

Native American Youth Voices on Success, Identity, and Cultural Values: Educational Success  
and Positive Identity Development through Culturally Responsive Mentoring

Zoë Higheagle Strong

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

Master of Education

University of Washington

2013

Committee:  
Brinda Jegatheesan (Chair)  
Deborah McCutchen

Program authorized to Offer Degree:  
College of Education

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor Brinda Jegatheesan for supporting and honoring my cultural ways of learning and providing guidance in conducting meaningful research to benefit the Native American community. I am grateful for Deborah McCutchen joining my masters committee and providing feedback. I also thank Michael ChiXapkaid Pavel for encouraging me to enter graduate school and helping guide my career along the way. Most importantly, I could not have completed this milestone without the love and support of my husband Mack Strong and sons Isaiah and Evan Strong. My parents' wisdom and compassion for others has led me to have deep concern for disadvantaged and Native American children. Finally, without God giving me my culture, talents, and experiences, I could not have accomplished this work.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....   | 1  |
| CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .....                                    | 3  |
| CHAPTER 3: METHOD .....   | 23 |
| CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS I .....   | 32 |
| CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS II .....  | 50 |
| CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS III .....   | 56 |
| CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION .....   | 61 |
| REFERENCES .....  | 72 |
| APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SAMPLE QUESTIONS .....              | 80 |
| APPENDIX B: WORKSHOP AND RESEARCH RECRUITMENT FLYER .....             | 82 |
| APPENDIX C: PARENT/GUARDIAN FOLLOW UP AND RECRUITMENT LETTER .....    | 83 |
| APPENDIX D: FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW SAMPLE QUESTIONS .....                | 84 |
| APPENDIX E: RASC INVITE SAMPLE LETTER .....                           | 85 |
| APPENDIX F: NOTES ON PROTECTION OF STUDENTS AND TRIBAL IDENTITY ..... | 86 |

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Before discussing the review of literature on the mentoring needs of middle school Native American youth in American Schools, I believe it is important that I introduce myself to the reader to understand a little about who I am, where I have come from, and what has inspired this research.

My name is Zoe Higheagle Strong a registered member of the Nez Perce tribe, *Nimiipuu*. I come from the Higheagle family from my Father's side and the Ankney Family from my mother's side. My father is Native American and my mother is Caucasian. They were both born and raised in the Nez Perce tribal community. My Indian name is Hookoo, which my father named me after my great, great, great, great grandmother who was a prisoner of the Nez Perce War of 1877. She was sent to prison in Oklahoma because she refused to give up her Native religion and cultural practices. My father gave me this name as a young woman after accomplishing certain milestones in my life – those milestones were not based on academic achievement nor a high paying job, rather I was honored for becoming a good wife, a mother and deciding to give back to my community. My husband and I started a foundation over 11 years ago that provides wrap around mentoring and tutoring support for Native American youth through out the Northwest. Their stories of struggles and perseverance surrounding educational issues gave me the courage to go back to college after experiencing many years of failure as youth.

The numerous students we have served along with my personal journey of learning and attending schools in tribal communities and predominately non-Native public schools as a Native American youth in the United States has inspired this research. In my higher academia studies

on Native American educational issues, I have found it difficult to find existing theories and conceptual frameworks that fully capture my experiences and understanding of Native American ways of learning and knowing - especially when each tribal community differs in cultural practices. The following is my humble efforts to capture a small piece of the educational strengths and needs in Native American communities.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### Overview

The history of Native American education in federally funded schools is multifaceted and requires a compassionate understanding of the past in order to effectively address current educational issues of the present. For many generations the federal government and non-Native Americans have defined educational success and the pathway to success for Native Americans. However, when you analyze the recent statistics of Native American students in the American School system, a dismal picture of success has been painted. For instance, the average graduation rate for Native Americans was reported at 46.6%, the lowest graduation rate amongst all other racial/ethnic groups (Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010). In the 2011 National Indian Education Study (NIES), Native American students on average performed lower on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report card in reading and math at grades 4 and 8 if they were a part of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and attended Bureau of Indian Education School (BIE) over a public school (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012). Unfortunately, the same NIES 2011 report showed an increase of grade 4 participants eligible for NLSP from 66% in 2009 to 72% in 2011 and an increase from 62% in 2009 to 66% in 2011 for grade 8 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012). Statistics like this portray an aspect of Native American students' academic achievement in American Schools, but does not begin to capture the complexity of historical implications of government policies/procedures and poverty, nor does it evaluate success according to Native American cultural values.

McCarty and Watahomigie (1998) stressed the need for educators to gain an historical understanding of various government policies and procedures that have contributed to

assimilation and/or cultural discontinuity for Native Americans in federally run schools. A macro level perspective is vital to understanding the apposing Euro-American ideology that has guided Native American education through different means for approximately 500 hundred years. A micro level perspective is also crucial when addressing the immediate concerns that Native American students face on a daily basis, such as the incongruence of ideologies between Native American cultural values/practices and mainstream education. Many researchers have contributed lack of educational success in part to cultural discontinuity in the classroom and administrative policies (Cleary & Peacock, 1998; Huffman, 2001; Castagano & Brayboy, 2010).

This study examined the perspectives of mentoring needs of middle school Native American students in order to better support them on their path towards educational success in alignment with their Native American cultural values and ways of learning. Before addressing the four Native American students' responses to educational issues in American Schools (public and BIE schools), the remainder of the literature review will examine the implications of the historical assaults towards Native Americans and the government laws that are working towards rectifying the residual devastating effects on Native American education.

**Historical influences on Native American education.** The history of Native American education is complex and goes beyond the reach of this paper; however, a few impacting historical experiences and federal government policies and practices will be highlighted that demonstrate the effects of colonization on educational success for Native American youth in the Euro-American education system. From the time of early contact with European culture in the early 1500's, Bill (1988) stated, "the intrusion process swept across North America, the traditional educational format of the Native American was interrupted" and they "gradually, abruptly, lost control of their educational institutions" (p. 6). A major deficit on Native

American education was the loss of controlling leadership over educating their own children in alignment with cultural values and practices.

Initially, the missionaries played a more dominant role in directing Indian education, then, the Federal government overtook governances during the treaty period (approximately 1778 to 1871) to develop educational policies for Native Americans. One of the early federal government policies that shaped Native American Education was the Civilization Act in 1819 passed by Congress in which the primary goal “was synonymous with forced assimilation or ‘civilization’” (McCarty & Watahomigie, 1998, p. 71). Policies like this led to the forceful removal of many Indian children from their families to attend boarding schools ran by the federal government.

In 1824 the Office of Indian Affairs, later named the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) was established under the War Department and in charge of Native American education and policies (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). The education that Native Americans received was horrendous compared to Euro-Americans. For instance, the goal of education for European Americans in the public schools was to protect and promote democratic citizenship in a changing society by means of the school system (The Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education, 1918), meanwhile for Native Americans the goal was assimilation (Lomawaima, 1994). In the missionary and boarding schools, cruel teaching methods were used to advance the assimilation process. Techniques such as beatings for speaking their Native language or participating in cultural practices sent devastating messages “that Native American families are not capable of raising their own children and that Native Americans are culturally and racially inferior” (Yellow Horse Brake Heart & DeBruyn, 1998, p. 63). The degree of autonomy for Native Americans to preserve their cultural practices varied amongst public schools. Lomawaima (1994) provided

glimpse into a case study of the Chilocco Indian school that provides a powerful picture of the boarding school experience.

***Chilocco Indian School case study.*** In the Chilocco Indian school similar to many other boarding schools, the federal government administered the curriculum and pedagogy through a centralized leadership of military personnel. Lomawaima (1994) summarized the curriculum and pedagogy intent guiding the boarding schools:

The United States government established off-reservation boarding schools in the late 1900s as part of its grand civilizing plan to transform Native American people. Federal policymakers and administrators cooperated to remove thousands of Native American children and young adults from their families, homes, and tribes in order to educate them in a new way of life.... Tribal/communal identity, primitive language, heathen religion: these pernicious influences would be rooted out and effaced in the construction of a new kind of American citizen (p. 28).

