related decisions.

### **Conclusion**

This study provides a glimpse into the lives of incoming college students who exist between categories. For the primary researcher, who identifies ethnically as multicultural, this study became significant in a way not previously considered. The stories we gathered from the participants shed light on a population that does not have a definitive place amongst student development literature, until now.

The experience of anxiety during transition was the most salient issue for the participants in this study. The fact that many had the opportunity to sit with this anxiety for weeks prior to the study suggests that they might have had time to be reflective about the process. We might get different results if we interviewed a cohort in the first or second week of the semester, before they began to develop comfort in the new environment. Additionally, every research team



member has transitioned to college at some point. We all disclosed feeling anxiety during this 94 process. However, as individuals on the other end of the rapid currents of worry, our interpretations of findings are not impacted as much by the anxiety we once experienced during our own transition process. Therefore, both the data gathered and analysis is more a reflection on experiences of transition anxiety.

This study presents a reflection on the transition process to a PWI for students who identify in part as Native American. We hope these findings stimulate further research on the intersectionality of ethnic identification and socioeconomic status on the perceptions of Native American students as they transition to college. As social justice advocates, we are proud to have this unexpected but unique opportunity to find the voices of a group that might not otherwise have been heard.

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## **APPENDICES**

APPENDIX A  
**Initial E-mail Invitation**

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Greetings and welcome to UT!

My name is Adrian Rodriguez. I am a doctoral student in Counseling Psychology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. I am conducting a study designed to provide information about the factors related to coping and success of Native American students in their first year of College. I received your email contact information from the UT registration database because you indicated your ethnicity as Native American. I identify part of my own ethnicity as Native American. Before coming to UT, I worked in the state of California university system as a counselor to help first generation, low-income students succeed in their first year of college.

In this study, I hope to interview Native American students in their first year at UT in order to learn directly from them about the challenges they face, and the tools they use to meet these challenges. I am especially interested about the role of friends and family. I hope to interview students twice. The first time will be over the next few weeks; the second interview will be in September at the beginning of your second year at UT. Students who agree to complete an interview will receive a \$20 Amazon.com gift card for each interview. If you agree to the first interview, you do not have to agree to the second. I will be the person conducting the interviews. They will be held on campus and should last about an hour. (However, I ask people to schedule 90 minutes to allow for extra time if it is needed).

To participate in the study you must (a) identify Native American as your primary ethnic identity, (b) have lived with a parent or guardian during the past year, (c) have not previously attended a community college or university and (d) be 18 years or older at the time of the first interview. Your participation could eventually help improve counseling and student affairs services provided to Native American students at universities like ours.

If you are interested in participating, all you need to do is send a brief reply to this email.

After I receive your reply, I will send a second e-mail that will provide more details about the study further instructions on the next steps in the process. No matter what your decision may be, I wish you the very best of success at this exciting new experience at UT!

Thank you,

Adrian Rodriguez, M.S.  
Doctoral Student in Counseling Psychology  
University of Tennessee, Knoxville  
[arodri18@vols.utk.edu](mailto:arodri18@vols.utk.edu)

APPENDIX B  
**Second E-mail Message**

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Dear << >> ,

Thank you for your interest in my research project! Please read this message and the attached “Informed Consent” document to find out more about the study. I am the lead researcher, but I am part of a team that also will include four undergraduate students. All of us are interested in learning more about the factors related to the ability of Native American UT students to navigate their first year of college. Therefore, we are specifically interested in the opinions of first year students who identify primarily as Native American. The purpose of this interview is to identify your own personal hopes and concerns regarding college as you begin your undergraduate academic journey at UT.

To participate in this study you must meet these qualifications:

- (a) Identify your primary ethnic identity as Native American**
- (b) Have lived with a parent or guardian during the past year**
- (c) Have not previously attended a community college or university**
- (d) Will 18 years or older at the time of the first interview, that is, before October 1 of this year**

If you were able to answer, “Yes” to each of these four conditions, and would like to participate, please read through the attached “Informed Consent Statement”. It provides more details about the project. After reading it, if you decide you would like to participate, please reply to this email with the following information:

Your name:

Phone number:

Best times to reach you at this number:

You will be contacted soon by telephone so that I can schedule your interview. Thank you in advance very much for considering this project!

Sincerely,

Adrian Rodriguez, M.S. ([arodri18@utk.edu](mailto:arodri18@utk.edu))  
Doctoral student in Counseling Psychology  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

APPENDIX C  
**Informed Consent Statement**

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<<Note: Language used only in the informed consent for the first interview is underlined,  
language used only in the consent for the second interview is in brackets.>>

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Adrian Rodriguez, a doctoral student at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are an incoming freshman student who identified primarily as Native American in terms of ethnicity.

Purpose of Study

This project focuses on Native American freshmen students who are beginning their first semester [attending their second semester] on campus. The study aims to identify the challenges and coping resources that influence a Native American student in her or his transition to college and experience throughout the first year at UT. Through the findings I hope to develop a more complete view of Native American students' development in college, and identify how to best assist in their academic success.

Procedures

If you agree to participate in this project, you will be asked to complete two in-person interviews that will be conducted by Mr. Rodriguez. The first interview should occur early in your first semester at UT. The second interview will take at the beginning of fall the following year. You have the opportunity to make independent decisions about each interview. That is, you are not obligated to complete the second interview simply because you completed the first. [We thank you for completing the first interview last semester. Please remember that you are not at all obligated to complete this second interview.] As a small "thank you" for participation, you will receive a \$20 Amazon.com gift card for completing each interview.

All interviews will take place on the UT Campus in the Austin Peay Building, Room 410A. Before the interview begins, you will be given a paper copy of this form, and an opportunity to ask questions. After your questions have been answered, you will be asked to sign to indicate your agreement to participate. You will also be given a copy to keep for your records. We expect interviews to last 45-90 minutes, depending on how much you would like to share about your experiences.

You will be asked questions about your feelings as you begin your first semester at UT [during your second semester at UT], including your hopes, fears, and related concerns, as well as what you think you might do to ensure your success at the university. You will also be asked to describe your ethnic and cultural identification, your participation in any ritual or tribal ceremonies, your relationship with your immediate and extended family, and lastly, about any difficult experiences or setbacks you have faced. The basic idea behind the questions is that we want to identify the challenges faced by first year students like you, together with the coping strategies that seem to work best.

We plan to interview about 15-20 students. We hope to publish our findings in a scholarly journal that is read by counseling and student affairs professionals. In this way, the information you and the others we interview will provide could be helpful to very many other students like yourself. 109

The interviews will be audio recorded, but not immediately from the start. You'll have a chance to ask any questions you have about the study first. Only when you are ready to begin the in-person part of the interview, I will turn on the recorder.

This recording is necessary so that all research team members will be able to hear what you have to say. The team consists of Mr. Rodriguez (the Ph.D. student project coordinator who will interview you), and four other students who help transcribe and analyze the interviews. We will meet together to discuss what we have learned from each interview. To help with this discussion a transcript of your interview will also be typed. This transcript will allow research team members to reference specific portions of your interview in team meetings.

This procedure will be repeated for the follow-up interview that occurs in September of the next year. [For the second interview] The questions are [will be] very similar to those asked in the first interview, but now you will have the benefit of nearly one year's experience at UT. Therefore, we expect that the answers for many students will change to some degree from their impressions at the start of their first year. At the end of the first interview, we will ask for permission to contact you again in late August to schedule the second interview. You are completely free to decline participation in the second interview at any time.

A final part of the procedure is called "member checking." We will write a preliminary report that will include quotes from many of the interviews to illustrate key points. All quotes will use a "pseudonym" (i.e. not anyone's real name) to protect your confidentiality. However, the personalized email that we send to you will reveal your pseudonym, only to you. In this way you can check any quotes from your interview. If you have concerns about any of the quotes from your interview, we will edit them or delete them so that you are comfortable with what appears in the final report from your interview. About one week after you receive the draft report by email, Adrian will give you a phone call. The first purpose is to check with you about any quotes from your interview. The second purpose is to hear what you think of the report. Is it accurate? Have we captured your experience, or did we miss something important? Member checks interviews help improve the quality of the final version of the report.

Of course, as with any part of this research, you are free to discontinue at any point. This includes saying "no thanks" when you are called for the member check telephone interview.

### Potential Risks

Some students may experience emotional discomfort to questions that ask about the stresses and challenges they face. We will minimize this risk by giving you the option not to answer any question you are asked, or to stop participating in the interview entirely at any point. You do not need to give a reason for skipping a question. If you decide not to finish the interview, we will erase the recording and shred your responses to the demographic survey without using this information. Even if you complete the entire interview, if you aren't comfortable at the end, you



can still tell us not to use your information. We will honor your request. All students who begin the interview will receive the \$20 gift card, even if they skip questions or decide not to finish. 110

If you experience any lasting discomfort as a result of participation in this study and would like to talk to a counselor about your related feelings, you have at least two options. You may phone the National Crisis Hotline at 1-800-784-2433, or you may see a counselor at the UT Counseling Center located on campus at 1800 Volunteer Blvd.

### Potential Benefits

As a potential participant, you will have the opportunity to contribute to a better understanding of Native American students' development in college, and identify how to best assist in their persistence through graduation. While there are no direct benefits from participating in this study, if the project report is published in an academic journal, we hope it will help psychologists, counselors, student affairs professionals and other educators to identify culturally appropriate ways to support Native American students in their transition to college. As part of the member check process, you will receive a copy of the report. Because you'll be able to read the full report, you will also learn what we have learned ourselves from all of the interviews. In our past experience with research of this type, many participants do enjoy reading the final report. We will also send by email for your own personal reference a transcript of your interviews. In the years ahead, you might find it interesting to look back on your impressions of your first year at UT.

### Incentives

As thanks for your time and cooperation, immediately after each interview you will receive a \$20.00 Amazon.com gift card.

### Confidentiality

The recording of your interview and the transcript will be labeled only with a code letter (for example, "Interview A," "Interview B," etc.). Your responses to the survey measures will be labeled with the same code letter as your interview information, and will be kept in a sealed envelop and stored in a locked cabinet for scoring and analysis after your interview has been transcribed and analyzed. As a further protection, just before Mr. Rodriguez turns on the recorder he will remind you not to mention the names of specific persons or places during the interview itself. In that way, no specific identifying information (e.g. your home city, or the name of a specific friend) will appear on the recording or in the transcript. When the project is completed, we hope to publish the results. In this report we will quote some material from specific interviews to help make key points, but we will never use a participant's real name.

I will create a "matching key" list that will have your name and contact information as well as your interview code label. However, this list will be kept in a locked location entirely separate from the interviews, transcripts, and survey measures. We use this list to match the two different interviews, and to contact you for the "member check." When the member checks are complete, this list will be destroyed. After that, it will be impossible for anyone to determine the identity of

a particular interview recording or transcript. You will never be personally identified in public presentations or in published reports.

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### Identification of Investigators

If you have any questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study) you may contact my Faculty Advisor, Dr. Brent Mallinckrodt, at 312 Austin Peay, 1404 Circle Drive, Knoxville, TN 37996, or by phone at 974-8796. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-3466.

### Participation

You must identify primarily as Native American in terms of your ethnicity. You must be beginning your first semester of undergraduate study, and not have completed any college-level coursework prior to this semester. Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You will be asked to sign one copy of this form at the time of the interview, and you will be given a second copy to keep for your records.

Thank you so much for considering this invitation! Whatever what your decision about this project, we wish you the very best success in your undergraduate career!

### CONSENT:

I have read the above information and I am at least 18 years old.

☐ I agree to participate in this study

☐ I do not agree to participate.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (please print clearly): \_\_\_\_\_

**Please sign and return one copy of this form. Keep the second copy for your records.**

**Initial Interview Questions**

1. Tell me about how you are feeling as you begin your academic journey at UT this semester?
  - a. What are some hopes that you might have?
  - b. What are some concerns that you might have?
    - i. What people and places on campus might you turn to when you need help with that?
    - ii. What people and places in your home and community might you turn to when you need help with that?
  - b. What are some strengths that you feel you bring with you based on who you are that will help you to succeed in college?
2. What do you think will be important for you to know and/or do as you begin college in order for you to be successful?
  - a. If you are not sure, how might you find out?
3. How do you identify yourself culturally and ethnically?
  - a. What does this identification mean to you?
  - b. How important is it for you to be a member of this particular cultural and ethnic group?
    - i. In your experience, what are some benefits of associated with being a part of this group, if so, please describe?
    - ii. Are there any difficulties, if so, please describe?
  - c. How might your identification as a Native American individual help you to succeed in college?
4. Do you, or have you participated in any rituals or ceremonies as part of your ethnic or cultural identity, or tribal membership?
  - a. If yes, how important are these rituals to you?
  - b. What are some specific values, beliefs, norms, attitudes, etc. that have been passed down to you based on your native American heritage?
    - i. Would you say these values, beliefs, norms, or attitudes shape your identity and or your daily life?
    - ii. If yes, please elaborate, if no, please elaborate.
5. Have you had any setbacks this year?
  - a. If so, tell me what you did in response and how you felt about the actions you took?
  - b. Who did you go to for help?
    - i. Did you approach an individual within your family, tribe, or community for help through this setback?
      1. If so, what is your relationship to this person, and why did you approach them?
  - c. That sounds very creative, were there other things you might have done, or that you can do?
6. Some people's family can be both a source of support and/or of stress as they adjust to college. How would you describe your family in relation to this?