The boarding school model went far beyond the traditional public school's intent of democratizing – instead the primary goal was assimilation through coercion. Andrews (2002) stated, “The architects of assimilation expected that Indian children would abandon their ties to tribal cultures, learn to talk and work like Americans, and disappear into the mainstream” (p.427). Native Americans were expected to completely embrace a different set of values; meanwhile, the dominant society rejected their cultural ways.

Similar to other boarding schools, the federal government used coercion tactics in the Chilocco Indian school to enforce their policies and procedures – “Many schools in the Indian Service coerced families and kidnapped children to maintain student enrollment levels” (Lomawaima, 1994, p 571). For most Native Americans, the concept of sending their children

away to boarding schools far from their family and homeland did not align with their cultural values or ideology. Conversely, the separation hurt the family system that was once intact. It appeared that poverty conditions of Native Americans were used to coerce families. Curtis, a student who attended the Chilocco school stated, “I don’t think (my mother) wanted us to go, it was a question, she had three kids and she couldn’t support us” (Lomawaima, 1994, p. 541). Many of the students from Chilocco Indian school were separated from their family from a young age and could not afford to travel home on school breaks (Lomawaima, 1994). Fortunately, the Indian Bureau outlawed coercion in 1917, yet the poor conditions for Indian education remained.

*The lasting effects of boarding schools.* The Meriam Report (1928) was a turning point for better conditions for Native American Education and boarding school practices – the report recognized the “grossly inadequate conditions” (11). The story of the Chilocco Indian school is an example of the traumatic history of Native Americans in the education system – which continues to complicate the advancement of Native American education in American schools to this day. Research has linked some of the current academic hardships of Native American youth to historical experiences like the boarding schools (Dejong, 2007). An historical understanding of Native American Education policies is important to mentoring Native American youth today because these generational traumas have produced a lasting effect on family dynamics, wellbeing and trust in the education system. Yellow Horse Brave Heart and DeBruyn (1998) described these generational effects as “historical unresolved grief and historical trauma” (p. 61).

**Laws, policies, and practices influencing Native American education.** Since the Meriam Report of 1928, there has been government laws and orders that have recognized the assaults to cultural preservation, sovereignty and inadequate learning conditions for Native

Americans. The following are only some examples of governing acts created to benefit Native American educational needs.

***Governing laws to support Native American education.*** According to the United States Department of Indian Affairs (2013), the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 allowed the Bureau of Indian Education schools to incorporate Indian history and culture into their teaching and later the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 (P.L. 93-638) allowed federally recognized tribes to establish agreements with the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) to operate Bureau funded schools. This allowed for a greater collaboration for government-to-government interaction surrounding educational issues for Bureau funded schools. There are currently 183 BIE schools through out the U.S. and 126 of those schools are tribally controlled (Bureau of Indian Education, 2013).

The Indian Education Act (1972) established the Office of Indian Education within the U.S. Department of Education. This act also created the National Advisory Council for Indian education that was comprised of Native American members recommended by the tribes or Alaska villages and appointed by the President and increased funding towards educational opportunities for Native American students and adults. The Native American Languages Act (1990, 1992) strongly advocates for the preservation of Native language and culture and acknowledges the “convincing evidence that student achievement and performance, community and school pride, and educational opportunity is clearly and directly tied to respect for, and support of, the first language of the child and student” (p. 2).

***Do governing laws translate into policies and procedures that benefit Native American education?*** In more recent years, many researchers have contributed policies like the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 as a barrier to cultural responsive curriculum and pedagogy

integration in American Schools, because of the emphasis on test taking and standardization over Indigenous ways of knowing and learning (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Cleary, 2008; Reyhner & Hurtado, 2008). Conversely, the NCLB Act of 2001 has made a positive impact by increasing available Native American student performance data and accountability in the American Schools.

The Native American Language Act of 1990 has increased efforts towards incorporating Native language and culture into schools and allowed for more funding opportunities for organizations to implement language and cultural programs. One aspect of this Act encourages “State and local education programs to work with Native American parents, educators, Indian tribes, and other Native American governing bodies in the implementation of programs to put this policy into effect” (The Native American Language Act, 1990, p. 4). The goal is for each local school to collaborate with their surrounding Native American community. According to the National Indian Education Study 2011, only 24 to 34 percent of Native American fourth-graders and 22 to 28 percent of Native American eight-graders “attended schools in which members of the Native American community visited three or more times during the school year to discuss education issues, share Native American traditions and culture, or participate in Indian Education Parent Groups” (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012, p. 46). The Bureau of Indian Education schools are reported to have the highest percentage of community members share traditions and culture at school. For example, 94% of BIE school administrators of Native American eighth grade students reported having Native American community share Native American traditions, while there were only 37% of administrators in low-density Native American public schools.

Progress has been made through federal laws addressing the deficits of cultural responsive curriculum and pedagogy in American Schools, but the laws are not necessarily translating into best practices or collaboration with Native American communities at the grass roots level. The degree of implementation of these laws into schools and districts vary amongst school type, with BIE schools appearing to show the most collaboration with Native American communities incorporating traditions and culture (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012). Because Native Americans' values and practices underlying educational achievement in American schools drastically differ from mainstream society (Peacock & Cleary, 1998; Garrett, 1995), collaboration amongst Native American communities and schools are vital.

**Building bridges for cultural differences and healing in American schools.** Today, educators face a daunting task serving in American schools because they are required to bridge the learning gap between numerous different ethnic, racial and linguistics groups that represent different value systems, learning styles and social behaviors (Banks et. al, 2007). They are also required to acknowledge the sovereignty and rights of Native Americans based on past treaties and current laws regardless of the percentage of Native Americans in the school or district. In the midst of these challenges, Native American communities are still in the healing process from the historical trauma faced in government run educational institutions. Within this richly diverse climate and lack of historical understanding, Native Americans educational needs can be easily overlooked when only representing a small percentage of the population.

According to Faircloth and Tippeconnic (2010), there are approximately 644,000 Native American students in the entire school system and approximately 92% of those students attend public schools. Even though a large percentage of students attend public schools, Native American students are only approximately 1% of the public school population (DeVoe &

Darling-Churchill, 2008). In the BIE schools the Native American population is drastically higher, but only 7% of Native American students attend Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools, which are now called Bureau of Indian Education Schools (BIE) (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2005).

Mentoring relationships is one approach to bridging the gap between Native American communities and schools, along with advocating for their cultural learning needs. In a meta-analysis of 73 mentoring programs, DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, and Valentine (2011) found that mentoring has the ability to help students improve “outcomes across behavioral, social, emotional, and academic domains of young people’s development. The most common pattern of benefits is for mentored youth to exhibit positive gains on outcome measures while nonmentored youth exhibit decline” (p. 57). Mentoring can provide holistic support for Native American students when attending schools that do not reflect their culture. Currently, the majority of research in mentoring does not include Native American participants or too few to generalize to this population.

### **Pertinent Definitional Term**

**Native American.** The term Native will be used herein to refer to self-identified or parent-identified Native American, Alaska Native, First Nations or Native Hawaiian.

**Personal identity.** Whitesell, Mitchell, Kaufman and Spicer (2006) defined personal identity as “aspects of the self that are differentiated from others and motivated toward self-interest and individual goals; self is defined here as a unique entity” and self-esteem is identified under this construct (p. 1488). Self-esteem is positive or negative evaluation or appraisal of oneself – it often affects how a person feels others perceive them. Self-esteem will be used in this study to analyze an aspect of personal identity.