7. Can you describe your immediate family structure (parents, siblings, other immediate family members)?
  - a. Who raised you? (Whom was your primary caregiver growing up?)
  - b. What was your relationship like with that person growing up?
  - c. What is your relationship like now with that (or those) individual( s)?
8. Tell me about your extended family
  - a. What, if anything, do you rely on your extended family for?
9. Is there a person other than a member of your immediate or extended family that you have or would feel comfortable to turn to now for support when you are faced with a dilemma or when you feel unsafe about something in regards to your college experience?
  - a. If yes,
    - i. What is this person's relationship to you?
    - ii. What was your relationship like with that person growing up?
    - iii. What is your relationship like now with that individual?
10. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX E  
**Second Interview Protocol**

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Follow-up Interview Questions:

1. Now from the perspective of being a second year student, what do you wish you had known in those first weeks of the academic year when I first met you?
  - a. About how to be successful at UT?
  - b. About how to manage your relationships with family and friends?
  - c. How have your perspectives changed since our first interview?
  - d. What people and places on campus have been helpful in your transition?
  - e. What people and places in your home and community have been helpful in your transition?
  - f. What are some strengths that you utilized to help you succeed last semester and/or this semester?
2. How do you identify yourself culturally and ethnically?
  - a. Has how you identify changed for you? If so, how?
  - b. Have you had an opportunity to get involved on campus and/or utilize any campus resources?
    - i. If so, please elaborate.
  - c. Have you had an opportunity to connect with your culture/ethnicity on campus? If so, how?
  - d. How important is it now for you to be a member of this particular cultural and ethnic group?
    - i. As a college student, what are some benefits of associated with being a part of this group, if so, please describe?
    - ii. Have you experienced any difficulties, if so, please describe?
  - e. How has your identification as a Native American individual help you to succeed in college?
3. Have you participated in any rituals or ceremonies as part of your ethnic or cultural identity, or tribal membership? If so, where?
  - a. If yes, how important are these rituals to you?
4. Have you had any setbacks since you began school in the fall semester?
  - a. If so, tell me what you did in response and how you felt about the actions you took?
  - b. Did you approach an individual within your family, tribe, or community for help through this setback?
    - i. If so, what is your relationship to this person, and why did you approach them?
  - c. That sounds very creative, were there other things you might have done, or that you can do?
5. Some people's family can be a positive or negative source of support for them, for example, as they are beginning college. How would you describe your family during your transition to college and until this point?

6. Is there are person other than a member of your immediate or extended family that you felt<sup>115</sup> comfortable to turn to for support when you were faced with a dilemma or when you felt unsafe about something since you began college this past school year?
- a. If yes, please describe this person, their ethnic identification, relation to your family and/or tribe, how your relationship with this person developed over time, and why you consider this person to be a support to you?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add?

**Transcriber's Pledge of Confidentiality**

As a transcribing typist and/or analyzing team members of this research project, I understand that I will be hearing tapes and/or reading transcripts of confidential interviews. Research participants who participated in this project on good faith have revealed the information on these tapes and transcripts that their interviews would remain strictly confidential. I understand that I have a responsibility to honor this confidentially agreement. I hereby agree not to share any information on these tapes with anyone except the primary investigator and faculty advisor of this project. Any violation of this agreement would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards, and I pledge not to do so.

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Transcribing Typist

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Date

**A-ris**

- Line 16: Nervous to start a new university  
Comparison of self to peer group
- Line 17: Older sibling in college to help with transition in college
- Line 22: Romantic partner as support system  
Upperclassman for support
- Line 23: Religious group/peers with same religion for support
- Line 28-31: Immediate and extended family as support
- Line 35: Leadership as individual strength
- Line 44: Academics are more rigorous
- Line 47: Need to be socially outgoing and active
- Line 52: White and Native American identity
- Line 55: Identities primarily with white culture
- Line 58: Identifying culturally on campus (NASA)
- Line 59: In process of identifying with his ethnicity
- Line 68-70: Difficulty finding meaning in culture
- Line 87: Difficulty identifying white culture, naming no culture is norm.
- Line 103: Financial benefits/scholarships in college
- Line 109: No perceived difficulties with ethnicity/culture
- Line 151: Perceived presentation as non-Native American (White)
- Line 153-154: Faculty knowledgeable about Native American culture
- Line 189-190: Reached out to older members of ROTC
- Line 199-200: Reaches out to girlfriend and friends as opposed to family  
Reaches out to girlfriend and friends during setback, doesn't reach out to family after failure
- Line 201: Campus friends as support during setback
- Line 220-221: Sees family as supportive, especially in times of problems
- Line 225-226: Identifies immediate family as very close
- Line 231-232: Primary caregiver was stay at home parent
- Line 243: Both parents have bachelor's degrees
- Line 257: Participant has scholarship support from ROTC
- Line 278: Closer to mother's side due to proximity
- Line 288-295: Extended family as support system if necessary
- Line 301: Expectations to follow in sisters footsteps academically
- Line 311: Significant others ethnic identification is white
- Line 334: Sees ethnicity on a sliding scale (biculturalism)
- Line 336: Historicization of Native Americans