**Native American identity.** Whitesell et al. (2006) delineated collective identity as Native American identity or group belonging. Collective identity is “embedded within social context, concerned with common welfare and connection to other, and rooted in the values of the group” (Whitesell et al., 2006, p.1488). In this study, the term Native American Identity will be used to represent an aspect of identity that is rooted in Native culture and values with a strong sense of belonging, connecting to world and to others.

**Native Americans’ contemporary ideology of educational success.** Traditional ways of knowing and learning are extremely important. I use the term “contemporary” to address the definition of success given by Native American educators, students, families, etc. in recent years. The word contemporary acknowledges that mainstream ideology has played a role in shaping current definitions due to the history of Native American education and current societal changes.

### **Native American Ideology of Educational Success**

In evaluating the mentoring needs of Native American youth, a contemporary ideology guiding educational success for Native Americans in contrast to mainstream society requires consideration. In a recent national survey of Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians - ChiXapkaid, Inglebret, and Krebill-Prather (2011) surveyed numerous Native educators and leaders on their perspective of educational success for Native students and the necessary qualities and indicators that promote success. In their analysis, six clear themes emerged: Educational success for Native students:

- is a holistic, multi-dimensional process;
- recognizes the unique talents and gifts of students;
- involves knowledge of Native culture, history, and language;

- addresses health and wellbeing on multiple levels – mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical; and
- builds the capacity to contribute to community (ChiXapkaid et. al, 2011, p. 5)

The values guiding educational success for Native Americans appear to be more holistic in nature with an emphasis on valuing the individual child's unique talent and place in the world while addressing all aspects of their wellbeing. These values seem to take priority over academic performance in grades and tests scores. Although, when participants were asked about the important qualities needed for educational success, 81% of the participants found it very important that Native students master various academic skills such as math, reading and writing (ChiXapkaid et. al, p. 5). Therefore, academic performance is still valued in the Native American community, but this is only one aspect of educational success and not meant to take precedence over other areas in development.

### **The Effects of Contrasting Ideology and Cultural Values**

Native American students underlying cultural values influence their learning behavior and can be misinterpreted in the American public schools and perceived as noncompliant, disrespectful (Huffman, 2010), not engaged, or uninterested (Powers, Potthoff, Bearinger, & Resnick, 2003). The perceptions of teachers and school administration have on Native American students can influence the shaping of their identity and overall educational experience. For instance, human beings have a tendency to develop their personal identity by self-evaluating themselves through social mirrors; consequently, a “negative social mirror adversely effects academic engagement” for minorities (Suárez-Orozco, 2004, p. 184). Native American students who continually receive messages that they do not meet the social or academic norms at school

will struggle to build a positive identity. Their identity has an impact on their educational learning experiences and wellbeing.

**Cultural discontinuity theory expanded.** The cultural discontinuity theory was used, as an aspect of the framework in analyzing the mentoring needs of Native American students in two different school environments, BIE School and mainstream public school. Kathryn Au (1993) centers the theory of cultural discontinuity in Native American education “on a possible mismatch between the culture of the school and the culture of the home, which results in misunderstandings between teachers and students in the classroom” (as cited in Huffman, 2010, p. 8). Cultural discontinuity also “assumes that educational problems arise, in a large part at least, because of the mismatch between culture and language between the school and that of the students” (Gibson, 1988, p. 29). In this study, the students’ interaction with their teacher and classroom was a major unit of analysis, yet the inquiry went beyond the classroom to examine other outside contributors.

Some Native American researchers have argued that the cultural discontinuity theory takes too narrow of focus in examining Native educational problems and does not take into account the research that correlates socioeconomic status or social issues with school failure (Brady, 1996), or the systemic or macrostructural problems (Ledlow, 1992). This current study accounted for socioeconomic issues, sociohistorical effects and macrostructural problems on a school level by designing broad, open-ended questions that allow the four Native American participants to discuss their perceptions of success and barriers to success. As well, there were questions designed to inquire at these different levels.

### **Factors Influencing Educational Success**

In the following sections, key factors that influence educational success for Native American youth are discussed. This research study defined and examined educational success from the viewpoint of Native Americans' contemporary ideology of success. To begin, researchers have found clear pathways to educational success and failures based on socioeconomic status as an indicator (Brady, 1996), others have shown the generational effects on education from historical trauma (Yellow Horse Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998), while other studies have analyzed the effects family socialization (Garrett, 1995). All these aspects will be more deeply discussed in the Findings and Discussion Chapters. Researchers have also found the relationship between cultural values, personal and Native identity as factors that strongly influence educational success directly and/or indirectly. All these topics provide greater insights to the mentoring needs of Native American youth in BIE and public schools.

**Native cultural values.** Native American cultural values and practices contribute to an individual's ability to successfully relate to the world, relationships and to overcome adversity. For instance, Garrett (1995) discussed the opposing values between Native American cultural verses mainstream and the socioemotional impact, "feelings of isolation, rejection, and anxiety develop as Native American children are confronted with the demands of a social value system that is incompatible with their own." Native American values and practices vary amongst different communities. According to a recent National Center for Education Statistics report, there are over 560 federally recognized tribes (DeVoe & Darling-Churchill, 2008) and there are numerous Native American communities such as Native Hawaiians and First Nations that are not counted in this number. Within Native American culture researchers have found some common shared values. However, the following list of values should not be assumed for each Native

American individual. In the review of common shared values, Garrett, Bellon-Harn, Torres-Rivera, and Roberts (2003) stated:

Native values generally consist of sharing, cooperation, noninterference, sense of being, importance of the tribe and extended family, harmony with nature, a present-time orientation, preference for explanation of natural phenomena according to the spiritual realm, and a deep respect for elders.... and by contrast, mainstream values emphasize saving, domination, competition, aggression, doing, individualism and the nuclear family, mastery over nature, a future-time orientation, a preference for scientific explanations of everything, "clock-watching," winning, and a reverence for youth (p. 226).

Once again, the cultural values represented does not necessarily reflect each Native American individual nor does it reflect each individual that is identified as "mainstream," but it does provide an overarching picture of opposing values between the two.

In two qualitative studies that spanned over 8 to 10 years, Ledesma (2007) interviewed urban Native Americans from several tribes on their perspective of significant cultural values and protective functions. Ledesma (2007) concluded:

Traditional values provide guidelines for an interpretation for life experiences. Values influence relationships protocols, social expectations, operate as resources in stressful conditions, and promote resilient capacities... Values influence individual and group identity and are the foundation on which the AIAN experience rests. The characteristics and values associated with traditional life include a group and collective orientation as well as an appreciation for family: kin, extended, and tribal (p. 56).

Native values appear to be the foundation for interpersonal connections, wellbeing and identity. In the next section, personal identity will be discussed and the effects on academic achievement.

**Personal identity.** In American school settings, Native students have been shown to care deeply about teacher support and approval even over peer support (Bock, 2006). Suárez-Orozco (2004) identified how minority students have the tendency to develop their personal identity through social mirrors. Native students may be receiving a large portion of their social mirroring from the response of their teachers, which could promote negative self-esteem from the discontinuity in the classroom. Powers et al. (2003) discussed that teachers reported being disturbed by Native students' silence, which is a value to the Native culture. Researchers have noticed many other misinterpretations that have led teachers to respond negatively to students (Garrett, 1995; Cleary & Peacock, 1998; Huffman, 2010). The discontinuity of interpersonal values can hinder the connectivity to the teacher and the school. Although, the teacher and student relationship is not the only social mirror that affects the self-esteem of Native youth.

Many researchers have also found self-esteem, a construct of personal identity, as a vital influence on academic achievement and performance (Whitesell et al., 2006; Whitesell et al., 2009). For example, Whitesell et al. (2009) conducted a 3-year longitudinal correlational study on the effect that self-esteem and cultural identity has on academic success; self-esteem had a strong relationship to academic success. They stated, “healthy self-esteem has been associated with internal locus of control, perceptions of competence, persistence in the face of challenges, coping skills, social support, and a variety of other qualities that are likely to better equip students to succeed in school” (p. 38). Self-esteem is a fundamental quality for Native American students to persist in a school system and see their value in school.