**Barbara**

- Line 14-15: Thinks classes are easy  
Higher expectations, but classes are easier in reality
- Line 20-21: Anxiety about starting school  
Difficult process to adjust to
- Line 22: No reliance in extended family
- Line 27: Immediate family is there for support for academic concerns
- Line 30-32: Uses counseling center as campus resource
- Line 38: Has drive to finish college
- Line 47: Studies all the time
- Line 48-49: Needs to build a social support system
- Line 57: Active Involvement in University's technological communication
- Line 62-64: Ancestry is Native Canadian  
Grandmother from Yukon
- Line 79: Identifies with "mainstream" American culture
- Line 81-86: Has desire to learn more about Native American culture
- Line 89-90: Knows more about Irish culture
- Line 101-102: Knowing more about the culture will give her a better understanding of  
who she is
- Line 105: Sees no difficulties as part of either ethnic group
- Line 108-117: Has seen negative impact from alcoholism in both cultures
- Line 135-137: Strong sense of family values  
Obligations to family (took a year off of school to babysit for sister)
- Line 152-158: Single parent mother  
2 Sisters who both have their own daughters
- Line 162: Wants to reach out to more people.  
Wants to get involved in more extra-curricular activities
- Line 164: Close to Grandfather that has doctorate degree
- Line 173: Good relationship with immediate family (relating to line 27)
- Line 187: Close family dynamic  
Living situation with immediate family
- Line 193-199: Extended family includes: Aunts and uncles on mom's side, and cousins and  
grandparents on dad's sides
- Line 202-205: Good relationship with extended family on mother's side (aunts and uncles)  
Not much of a good relationship with family on father's side
- Line 226-228: Views family relationships as a positive aspect  
Can talk to family about anything
- Line 232: Goes to boyfriend (who is American) for support with challenges in college  
They have been together for one and a half years  
He is a good listener.
- Line 249: Goes to teacher/TA with any academic concerns

**Candia**

Line 17: "Giant lecture hall" Concern

Lines 18-19: Concern over student teacher ratio

Lines 20-22: Utilizes resources (professors, writing center, library); Receives teacher's support in lectures and emails

Line 23: Anxiety regarding classes

Lines 38-39: Fear of uncaring professors

Line 43: Project Grad- high school prep program

Line 49: Uses library

Line 50: First Year Studies informed about resources

Line 62: Mother supportive and involved

Line 65: Mother also went to UT

Lines 79-92: Very methodical, has successful routine

Lines 95-102: Anxiety over limited teaching/interaction opportunities with classmates

Line 111: Anticipatory anxiety, has identified different learning strategies based on rigors and expectations of classes

Lines 128-130: Ethnicity: Black, Native American, Spanish, Polish

Lines 141-142: Potato tribe- very specific in cultural knowledge, but has no information on them (Cherokee?)

Lines 150-161: Understands stereotypes and expectations. But not ready identification with any particular ones

Lines 171-172: Knowledge of ethnicity and background as coping tools

Line 179: Rejection of external resources that label her

Lines 198-207: Difficulty being acknowledged for who she is in racially dichotomous H.S.

**Desiree**

Line 9: Nervous about starting college  
Line 14: Difficulty balancing multiple roles (friend, student, athlete)  
Line 29: Chief of tribe as support system  
Line 76: Tribe provides financial benefits (college paid for)  
Line 81: Tribe prepares through summer intern program  
Line 83: Promotes getting an education  
Line 86: Part of Eastern Band of Cherokee  
Lines 108-115: Very involved in tribe's cultural activities  
Line 124: Lived on reservation, went to high school off the reservation  
Lines 125-128: Involved in junior council  
Line 135: Tribe pays for involvement in tribal activities  
Lines 145-151: Setback-didn't make the softball team  
Line 161: Parents supportive during setback  
Lines 170-174: Whole family lives on reservation. Wants independence while still maintaining relationships  
Line 179: Missing home life  
Line 189: Father influenced college selection  
Lines 197-200: Student sees importance of distancing oneself from home  
Lines 211-215: Secure attachment to mother  
Lines 228-229: Baby of family, golden child  
Lines 240-270: Identifies with and depends on "Caucasian" mom

**Eduardo**

- Line 17-19: Size of campus is intimidating
- Lines 24-25: Introversion makes it difficult to reach out to professors
- Lines 27-35: Difficulty adjusting to college professors' teaching style
- Lines 37-39: Tries to form positive connections
- Lines 43-44: Doesn't meet expectations
- Line 49: Needs intellectual relationships
- Line 46: Feels overwhelmed but sees the need for balance
- Line 50: Hard time fitting in high school
- Line 67: Turns to friends and family for support
- Lines 84-85: Has a positive perception of self
- Line 95: Associates self with Canadian/Native American culture because of values shared with grandfather
- Lines 98-103: Would like to be more involved/knowledgeable of Native American culture
- Lines 114-115: Draws pride and values from culture
- Lines 131-132: Uses identification as way to separate himself, start conversation
- Lines 130-140: Uses culture to defend political views
- Lines 186-194: Sees being Native American as what makes him unique (identity)
- Lines 225-230: Resilient in (family) setbacks
- Lines 232-233: Stunted social development as result of setback
- Lines 257-265: Sudden responsibility has made him have to grow up quick
- Lines 288-294: Sister seems more emotionally motivated
- Line 308: Father primary caregiver
- Lines 318-321: Mother taught him to be more skeptical and realistic
- Lines 345-346: Loves knowledge and learning
- Lines 371-375: College important for extended family
- Lines 371-402: Can rely on grandparents for support (i.e. financial, housing)
- Lines 384-385: Strong connection to mother due to father and grandfather having passed away
- Lines 391-392: Strong attachment to money
- Line 411: Hasn't developed strong relationships with others

**Frank**

Lines: entire transcript  
Considers himself white, middle-class, conservative  
Great grandma full-blood Cherokee  
No ties to native side  
Grandma died when young  
Volunteer firefighter, volunteers with church  
Felt pressure to excel in college like brother  
Mom is primary attachment figure  
Stress → Family pressure  
Friends  
Close to mom  
Hiking  
White  
Middle-class  
Level headed  
Not emotionally attached  
Proud

**Georgina**

Lines 13-15: Nervous about academic rigor of college

Lines 24-25: Wouldn't reach out to people on campus, introverted

Lines 25-29: Goes to family for help

Lines 49-55: Introverted but seeks out resources

Lines 70-72: Identifies with North American and Native American culture

Lines 79-82: Culture is important and wants future children to know

Lines 85-89: Being multi-cultured gives her a broader perspective

Lines 93-94: Never had any difficulties regarding ethnicity

Lines 106-108: Went to Pow-Wows with grandma as a child

Lines 116-123: Developed sense of group identity with tribe at Pow-Wows and group activities

Lines 139-143: Family support helped ease move to new school

Lines 144-146: Adjusting to school transition made her stronger

Lines 148-149: Closer to family in times of difficulty and setback

Lines 186: Mom is caregiver

Lines 192-197: Opposite personality from mother

Lines 200-211: College is important. Pushed as parents worked on and finished degrees

Lines 240-246: Geographic distances lead to lack of closeness with extended family