Research has also found a connection between self-esteem, Native identity and psychosocial wellbeing. Jones and Galliher (2007) conducted a study on Navajo students, both male and female adolescents “who were categorized as having achieved (identity) status (i.e.,

reported high levels of exploration and high levels of affirmation of their ethnic heritage) were found to have higher scores on the indicators of self-esteem, social functioning, and school membership” (p. 692). This study shows the reciprocal relationship between self-esteem, ethnic identity and psychosocial wellbeing on which are important indicators when addressing education from a holistic perspective. In the next section, I will discuss the complexity of Native identity in mainstream society and in the American School setting.

**Native identity.** Kenyon and Carter (2011) surveyed 95 Northern Plains Native American students from a tribal high school to examine the relationship between ethnic identity, community belonging and self-esteem. The study found that ethnic identity in Native American youth was positively associated with sense of community. In their post hoc analysis, the achieved identity group was highest on sense of community. Achieved ethnic identity represented a high commitment and involvement in cultural activities (Kenyon & Carter, 2011). In a similar study, Jones and Galliher (2007) also found that affirmation and belonging played a more significant role in psychosocial wellbeing over traditionalism and cultural immersion. While these studies examined the relationship between self-esteem, ethnic identity and community belonging, they did not discuss academic achievement.

The studies that have examined ethnic identity and academic achievement have shown the complexity of the relationship (Powers et al., 2003; Suárez-Orozco, 2004). For example, Whitesell et al. (2009) found that ethnic identity did not have an effect on academic achievement for Native American youth. Conversely, Oyserman (2009) found ethnic identity had an effect on test performance and academics. What made the difference in these findings? Oyserman (2009) studied identity-based motivations in ethnic minority groups – which is described as “readiness to engage in identity-congruent action” (p. 250). When Native American students were primed

with their ethnic identity directly before a test, they performed lower in their testing scores than those who were not primed; the opposite effect was found with Caucasian students (Oyserman, 2009). Native students cannot control when priming of their identity may take place in schools, however, it is possible for students to gain a more positive perspective on their Native identity so that they are less likely to equate failure with academic performance. Culturally responsive mentoring could assist Native students in gaining a more positive personal and Native identity regardless if they attend a school that supports or does not support their cultural values.

### **Culturally Responsive Mentoring**

Mentoring relationships can empower Native American students to overcome a tragic history and the confidently face current challenges in the American education system— it can also promote a sense of belonging and value in this world that each child needs. Based on the findings of Navajo youth identity and psychosocial wellbeing, Jones and Galliher (2007) concluded “as living and being successful in traditional ways of life become more difficult, feelings of commitment and belonging to one’s ethnic group may be instrumental in overcoming negative effects of acculturative stress” (p. 692). Regardless whether a Native American student attends a BIE school or a predominately non-Native public school, they are undergoing acculturative stress as they strive to meet mainstream education standards that provide governances over both of these school types. However, the level of acculturative stress may vary amongst school type due to the culturally responsive resources and/or proximity to tribal community.

For Native American students, the patterns of whom they turn to for help may differ than mainstream students. In the NIES 2011 report, “A total of 73 percent of American Indian/ Alaska Native fourth graders reported getting help with their schoolwork from a parent or family

member once a week or more, and a total of 62 percent reported getting help from a teacher at least once a week” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012, p.42). Bock (2006) found that American Indian students showed to care deeply about teacher support and approval over peer support (Bock, 2006). Teachers identified as “mentors” have shown to be vital for disadvantaged minority youth to improve academically (Erickson, McDonald & Elder, 2009) and especially when culturally responsive practices are implemented (DuBois & Karcher, 2013; Cleary & Peacock, 1998).

Native American students also tend to rely on family for mentoring support. For the Native American eighth-graders, a “higher percentages of students reported talking to a family member or another student more frequently (two or three times, or four or more times) than less frequently (never or one time)” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012, p.43). The counselor relationship and relationships outside of the family were least reported for Native American students to seek help or discuss academic plans. These examples provide a glimpse into the mentoring relationships that Native American students tend to feel most comfortable approaching and asking for help.

After reviewing research on educational success for Native youth and reflecting on my own personal experiences in American Schools, a few recurring themes emerged – connection, belonging, and value. Chief Dan George stated:

Love is something you and I must have. We must have it because our spirit feeds upon it. We must have it because without it we become weak and faint. Without love, our self-esteem weakens. Without it our courage fails. Without love, we can no longer look confidently at the world. We turn inward and begin to feed upon our own personalities, and little by little, we destroy ourselves. With it, we are creative. With it, we march tirelessly.

With it, and with it alone, we are able to sacrifice for others” (as cited in Garret et al., 2003)

In summary of this literature review, cultural responsive mentoring in American schools is: to care for a Native American student by placing the relationship before performance, to develop an understanding and compassion for historical assaults on Native American education along with acknowledging the ongoing difficulties of living in an environment with opposing values, to incorporate their core values when guiding and motivating them on the path that best fits their unique talents and allows them to give back to their community and beyond, to help them to preserve and develop a sense of pride in their cultural heritage, while helping them become successful in mainstream education.

### **Conclusion**

Mentoring can provide a mediating role between home, community, and the school. Cultural differences in learning, educational standards, and social norms are extremely complex issues for middle school students to navigate on their own. Furthermore, the difference of expectations and available resources at each school type varies. For instance, a Bureau of Indian Education schools with a higher percentages of Native American students has the ability to focus their curriculum and pedagogy towards Native American cultural needs. They may also have easier access to the Native American community, but perhaps they are challenged with preparing the students for future academic endeavors in mainstream education. Meanwhile, the public school system may not have direct access to the Native community depending on proximity or could be more intimidating to approach for the Native American community. Each school type has unique challenges in helping middle school Native American students succeed.

Middle school Native American students' voices can be easily overlooked when Native American students only represent 1% of the public school population (DeVoe & Darling-Churchill, 2008), and one of their guiding values is silent reflection (Cleary & Peacock, 1998). This research is important because the voices of Native American youth are rarely heard in research and in mainstream American public schools. The analysis of mentoring Native American youth for educational success can benefit Native American communities, American schools and supplemental organizations that desire to provide culturally responsive mentoring to assist in bridging the cultural gap and support the healing process of historical tragedies in the educational system.

This study will provide the voices of four middle school Native American students who attended BIE and public school during their middle school years. They will share their educational experiences and perceptions of how mentoring helped them to overcome failure and provided motivation and guidance to succeed. Mentoring came from parents, extended family, teachers and friends. They also addressed important issues regarding the role of family, community and school culture played in their shaping of identity and values.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methods**

#### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this research was to explore the perspectives of middle school Native American students on their mentoring needs to succeed in the American school system. First, the goal was to determine their definition of educational success and their insights on the pathway to achieving success for Native American students. Secondly, to analyze the relationship between their guiding cultural values and the shaping of identity during a key time in adolescence for Native American students in predominately non-Native public schools and Native BIE schools. Lastly, to determine how their cultural values and identity are influenced similarly and differently amongst these two school types.

#### **Design**

The research design used a qualitative methodology approach that included focus group interviews (talking circles) and participant observations in gathering data on the mentoring needs of middle school Native students for educational success. In order to provide an in-depth analysis on mentoring without a preconceived hypothesis, the focus group interviews were vital to allowing the student to respond to open ended questions and discuss what they believed was the pressing issues. Talking circles are also a cultural supportive approach to sharing ideas. Participant observation was used to observe the interpersonal interactions outside of the talking circles to examine the interpersonal interactions with other Native American students and their families at the Native AC2A Workshop, the day of the study.

#### **Research Questions**

1. How do middle school Native students perceive/define educational success for Native students in the public and BIE schools?
2. How do cultural values, Native and personal identity influence educational success for Native students in the public versus BIE school system?
3. How can these insights guide the mentoring practices of Native youth for educational success?

### **Participants**

**Description.** In this study, Native American refers to American Indian and Alaska Natives based on parental identification. The participants consisted of two Native American boys entering ninth grade at a BIE school and two Native girls entering tenth grade in two different predominately non-Native public schools. Each student just completed middle school in the Puget Sound region of the State of Washington. This grade range was chosen because of their completion of middle school, thus a qualified group that could speak to middle school experiences. Students were eligible for research participation if parents submitted a signed consent form identifying their child as “Native American” and entering either grade 9 or 10 in the fall of 2012. During the focus group interviews, each student was asked their tribal affiliation and if they were an enrolled tribal member. This question was asked to determine whether or not they were living in their tribal community and to determine the resources they have access to for educational support. They were given pseudonyms and their tribal affiliation is kept anonymous for confidentiality purposes.

**Native girls.** Tatiana and Kia are both 15 years old and registered tribal members from the same tribe. They live on or close to their tribal land that is surrounded by an urban city. Tatiana attended a predominately non-Native public school all of her middle school years, while

Kia attended the first half of middle school at a BIE school operated by her tribe, then transitioned to a non-Native public middle school.

**Native boys.** McCord and Daniel are both 14 years of age. They attended a BIE school since kindergarten in the same tribal community as Tatiana and Kia. McCord and Daniel also live with both of their parents. Daniel is a registered tribal member from another Native American community than the one in which he is currently residing. McCord's mother is Native American, but his father is not. He considers himself Native American but is unsure of his tribal affiliation.

**Access and recruitment process.** Various Native American leaders, teachers and tribal organizations assisted in identifying and recruiting students to attend the Native AC2A Workshop on August 28, 2012. See appendix B and C for recruitment documents. The camp was originally scheduled for August 8 – 9, 2012 (see appendix B for original invite), then changed to August 28 because of conflicting Native American youth events during the same week. The research announcement and parental consent form was distributed with the camp applications. This event was hosted by the Mack Strong TEAM-WORKS Foundation in which I am a cofounder.

**Ethical considerations.** In conducting ethical research in the Native American communities, Stiffman (2009) encouraged researchers to remain in ongoing communication with community stakeholders not only in the initial stages of the study but through out the research process. In this way, researchers have the ability to adapt the study to cultural needs and concerns. A research advisory stakeholders committee (RASC) was composed of Native researchers, educators, leaders that represent the communities being served to ensure community

collaboration. See the RASC Invite letter (appendix E) for committee description and responsibilities.

I met with each RASC member individually in person or over the phone/email to receive regular feedback during the planning, implementation and follow up phase of the research project and camp activities. The RASC members served at various degrees and were more available on an individual basis rather than for group meetings. RASC members did not have access to direct data, but they will receive a final report of the findings upon completion and be invited to a debriefing meeting to discuss how this research can lead to direct impact for the Native American community.

### **Procedure**

**Informed consent process.** Parents/guardians received a letter confirming their student was registered for the Native AC2A Workshop on the new date of August 28, 2012. The parental/guardian follow up letter announced the study opportunity and clearly stated that students could attend camp regardless of their participation in the study. The parent/guardian research consent form was attached to the letter and provided details of the study. Only the students whose parents/guardians read and signed the research consent forms were eligible for the focus group interviews at the workshop. This policy was in place to avoid coercion so that all students could attend camp whether or not their parents gave permission for the student to participate in study.

This process was also in place and repeated for the follow-up interview for the four research participants. Additional documents were created and approved by the University of Washington, Human Subjects Division to seek parental/guardian consent. Parents were contacted over email and/or phone to schedule a follow-up interview for their student. The

parents and students were given an option for the interview to be conducted in-person or over the phone. The consent and assent forms were sent to all participants' parents by email and two out of the four parents signed, scanned and emailed the forms. The other two parents expressed approval for their daughter to participate in the follow up interview over the phone and email, but they were not able to arrange the follow up interview within the six-month deadline that was originally stated in the consent and assent form.

**Student assent.** Before students participated in the focus group interview, I read and recited the student consent form that advised them of the purpose, procedures and confidentiality of the study. Then, I asked if they understood the assent processes and whether or not they had any questions. All four students agreed to participate in the study and stated they did not have questions. They also signed a promise of confidentiality statement that agreed to not share what others discussed in the focus group interview with those outside of the group (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

A similar student assent process was implemented for the follow-up interview with the exception of a revised assent document and the assent document being read over the phone before conducting the interview. Parents and students were given the opportunity to schedule the follow-up interview over the phone or in-person. Both McCord and Daniel requested phone interviews. The students read and signed the assent form, then their parent's emailed the scanned copy before the interview was conducted. I then read the student assent form to each student over the phone to make sure the student understood and was given opportunity to ask questions before I conducted the phone interview. McCord and Daniel agreed and stated that they did not have questions.

**Description of Native AC2A workshop activities.** The Native AC2A Workshop objective was to provide Native American youth entering high school the academic tools, educational and community resources to be successful in high school. To help students establish a positive Attitude, make a personal Commitment to school and their community, set goals for academic Achievement and for learning Acceleration (AC2A). A total of 18 students attended the workshop.

The camp consisted of a one day of panel discussions led by elders, Native American professionals in diverse fields and young college recruiters. There were participant group activities and opportunities for brainstorming sessions to discuss topics such as, defining educational success and pathways in achieving success. In addition, I conducted the focus group interviews for the study during a portion of the morning classes for the girls and an afternoon session for the boys. Each group only missed one class session at the camp to attend the focus group interview.

**Focus group interview.** The focus group interviews were held during the workshop, while the other students were attending separate class sessions. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) recommended focus groups to consist of 7 to 10 students. The goal was to create two separate focus groups of up to 10 Native boys and 10 Native girls based on the first 10 applications of each gender that fulfilled the participant eligibility requirements. The attendance for the Native AC2A camp attendance was lower than expected with a total of 18 students. A total of four students were selected for the focus group interview that met the eligibility for the requirements.

The girls' focus group was held during a morning session for approximately 1.25 hours of time, while the boys' focus group was held in the afternoon for approximately one hour of time. The interview questions were designed by me, reviewed by my advisor Dr. Jegatheesan

and discussed with the RATC and redesigned accordingly to ensure cultural appropriateness. I lead the focus group interviews by asking open ended questions in a relaxed environment; for example, “How do you define educational success?” or “Do you feel a sense of belonging or connection at school?” See appendix A for list of the sample focus group interview questions.

**Follow-up interview.** After collaborate analysis of the focus group interview transcription with my advisor Dr. Jegatheesan, the student responses required additional information to gain a clearer understanding and to expand upon key themes. The initial consent process notified the parents and students that a follow-up interview might be scheduled within six months. McCord and Daniel’s moms quickly responded and scheduled a follow up interview. Both Tatiana’s and Kia’s mother stated their daughter would like to participate in the follow-up interview, but both families were challenged to submit their forms and schedule an interview before the six month deadline. Each phone interview lasted for approximately 30 minutes. I asked the students follow-up questions such as, “Do you participate in Native cultural activities?” or “Who provided or organized the after-school activities that you attended in middle school? See appendix D for list of sample follow-up interview questions.