Lines 273-276: Two best friends from high school like family; welcomed in family

**Heather**

Lines 15-16: Thought College would be harder  
Line 16: Has put in effort in high school  
Lines 16-17: Thought she would have more friends  
Line 23: No concerns so far  
Lines 27: Part of minority achievement program  
Lines 27-28: Goes to mentor and RA for help  
Line 28: Lives in residency hall  
Line 33: Would go to family and old co-workers for support  
Lines 36-38: Very goal oriented  
Lines 42-45: Had to develop study method to do well in the first semester  
Lines 48-49: Formally claims Caucasian and Native American, but verbalizes Caucasian side  
Lines 55-57: Doesn't want to be separated by ethnic groups  
Line 65: Picked out for things based on ethnic identity  
Lines 72-74: Feels selected for opportunities because of leadership and speaking  
Lines 77-79: Native American on both sides  
Lines 81-82: Mixed and doesn't focus on specific culture  
Lines 85-86: Not a minority at home  
Line 98: Ethnicity allows her to have different viewpoints or perspective  
Line 110: Been to a reservation  
Line 117: Grandma taught her a song  
Lines 135-137: Weighs all options then makes decisions  
Lines 136-137: Talks to others to get feedback on a situation  
Line 156: Close to mom, brother, and grandparents  
Line 162: Mom is primary caregiver  
Lines 167-168: Felt protected by mom  
Lines 171-172: First in family to go straight from high school to college  
Line 179: Relationship with mom got better, talk everyday  
Line 189: Close to small extended family  
Lines 194-195: Emotional support from extended family  
Line 206: Goes to best-friend for help and advice

**Ignacio**

Line 3: Nervous about starting college; found it easier than expected  
 Lines 15-18: Motivated to keep scholarship and get honors  
 Line 21: Appears optimistic  
 Lines 30-31: Would go to tutors for help  
 Line 45: Doesn't take no for an answer  
 Lines 45-46: Very competitive  
 Lines 63-64: Identifies as white and Native American (Cherokee)  
 Line 68: Doesn't know much about tribe  
 Line 68: Native American family and grandparents live in Oklahoma  
 Line 83: Legally Native American  
 Line 84: "I have that little card" condescending?  
 Line 108: Social benefits of being Native American (being invited to things)  
 Lines 118-119: Some family members still have traditional Native American names  
 Line 119: "Different than just being a regular American"  
 Lines 119-122: Researches ancestry  
 Line 123-126: Native American identity could impact him if he tries to learn more; "But if I could just like ignore it"  
 Line 130: Feels people see him as white  
 Line 134: Doesn't see not knowing about Native American as a disadvantage  
 Line 135: Native American not super salient to identity  
 Line 137: Thinks knowing about Native American heritage would be beneficial, more well-rounded  
 Line 145: Would go to dad to learn more about Native American side, dad got him I.D. card  
 Lines 153-163: Appreciates diversity in Chickasaw nation  
 Lines 162-163: Felt it was difficult to manage two friend groups  
 Lines 173-177: Tried to mix group but didn't work, so stopped  
 Line 175: Native American identity makes him feel unique  
 Lines 176-178: Appreciates financial resources in Chickasaw nation  
 Lines 181-183: Felt better when split time between different groups  
 Lines 197-202: Found solution to problem and thrived (resilient)  
 Lines 207-208: Immediate family is both parents and younger sister  
 Line 210: Is close to immediate family  
 Lines 210-214: Aware of whiteness  
 Line 214: Mother is white  
 Line 218: Mom and dad are both primary caregivers  
 Line 223: Pretty close to both parents growing up, no major fights  
 Lines 225-227: Failing a class made him work harder  
 Lines 226-227: Respects parents  
 Lines 233-236: Felt had to follow parents to stay there  
 Lines 251-256: Goes to friends and family for support  
 Lines 253-255: Dad went to college, mom didn't-worked out of high school  
 Line 258: Relies on friends more because they are physically present  
 Lines 261-263: Talks to mom everyday on phone  
 Lines 275-276: Mom very inquisitive with him



Lines 278-282: Mom wants to know every detail of his life  
Line 286: Lives on campus  
Lines 291-292: Grandparents and aunt on dad's side are extended family  
Line 295: Dad's parents are Cherokee  
Lines 295-298: Parents encouraged him to do well in school  
Lines 296-297: Spends more time with dad's family  
Lines 298-299: Self-driven to do well in school  
Line 305: Says family has no problems  
Lines 315-318: Talks to grandparents every week or every other week  
Lines 317-318: Dad's parents provide financial support for fraternity  
Lines 332-335: Dad very curious about culture, which got him into it  
Line 343: Doesn't feel that being Native American affects us  
Lines 366-369: Interested in his Cherokee connection to the Trail of Tears  
Lines 382-385: Feels his fraternity is more supportive than most  
Line 387: Sees fraternity like family  
Lines 409-15: Goes to fraternity brother during setbacks  
Lines 410-415: Identifies certain physical features as Native American  
Line 417: Fraternity brother is white  
Lines 437-439: Mascot stereotypes don't bother him  
Line 461: Thinks Native American mascots are ok because we don't interact with them much on reservations

**Jasmine**

127

No new codes were found when transcript was reviewed against open codes of other participants

APPENDIX H  
**Open-Coding Model**  
**Strauss and Corbin (1990), and Busby (2009)**

Developing a theory of Native American students transition to college:

Context

- Ethnic identity
- Cultural benefits
- Cultural perceptions
- Family influence on education
- Academically oriented

Process

- Family reliance
- Support from campus agents
- Support from peers
- Academically oriented
- Transition anxiety
- Campus involvement
- Community involvement
- Stress management

Conditions (Why?, Where?, How?, What?)

- Why
  - Difficulty in class
  - Home sickness
  - Company/Social Support
  - Family expectations
  - Change of environment
  - To manage stress
- Where
  - Campus (residence halls)
  - Home
  - Reservation/Tribal Community
  - Church
- How
  - Reaching out to others
- What

Consequences

- Attachment to mother
- Support from campus agents
- Support from peers
- Cultural benefits
- Cultural perceptions

- Campus involvement
- Stress management

## 130

[illegible]

1. Family Reliance
2. Attachment to Mother
3. Support from Campus Agents
4. Support from Peers
5. Ethnic Identity
6. Cultural Benefits
7. Interest in Culture
8. Cultural Perceptions
9. Family Influence on Education
10. Academically Oriented
11. Transition Anxiety
12. Campus Involvement
13. Community Involvement
14. Stress Management

**Adrian Rodriguez memos**

8/29

I felt bad for participant 5 because of the loss of his father and found myself feeling more sympathetic towards him. I am iffy about how he views native culture and its connection with outdoors but that is because of my own views on culture. I need to be mindful that I am not negatively judging him for what his experiences with culture and what he values as part of his Native American identification.