**Observations.** Key observations were gathered on the four Native American participants’ comments, behaviors, and relationship dynamics made during the large group workshop activities. The group workshop took place in a large classroom with rows of tables so that the students could sit in groups with the teacher’s podium upfront with a video screen. During this time, I made observations from two different perspectives, as a teacher and an active participant observer. I taught a portion of the class, which allowed me to ask the students questions and direct the activities while observing their interactions with me and the other participants. I also participated with the students’ group activities and walked around the

classroom interacting with the students. The last observations were made during the time parents dropped off and picked up their students. I assisted the students sign in process by greeting all the families when they arrived to drop off their students and made sure to speak with the families when they came to pick up their students. The observations aligned with the guiding research questions to supplement the focus group interviews and provided insight in directing more in-depth focus group discussions.

**Data collection.** All confidential documents and recordings are kept by research investigators and stored in locked, secured file cabinet at the University of Washington. Only Dr. Jegatheesan and myself have access to primary data such as field notes and audio recordings. The RASC members and pertinent community members will receive a report of findings, but they do not have access to any primary data and pseudonyms were designated in place of real names.

**Demographic survey.** The parent/guardian consent form contained a brief demographic survey that collected data based on age, grade (entering in fall of 2012), and parent-identification on Native affiliation for student (i.e. American Indian, Alaska Native, First Nations, Pacific Islander, Native Hawaiian, Samoan,), and etc.

**Audio recorder.** An audio recorder was used to record both the boys and girls focus group interviews. Both parents and students received a consent/assent form that requested permission to record their voices (appendix D, E). The assent process stated that the student could request the audio recording to be shut off at any point. Once I began the focus group interview, I set the audio recorder on a table in between the student and myself. I reassured each group to relax and not worry about the audio recorder. I also reminded them once again that they could request to have the recording turned off at any point. The audio recording is stored in a

secured file cabinet at the University of Washington and will be destroyed after one year of the study, as of August 28, 2012.

**Field notes.** The field notes were hand written and recorded in a journal and used to collect data during times of observing participants during class sessions and/or to record nonverbal communications or personal reflection during the focus group interviews. Field notes were also used to record the follow up interview. Original names and data will only be shared with my advisor Dr. Jegatheesan.

### **Data Analysis.**

The focus group interview transcript was reviewed and coded by Dr. Jegatheesan and myself. During this process, I also shared the student demographic information and important observations that were recorded in my field notes with Dr. Jegatheesan to supplement the transcript. We then compared and discussed our analysis. The observation and field notes were analyzed without any preconceived categories. I used the constant comparison method of coding data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). We discussed and agreed upon evident key themes and aspects of the students' responses that required more in depth discussion or clarification. The follow up interview questions were then designed in collaboration with Dr. Jegatheesan and myself. See appendix K for the sample of follow up interview questions. The follow-up interview allowed for further feedback and clarification on our original analysis of focus group interview transcript.

After the follow-up interview was conducted and recorded in field notes, the students' responses were discussed once again with Dr. Jegatheesan and important key themes were agreed upon. During the process of the constant comparison method, I also stayed connected with the Native American community discussing my interpretations and analysis to establish credibility.

## Chapter 4

### Findings

#### Native American Students' Perceptions

The findings in Chapter 4 include the perceptions from four Native American students, across genders on Native American education. First, McCord and Daniel's experiences and perceptions gained from attending a Bureau of Indian Education middle school will be discussed, then, Tatiana and Kia perspectives that are primarily from their public school experiences. Both of the girls previously attended the same Bureau of Indian Education. They made interesting school comparisons that will be shared in Chapter 6. The following sections address the differences between the boys and girls definition of educational success. They also share similar and differing perspectives on mentoring relationships support needed, and motivating factors to educationally succeed. In the last section of this chapter, the role of cultural activities and pedagogy on identity development and school engagement are examined.

The only incentive offered for their interview, was the opportunity to give back to younger Native American students. As a Native American educator and based on the student interviews and observations at the workshop, I believe all four individuals are great examples of Native American students succeeding in different school environments. They were able to articulate and demonstrate a strong value system. Therefore, their experiences can provide insights from positive Native American examples of success along with cautionary concerns that students face in American schools.

**Native American boys' perceptions on Native education.** McCord and Daniel considered themselves good friends and have attended a BIE school together since kindergarten. They both reside on tribal land in an urban area that is away from their tribal affiliation. Daniel

appears to have a deeper connection to his home tribe and feels he is achieving educational success, while McCord is not aware of his tribal affiliation but still has Native American ties through his current community and feels that he is moderately achieving educational success. They both shared many similar perspectives on educational success for Native students.

***Defining educational success for Native American students.*** Daniel was the first to share his definition of educational success, “I define it as being active, seeking help when you need it, being independent worker, and getting involved with a group if there is a group project and taking down notes.” For McCord success meant, “being able to follow what the classes are doing, being able to work well with peers if needed, having good communication skills, being able to make it to class,” and “to be good enough to get into a good University”. When asked for example of a Native student that is succeeding, McCord shared about their friend Shaun. Shaun had “perfect attendance and gets good grades.”

Based on the boys’ response, the primary value attributing to educational success for a Native student is *cooperation*. Together, they stressed the importance of being able to be present, communicate, work well with other peers and follow and seek help when needed from their teachers. Along with *cooperation*, balance of *autonomy*, *self-discipline* and *responsibility* was expressed by the need to work independently, taking personal notes and making it to class with good attendance. McCord talked about grades and the need to be “good enough” to get into college, while Daniel did not mention grades in his definition of success but did refer to the importance of grades later in his interview. Secondly, the value of *achievement* was also factored into their definition and/or priorities.

***Mentoring relationships and support needed.*** The primary mentoring relationships that supported Daniel and McCord in school appeared to be family, teachers and peers. The family

support will be discussed later in this chapter under “motivating factors for academic achievement” and in Chapter 5.

*Teacher relationship.* The teacher relationship seemed to have the most immediate impact on the student’s academic achievement and enjoyment of learning. McCord described a relationship with his teacher that helped him improve his grades – “I am always the worse in math, and when I was failing, I asked the teacher if they could help after school. My grade went from a ‘C’ to a ‘B’”. He attributed his lower grade to sitting in the back of the classroom and not paying attention and being distracted. He also said that he was “sort of a quiet person” and this appeared to keep him from engaging in class. He stated, “I thought if I meet her one on one. I could do better.” Although McCord claimed to be shy, he demonstrated *confidence* by asking his teacher for help. After further inquiry, the *confidence* to approach his teacher appeared to be the product of a good and comfortable relationship with his teacher and knowing she would meet with him privately after school. He also confirmed this by stating that he would have to get to know a new teacher before asking them for help. Daniel agreed with this statement.

Daniel also struggled with math. He was getting an “F” until he asked his teacher for help. He would approach his teachers first for academic help, and then he would turn to his parents if a teacher could not help him. Daniel shared, “some of our teachers are pretty much our mentors that help us. We just ask them for help and they help us, one on one.” Daniel’s current grades are a couple “B’s” and the remainder “A’s”. The ability to connect with the teacher one on one seemed important to both of the boys. These teachers’ interactions with the boys showed a great example of how creating an environment of *cooperation* that provided friendship and additional support, privately outside of the classroom enhanced their academic achievement and school experience.

*Peer friendships.* McCord and Daniel described some of their peer relationships in terms of family and support. They stated the majority of their friends (approximately 10 or 12 of them) did well in school and mostly helped each other. *Cooperation* amongst positive peer relationships can also contribute to improved academics and overall school experience. Daniel stated, “We encourage each other when we are in the group... we will ask what is wrong with them or what's been going on.” McCord also said that his friends motivate him. Daniel helps McCord with his homework, while McCord listens to Daniel as he has gone through a lot of challenges. It was clear that McCord and Daniel carried over this cooperative support of helping one another academically and with life issues to their group of peers.

On the contrary, they discussed some negative values and behaviors amongst American Indian peers; “They tend to not care as much about school, goof off, miss class and talk badly about their teachers”. One example of this, McCord attributed part of his failure in a math class to his peer interactions - “It was just distractions. Sitting around in class talking to people. When I excluded myself from that I got a higher grade.” Part of McCord and Daniel’s success in school depended on surrounding themselves with positive student relationships while excluding themselves from harmful relationships.

***Addressing the overall wellbeing of the student.*** In many ways, McCord and Daniel were achieving success in school academically and socially. Nevertheless, there were other psychological and emotional aspects in their lives that needed addressed to enhance their overall wellbeing and school experience.

*Grief and loss.* According to McCord, he had only experienced minimal amounts of grief and loss until the recent death of his grandmother and the break-up with a girlfriend. Two weeks after his grandmother’s death he attended the Native AC2A Workshop and participated in this

research study in a deep, meaningful way. Daniel on the other hand, had lost many uncles to alcohol related deaths. His parents frequently participated in drugs and alcohol when he was young, then fortunately made a decision to quit out of their devotion for their children. Recently his mother lost her job, which caused extreme financial distress to their family in the midst of his half-sister periodically running away and getting involved with drugs. Daniel stated, “I worry about my parents and my family all the time. That's why I want to take care of them.”

Through the grief and loss, McCord and Daniel showed a sense of *resiliency* and *perseverance* by staying focused in school and participating in supplemental academic opportunities like the Native AC2A workshop. How did they develop these attributes? The strong mentoring and interpersonal relationships appeared to be an important contributor to the development of *resiliency* and *perseverance*. In addition to their teacher and peer support that has already been discussed, both of their mothers also appeared to be very compassionate and supportive. Daniel was also seeking a professional counselor for additional support. It was evident that McCord and Daniel welcomed help into their live and were strengthened because of it.

*Self-esteem.* Positive mentoring and interpersonal relationships also appeared to enhance self-esteem. For Daniel school seemed to help and hurt his self-esteem. He said that he struggled with self-esteem mostly at school. He stated, “I just don't think I'm good enough for some people.” He believes that his feelings are not based on reality because he is treated well at school. When asked what boosts his self-esteem, he said being around his family and friends. Although the school environment triggered low self-esteem, his good friends at school helped improve it and provide a protective factor.

Aligning student's classes with the their unique interests and talents also positively

influenced their self-esteem. The boys were asked, what would help you to feel more successful or confident in school? McCord responded, “Well, I just found out that I am no longer in a 2 math class, I am in 1 math class now. So, I think its pretty good. So I have extra classes that I can take like culinary and auto... When I thought I had one, I thought that I could do better.” He felt more confidence once he had a balanced scheduled that reflected the classes he naturally excelled in and found interesting.

*Middle school transition.* Daniel and McCord expressed a level of anxiety on entering middle school, but the workload turned out to be less challenging then expected. McCord expressed he felt anxious entering middle school but then gained more confidence once he began. He said, “When I felt like, when I went to middle school that it was going to be one of the toughest times in my life, and it wasn't really that tough actually. It was like regularly old grade school but more classes.” Daniel agreed, but also said “the only thing different was the difficulty increased.” They did not feel that they got an increase in homework. McCord also stated he no longer got bullied like he did in grade school, most likely because he grew bigger.

McCord increased in confidence during middle school, while Daniel’s depression began once he entered middle school. It is unclear how much his extenuating family problems and/or the transition into middle school/adolescent development contributed to his emotional distress. Regardless, their transition into middle school varied and requires further understanding.

*Motivating factors for academic achievement.* The motivation for the students to seek help, overcome and achieve mostly stemmed from their desire to take care of their family and/or please their family and close teacher relationships.

*Family.* Daniel was asked, what helped you care about your grades? He responded, “I want to be able to make it in life and help my family by getting a good job... Being able to help

them pay for stuff if they needed. Being able to help pay for hospital bills cause my family doesn't have a lot of money. Every since my mom just lost her job last year... But most of all that I want to take care of my family. I don't want anything to happen to them". Daniel obviously valued *achievement* based on his grade performance and his willingness to take on challenging math classes to work towards becoming a scientist. The motivation that drove him to achieve appeared to be his family, not individualistic goals. His parents would motivate him for test by saying "it is going to be fine since I always do well on my test." McCord, "My mom, she always said that she never had a chance to go to college... She went to the same school that I go to now. She didn't have all the things we have then. She says, gets good grades so that I can go to college because she didn't have that chance." There is more discussion on the role of family in Chapter 5.

*Teacher relationship.* A teacher relationship was the primary motivation for Daniel to attend extra curricular activities after school. He joined a recycling club led by one of his teachers that he had good relationship with. The teacher asked him personally to join the club. Daniel said that he would not have joined the club if he did not have a relationship with the teacher, and if the teacher did not ask him personally. For Daniel, most likely a group announcement would not have been enough. See Chapter 6 for other motivating factors regarding the teacher relationship.

***Cultural activities/teachings promoting positive Native identity and school belonging.*** McCord and Daniel spoke positively about their culture and expressed a sense of belonging to school that appeared to be related to the BIE School's cultural opportunities and teachings. The BIE School played a key role in augmenting their cultural experiences and knowledge that they did not receive from home. For McCord, school was vital to his connection to the Native

community because he had minimal traditional cultural experiences at home. See Chapter 6 for further discussion on the BIE School's culture.

*Participation in cultural activities.* The boys were asked if they have participated in Native cultural activities. Daniel said, "I have. I went to a few pow wows. I danced a couple times at circle at school." It appeared that Daniel had participated in cultural activities outside of school, but that school also played a key role in expanding his opportunities to learn to dance. For McCord, school was the primary source of providing traditional cultural experiences. His mother is Native, but he said that traditional Native cultural practices have "never really been in my family that much." The BIE School also organized summer camps that allowed him to learn to dance and sing.

*Knowledge of Native Historical Experiences.* The boys were very limited in their knowledge about historical trauma that Native Americans endured in the United States. Their knowledge of historical experiences was primarily obtained from classes taught at school. Daniel was not familiar with the term of historical trauma. He did however say that he learned about the issues of Sovereignty when the school brought in a guest speaker from the law department of a local university. He further discussed the fishing wars in the 1970's. McCord was familiar with historical trauma from his history class. He stated, "We were given reservations, and not treated equally as white people. We had boarding schools given to us, gave up religion, and children taken away many miles to boarding school..... I was shocked that we were not treated the same as white people. Even though we are the same people, not really different, just different perspectives." The historical knowledge appeared to give them a sense of compassion and connection to their own people and culture, but there was no evidence of negative attitudes towards non-Native people.

*Positive Native identity and school belonging.* As McCord and Daniel discussed the hardships within their family or aversive peer relationships at school, they did not connect any of these negative attributes with Native American people or community. In fact, they felt a sense of belonging being surrounded by their culture and people. They were asked after expressing a sense of belonging, “What about school makes you feel like you belong?” Daniel responded, “That I am with a bunch of people that are Native Americans.” McCord agreed with Daniel, “Yeah, people I share the same culture... I feel like I am similar to others.” Daniel finished with, “I feel like I have found somewhere where I belong.” McCord said that he would probably not feel a sense of belonging if he went to a primarily non-Native school. Their positive Native identity and appreciation for the Native community did not cause them to think negatively about other cultures. They went on to share that they would try to branch out to a non-Native college. They also stated that it does not matter whether or not a mentor or teacher is Native American, rather the personality of the person is most important.

**Native American girls’ perceptions on Native education.** Tatiana and Kia are from a two-parent household and attend different public schools on or near their tribal community. They are both registered tribal members and stay connected to their tribal youth program. They also attended school together from Kindergarten to third grade at the BIE School that Daniel and McCord attended. Their tribal youth outreach registered and brought them to the Native Youth AC2A Workshop. Even though they both attend different public schools, they described themselves as friends based on attending periodic tribal activities together and previously attending school together. Through out the interview, they often agreed with each other and finished one another’s sentences.

***Defining educational success.*** The girls described educational success for Native youth in a more cognitive, *goal-oriented* approach than the boys. Kia defined success as; "I guess its just staying focused on your grades and keeping up on everything and just succeeding." Tatiana stated, "It's like figuring out your goals in life and like pursuing those goals until you achieve them... educational success because it's like thought out. Things that you want to succeed in." They also did not feel that educational success differs between Native American verses non-Native American students - "Everyone practically belongs to the same. Everyone wants to succeed in each different race. Everyone wants to succeed in something. No one wants to fail." For Tatiana and Kia, educational success is defined similarly for every student with no cultural differences. They both believe that if a student wants to achieve, they will work for it and succeed.

***Mentoring relationships and support.*** The primary mentoring relationships that supported Tatiana and Kia in school appeared to be family and teachers with peer relationships mostly negatively influencing their school experience. The family support will be further discussed in this chapter in section "Motivating factor for academic achievement" and in Chapter 5.

***Teacher and tutor relationship.*** The teacher relationship was valuable in helping the girls achieve academically and enjoy learning similar to the boys, although the girls gave additional attributes that helped connect them to a teacher and motivated learning. For example, Tatiana stated, "I have better relationships with teachers that have more humor, so like when I can joke around with my teacher. I can do better in the class and work more. I keep my grade up and I ask more questions and everything." Once again, Kia and Tatiana started finishing one another's sentences, rattling off other important teacher qualities, for instance, funny, nice, personable, and

enjoys when teachers “get out of the box of academics and conversate.” These qualities communicated to the girls that the teachers cared for them.

Tatiana received tutoring arranged by her mom after school. She explained the qualities that helped. Tatiana said, “She helped me with math and I didn't really need help in math. So she like got me another tutor and all the sudden my grades got better and better because she started helping me in science and English, which actually what I needed help in.... the first tutor we didn't connect like she barely ever talked and like I didn't really get help when we didn't have a relationship like me and my new tutor.... It's a lot more helpful when you have a relationship with someone.” For Tatiana, the relationship and the ability to talk about life outside of tutoring improved her performance.

*Peer friendships.* Kia and Tatiana described peer relationships with girls as “drama” and the avoidance or loss of these friendships helped them to achieve more in school. Kia could see the importance of peer relationships *if* they were academically focused. She stated, “If you have a friend and you both have good grades, then, why not. So like, more kids that have better grades, there are more better grades, then, if they are all in the same class than it's easier.” They seemed to think that the female friendships were mostly distracting and negatively influenced their learning. Kia also stated that her girlfriends were holding her back - “I lost a lot of friends, so I think it kind of effects me positively. In a way I think some of my friends were holding me back from my potential, cause um, I really had a 2.5 when I had all those friends, then towards the end of the year my GPA started going up and started getting better.”

Kia also stated, “I get along with guys better than girls, just cause guys have sports to keep them on the right track and everything rather than girls, most girls just don't care anymore.” They both agreed that male friendships have less “drama”, but it did not appear that these

relationships helped them academically. In fact, the next section will further discuss how boys can distract girls from staying focused academically.

*Addressing the overall wellbeing of the student.* Tatiana and Kia displayed positive self-esteem and a healthy transition into middle school. They both appear to come from stable home environments with minimal amounts of grief and loss. Their relationships and past academic achievement appeared to contribute to their positive self-esteem.

*Self-esteem.* When the girls were asked to think about a time they felt successful in school, Tatiana discussed a memory of when she got to skip a math test because she was ahead. She stated, "I just really like math. Math comes really easy to me... I just always had an "A" in math." Taking classes that aligned with her talents helped boost her self-esteem. She also mentioned that her confidence grew once she gets to know people better

Kia's self-esteem increased through leadership opportunities and academic success in her early middle school years. Kia entered into middle school as a shy girl, afraid to talk in front of a group. In eighth grade she was asked by the ASB teacher to give a speech, and she did so successfully. She stated, "I think it's cause I've learned to be more confident in myself, just cause I have accomplished so much since 6th grade, cause I was a leader and everything in middle school."

*Middle school transition.* Tatiana said, "I ended up just slacking because it was really easy at first. So I didn't think I had to do that much so, the first semester of ninth grade I completely slacked and only got a 1.7 and it kind of scared me. So, like the next semester, I ended up getting a 3.1 at the end. I just focused more and realized I actually have to try." Her mom's involvement was important in helping her adjust during this transitional period. She provided consequences for Tatiana's slacking off. She took away her cell phone for a few

months and arranged for her to receive tutoring.

Kia and Tatiana also discussed the issues girls begin to face in middle school that requires additional support. They have witnessed a change in the girls' relationship with each other that they described as "drama." They attributed this drama to peer pressure, the focus on boys, drugs and cattiness. They felt the boys get cooler and more bonded to each other, while the girls start breaking apart. They were discussing relationships at school, which are primarily non-Native students. Kia said the mentoring support needed is "somebody that they are really close with that has a good head on their shoulders, really good at what they are doing or something. Someone who can keep them out of trouble." Tatiana added that they needed to be surrounded by good influences.

***Motivating factors for academic achievement.*** In order to succeed educationally, Kia and Tatiana believe it takes inspiration. Tatiana said, "It takes inspiration. Because most people in my life, my tutor, my mom and friend have all inspired me to get better grades." Kia said, "Motivation. Like having one thing that will always keep you focused and keep you on the right track." The family relationships appeared to be the primary motivators to help keep them on track academically, but they also discussed how monetary incentives helped and hindered their motivation.

***Family relationships.*** Kia was proud of herself for receiving an award for 'Most Improved in Math' from her school. Kia explained how she was able to overcome in math. "My uncle, he is my wrestling coach and he was talking to me about how high school is going to be, and he was telling me that middle school isn't going to matter, like my grades aren't really going to matter in middle school, but once I get into high school, it starts to be really serious and I need to buckle down and everything. And, so I just really need to get good grades all the time and

everything. I knew I needed to improve on the sections that I was not so good at so that is what made me want to do better in math.” Her discussions with her uncle helped her become more aware that high school will only get harder therefore she needs to work hard in middle school to keep up. Kia said her parents typically just tell her to do something, which does not really motivate her. What motivates her is when her uncle explains and shows her how to do tasks. Although, she said her dad can motivate her in sports by yelling at her, but it does not work for academics.

*Per capita and incentives.* Tatiana and Kia are from a tribe that receives per capita, which is a set amount of allotted money that is given to registered tribal members from the tribe’s discretionary revenue. Not all tribes receive per capita, and those who do vary in amount and frequency. Based on the girls’ perspective, they felt that per capita monies hindered the motivation of Native students to succeed academically. Tatiana and Kia’s tribe provide per capita when members turn 18. Kia stated, “Like a lot of things handed to us. Everything is laid out and a lot easier for us. And then once we have to work, it's like ‘I don't want to do it.’ Then it’s like we just don't.” Tatiana said, “Yeah. They don't realize that once the money runs out, its just like gone and they will be left with nothing.” It appeared that she developed this opinion from a finance camp she attended, organized by her tribe. They felt strongly that per capita negatively effects motivation to work and do well in school. At the same time, their tribal youth program paid for them to attend the finance camp and other supplemental education classes, which motivated them to attend these classes.

*The impact of cultural environment on Native identity and school belonging.* Tatiana and Kia are active within their tribal community from a young age. They even attended tribal BIE School in their early grade school years, and Tatiana also attended the school the first half of

middle school. Now that the girls attend a primarily non-Native public school, some of their experiences appeared to negatively shape their perspective on Native identity and school belonging.

*Participation in tribal cultural activities.* Tatiana and Kia's tribe provide regular cultural activities. They also have a youth services department dedicated to organizing and informing the youth and their families on cultural and educational events. Transportation is available for students who need it. In fact, the youth director helped register