9/5

I continued to feel sensitive toward participant 5 for loss of father. I have become somewhat anxious about getting this dissertation done and find myself wanting to move quickly through the data. I have to remember to go slow and treat each participant's words as meaningful and important to sit with. Remembering this helped me make sure our group had a chance to react to and discuss data from all participants.

9/12

Today we continued to divide coded data into smaller categories based on themes. There was no consensus on how to divide some codes or what to label some themes. We did our best to resolve discrepancies by talking out the reasons for our differing views and came up with a list of consolidated codes.

9/19

Today we began the axial coding process. I realized as we did this that I am still shaky on the definitions of the various labels in the axial coding process. I am concerned that I do not have many themes under consequences and need to re-examine the data to see if consequences emerge. We differed in our views of what should go under phenomenon vs. context vs. facilitating intervention in some cases so we talked it out and tabled some items for later discussion.

10/3

Today we began attempting to form relationships/themes between time-based column categories (i. e. antecedents, phenomenon). We had some difficulty at first but began to make connections (very action based) i. e. (academic drive). I became more confident as the group was able to conceptualize what I was envisioning. I was a bit concerned that we might be misinterpreting codes by building bridges as Jessy pointed out, so we had to look at participant numbers (i. e. how many people are saying this particular code/theme).

10/24

Today we had to somewhat start over with our analysis because after a two week break our post-it notes got mixed up and I was frustrated because I could not clearly remember how we got to where we were beforehand. Fortunately, Jessy remembered the layout of our prior axial coding design. We renamed some categories in the coding paradigm based on Udo Kelle's "Emergence" vs. "Forcing" of Empirical Data? A crucial problem of grounded theory.

10/31

133

Today, we got a late start as I overslept. We spent a good amount of time trying to identify which original participant interview matched with the second interview we were analyzing. Once we determined this we were very productive. The participant seemed mixed between appreciating his new tribal citizenship because of the historical significance but also because of the financial benefits. As a part-native person myself, I related to his experience of not thinking people see him as being native but valuing talking to others about this aspect of his identity. Due to my own experience I felt it important to capture multiple aspects of his experiences and viewpoints because of this.

11/7

Today we continued analyzing P9 interview 2. We got a bit of a late start due to needing to rearrange office and not finding our prior notes. Therefore, some of the interview we covered was a repeat from last week. I am concerned at how many participants say that Native American identity is not a huge identity for them, since my study is on Native Americans. I am trying to determine how to address this in the findings and analysis.

11/14

Today we finished coding p9 part 2. I really connected with the participant in that I also felt close to my extended family to a degree but would not seek them out for resources during setbacks. We coded that the participant is close to extended family but not much more. I wonder how my own experiences as somewhat removed from my extended family when it comes to asking for help shaped my view on downplaying the importance of the extended family for this participant. We began coding participant 10.

1/12

Today we recapped what has been done up to this point then we reviewed a form by Steve Busby in order to create a paradigm linking context with process and consequences. I am a bit stressed due to short timeline to get tasks done but my team is motivated which helps keep me focused.

1/26

Today we began to diagram the boxes and arrows that we will use to describe our theory. I have been a bit frustrated as we begin this process. I am worried about getting everything done by the deadline and fatigued with this data. I want to just be done with this study but also want to respect the process, learning for my lab mates and the voices and experiences of the participants. Due to this, I decide to end session early and asked everyone to develop their own visual depiction of the data to facilitate a more engaging discussion next time.

2/2

Today we compared models of the process of our theory and came up with a group consensus of what we believe explains our model visually (using boxes and arrows). I was very excited and re-energized throughout this process because everyone came prepared and our models were all on the same page. I was interested in our process because I could see our theory start to develop and look forward to keep going at it!



Today we compared survey scores with open-codes for each participant, one-by-one and looked for any commonalities among different participant scores. The group as a whole did not like the bicultural self-efficacy scale as they felt it was too dichotomous and forced. The group has concerns about how participants were interpreting questions and thus we were suspect about how to interpret the results of the bicultural self-efficacy scale in relation to the other data.

### **Alex Sherry memos**

8/29

Participant 5' attempts to relate to his Native American ethnic background reminds me of times I've tried to identify with my Pacific Islander background. Culturally, my family doesn't have much real identity with it but my mother often expresses pride in her background. This may help me relate to some of the participant's comments about his identity.

9/12

As I was thinking of ways to organize our points into subjects, I found that I looked for a lot of common themes to contribute into a spectrum. We also managed to get a lot done today in consolidating points into categories.

9/19

Today we axial coded all our subcategories. It was really hard for me to separate phenomenon from context for me. I believe this was because there were a lot of categories I saw as quite subjective to that individual and, therefore, should've been considered as phenomenon over context. It was difficult to differentiate categories created by that individual versus categories inherent in context.

10/3

Today, we further condensed the categories by writing a bridge between some of the subcategories. This is quite difficult as many times categories are hard to pair. We were able to sort through most of our differences and paired a good deal of the subcategories up.

10/24

Today, our categories got mixed up and we had to re-do and re-evaluate something we did previously. It ran pretty smoothly and the end of the meeting caught us up again. We were able to pretty easily sort out any disagreements we had and we were pretty efficient with categorizing. Everyone handled the temporary setback very calmly.

11/7

We read an interview from P9 today. We had an interesting time analyzing what he was saying. At one point we were bewildered by him talking about how he failed a workout class. He acted like he had to step up his game outside of the class yet the class is run on participation credit. He seemed to have devoted a great deal of time and resources into passing the class.

11/14

135

Today, we finished off p9's second interview. We ran through it quite smoothly and got some good final categories. We that Sam had accidentally wrote down the wrong interview so we spent a little time trying to remedy that situation. Eventually, we discovered that he had actually written down the correct one and just hadn't recorded the first sentence. After this we were back on track and we spent a little time talking about our career plans.

1/12

Today we were very constructive. We started out scheduling times when each of us would work on our own time. We also mapped out our schedule of deadlines for the semester. In the last hour we created paradigms. We were very productive and sped through them pretty handedly.

1/26

We had one of the most mind-numbing discussions on focus coding. We got caught up trying to categorize the subcategories under context. At first, I was very deadest on categorizing them a certain way but after Jessy pointed out certain things I began to second guess myself. After a long and drawn out discussion about it I got really burned out and didn't have much more to say.

2/2

We had a very productive meeting today. I was quite surprised and relieved to find out my model was pretty close to Jessy and Sam's. I was really concerned that I had done it wrong and also had trouble remembering why I had made certain decisions at the time of making my model. In the end, I was really glad we were able to work together to construct a really representative model.

3/2

Today we compared our results to themes in the participant's interviews. Eventually I became curious about the question contained in the efficacy survey due to everyone except for one participant having high efficacy. I found that the question was worded in a very confusing manner that doesn't quite get an accurate, unbiased answer from the participants.

### **Jessy Alva memos**

8/29

I could really relate to what participant 5 said about dealing with loss. I've lost many family members since adolescence and I think I reacted similarly to participant 5 by seeking internal comfort rather than external comfort from others.

9/5

Today we mostly looked through previous research assistants' notes and interpretations of the data. I felt a little emotionally disconnected from the data, but perhaps that was helpful in preventing personal biases. I felt a little out of sorts or distrustful at times though, worrying that maybe previous groups missed important themes from the interviews that I would have caught.

9/12

136

Today we made 14 major themes for the interviews and were very productive. It seems like high pressure to most efficiently categorize everything but I hope that we were able to capture the most important themes and didn't miss anything.

9/19

Today we did axial coding of the data. I thought it was very difficult to do because to me, all of the categories were very similar and hard to place in just one category. We disagreed a lot and tried to compromise, but sometimes I was not always convinced something went into the category we placed it in. It seems like a meticulous process that is very open to interpretation. Sometimes I didn't feel like our themes fit in to any of the axial coding categories and were entirely separate.

10/3

Today we got a little distracted talking about PhDs but we got to work and found some interesting connections between axial codes. We all had different perspectives and opinions on how the different categories were connected. Sometimes we'd have to argue for or against connections between categories and each person's opinions were insightful.

10/24

Today was kind of difficult because we'd been gone for two weeks. We spent a long time trying to figure out what we had been working on and eventually I remembered and we got back on track. We researched exactly how to classify all of our themes into axial codes. I know Adrian has some anxiety about getting this all finished before April, so I try my best to keep us on task once we get started.

10/31

Today we were going through participant 9's second interview that I typed up and we were looking for similar themes that had popped up in previous interviews. We didn't start until like 10 today because we were late so we didn't get a whole lot done. As we were going through the transcript we kept stopping a lot and I worried a little about if we would get very much done if we kept stopping. I felt like people were focusing on things in the interview that they thought were important but having just typed up the interview and listened to it I didn't think some of the things we were stopping to talk about were that important to the overall message of the interview.

11/7

When we came in today the room was re-arranged and we had to clean up a bit. Then we spent time trying to find the notes we took last week on P9 but couldn't find them and we figured Paymun may have accidentally brought them home with him. We got through about half of the interview and hopefully can finish up next week. Many people were a bit confused by the participant saying he respected his family's authority and didn't want to get in trouble growing up but I could relate because my dad was pretty tough on me as a little kid and I respected him a lot and hated to disappoint him (and still feel that way).

11/14

137

Today we finished coding p9 part 2 and I was happy about how productive we were. We got confused when we were going to start coding what we thought was p4 part 2 and realized it was actually p10. Sometimes I worry about how disorganized our materials are and how that slows us down and makes it hard to pick up where we left off. I will try to think of ways we could get more organized.

1/12

Today we worked on creating a paradigm of all of our themes. Honestly, it really went over my head. I feel like we have done stuff like this before and only partially worked on it and then moved on to something else. Sometimes this research process is confusing to me and I don't feel very helpful.

1/26

Today we worked on focused coding. I didn't even really understand what we were doing and I also felt like we didn't finish what we worked on at our last meeting so I wasn't sure why we were moving on. I actually feel like this a lot- that we start with something one week that I don't fully understand then don't really finish it but then we do something different the next. I feel like I'm not a very helpful research assistant when I don't understand exactly what we are doing.

2/2

Today we presented our process models to Adrian since we were really struggling last week. I was really excited because Adrian really like how I interpreted and compartmentalized the data, which is a good feeling because lately I have felt that I wasn't very helpful to the group because I wasn't understanding what we were doing. So this week I felt completely opposite from last week.

3/2

Today as we going through themes for each participant, our group began to question the reliability of the bicultural self-efficacy scale. We all felt like the questions were somewhat confusing or misleading and might not accurately be measuring an individual's actual bicultural self-efficacy. As a bicultural individual myself, I felt unsure of how I would answer some of those questions. Also, as we were analyzing whether or not people sought out resources like peers, teachers or campus agents, I began to wonder whether this was actually a reflection of inherent personality traits ( for example, introverts might not seek social support, but would just use a textbook). Would an introvert show up as avoidant on an attachment scale?

### **Paymun Najmi memos**

8/29

Something that came up for me during today's meeting was discussing the loss of participant 5's father. This helped me realize and understand that people have different ways/approaches of dealing with tragic events/stress, and these ways can influence a person their whole life. I have to try to better understand other people's coping strategies and not just my own.

9/5

Something that came up for me today was a statement that was made by participant 8 in the interview. The statement ensued that the participant feels that their ethnicity allows them to have different views/point of perspective. This was something I connected with, because of my background. This is something I feel is important when researching different cultures because it gives more of an open-minded outlook on other cultures.

9/12

When categorizing groups today I thought about the different support systems included. This included peers, family, campus agent support. This made me reflect on my own support systems and come to the realization that they are significant in people's lives. Also when pointing out differences between primary family support and extended family support it made me realize that extended family is very vital in people's life including myself.

9/19

While axial coding I reflected on all the subjects that were on the board (phenomenon, context, etc.). It made me put all the current themes we had in perspective and think of them in a more general sense. While thinking of what themes to place under the phenomenon category I thought about my own transition into college and what I believe may have made my transition different than others. Also when going through action strategies, to help understand it better, I thought about what I did to help.

10/24

Today when going over the themes and placing the topics of the themes there was confusion on what belonged to what group, which caused a little stress. Also in today's group meeting there was miscommunication between me and another member of the group. As a student, one who constantly wants to learn, I prefer people telling me when I am wrong because I am able to learn from my mistakes and correct/rectify them.

10/31

Today when analyzing an interview, a question in the interview came up that asked the participant to explain his cultural benefits. The participant went on to list only extraneous benefits, such as financial elements. This made me think because usually when someone lists benefits for ANYTHING they have both extraneous benefits and benefits that are internal. I had to realize that people will have subjective responses and not everyone thinks like I did after hearing a question like "explain\_\_ benefits." For example this participant may only think of benefits as those he can see. I have to be unbiased about this just because I have another sense of that question, does not mean the participant doesn't value internal benefits.

1/12

Today we created a paradigm through exploring the contexts and processes and their consequences. While doing this I tried not to form any biases that may be caused by my own experience as a college student my first year at UT. I had to tell myself that just because I did something doesn't mean that the participant did the same thing for that reason.

During focused coding we got confused and had disputes over what should fit in each box. I was a little frustrated at myself because I wasn't able to get a concrete title for the category. I feel that everyone felt the same. Speaking for myself, I think being frustrated and stuck on one category made us think about it even more and over analyze it. Also my head was hurting because of lack of sleep, but I don't think that affected me in anyway.

3/2

Today when reviewing the tests, we pointed out possible flaws in the self-efficacy test. When reviewing these scores I felt that some of the questions contradicted each other. Also, the way people answered on the test may derive from possible biases and wanting to answer a certain way to accommodate the study. I felt the test was not a good measure for this setting (UT- low Native American population).

### **Sam Jackson memos**

8/29

During today's interview I had a difficult time relating to participant 5's loss of his father to cancer due to the loss of some of my family in a similar means, so I felt sympathy for him. Participant 5 also at times sounds like some people that I know, so I do my best to not let that affect my judgment.

9/5

Today we covered 4 subject interviews. I always feel sympathetic towards the ones who say that they have lost a member of their family and the ones who say that they are having trouble making friends and adapting to college. Today we read 1 interview and older researcher's notes for the other 3 and it was difficult to connect with their notes instead of reading the interview.

9/12

Today we assigned the categories into more specific categories. It was difficult at times to come up with a good title and to remember which topics we had already covered.

9/19

Today we4 broke our categories down into the more specific categories of grounded theory. It was a bit complicated at times to decide what went where. While trying to decide I was trying to use my own knowledge and experiences to help me to decide and I had to try and keep it in check. It took me a little into the categorizing to fully understand what each category stood for.

10/3

Today we worked at finding connections between our categories. It was a bit rough at first to figure out what he was expecting us to do, but after I got a feel for it. Coming up with people names for the connections. It was difficult to find the connections. We also talked about the things we would need to do for grad school. It was exciting to hear about, but was also kind of scary to hear about.

10/24

Today I was running late. We also lost our order of categories and spent the day getting back to where we were. We didn't get back to where we were. Instead of using all our choices we just used our old category titles. At first I didn't like that since it didn't give us as much choices as before. It also changed all the data we worked for in our last session but it did start to grow on me by the end of the session.

10/31

Today we went over one of the interviews. We worked fast on it. It feels like this interview is going quicker and easier than the interviews we have done in the past. Paymun and I slightly tussled over what the participant valued about being NA, but we also had some difficulty with the interview due to the way the participant talked.

11/7

Today we continued through the interview. We had a difficult time taking him seriously due to his use of "like" and "you know" and the subject matter that he talked about. Although we were still able to pick the themes out of his interview.

11/14

Today we finished interview 9 part 2 and started interview 10 which I transcribed. Listening to the way that 9 talked and repeated and re-said the same thing over and over slightly made my head hurt, but I still did my best to listen for themes in his interview. Then when we started on 10 there was a moment when Adrian said that I transcribed the wrong interview. I felt worried that I messed up and angry that I did the one he told me to and he messed up, but it all worked out in the end.

1/12

Today we created a paradigm. I arrived late due to a dental appointment and I'm not quite sure what we're doing but it seems interesting. I'm glad we have some notes on what we're doing and I'm glad to be back.

1/26

Today we did focused coding. At first it was a little frustrating to try and get a word in edge-wise and at first I wasn't fully on board with some of the decisions we were making but after a while I could see why we made the changes. However, after focusing on one subject for so long it became a bit more difficult to focus on it and to try and look at it from another perspective.

2/2

Today we discussed our models that we made. I wasn't sure that I did mine right, and was worried when I saw how good everyone else's looked. I was happy that mine turned out ok and that we were able to make so much progress today.

Today we went over the scale and the survey that the participants took. We found many issues in the survey that we felt could've affected the participant's scores. Many of the questions leaned towards choosing a positive answer. It seemed like many participants may not have been completely honest. Some may have just picked neutral out of lack of care/not knowing what to choose. Some people may have been more introverted rather than insecurely attached.



APPENDIX K  
**Member Check E-mail**

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Hi (Pseudonym),

I hope this e-mail finds you well. In Fall 2012, you participated in a research study about your experience as a Native American student transitioning to college. My research team and I have synthesized the data from the different interviews to come up with a theory of what the transition process looks like based on yours and the other participants' thoughts and experiences.

An important next step is to show you these results and get your feedback about how we interpreted your experiences. I want to make sure we are representing your experience accurately and truthfully. I am including our results write-up document, and a figure that shows the theory of transition we have developed in-part by analyzing your experiences.

Would you please look through the results document and figure and let me know if there is anything you want me to remove, or if you have any concerns? I would also appreciate it if you let me know if what we developed is an accurate representation of your experience in college during your first year.

I am also attaching a file that contains the open codes my research team developed based on our analysis of your individual interview. If you would not mind looking through this smaller document and letting me know if you have any concerns or would like anything removed, I would greatly appreciate it. Your feedback will greatly help make this study more valid.

I will not contact you again after this e-mail unless you have questions. I appreciate your help. I would appreciate hearing back from you at your earliest convenience but no later than Friday, April 3rd.

Also: I created the pseudonym: “ ” to represent your quotes. Anytime you see a quote from Bob, it should be a quote you provided. Your participation in this member check is not a requirement of the study, but it will greatly help us to make the study the best and most accurate reflection of your experience. As always, your information will remain anonymous and readers would only see the name Bob attached to any of your quotes.

Please let me know if you have questions.

Thank you very much for all of your help.

Adrian

Adrian Rodriguez was born on March 17, 1980 in West Covina, CA. He graduated high school at Northwest Catholic in West Hartford, CT in 1998. He earned a BA in Music from Cal Poly Pomona in Pomona, CA in 2004. He earned a MS in Counseling from Cal State Long Beach in Long Beach, CA in 2011. For his master's degree he wrote a thesis on The Effects of Attachment and Acculturation for Latinas/os in their Relationships with Close Friends. Adrian attended the Counseling Psychology doctoral program at the University of Tennessee. He will graduate in May 2016 with a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology.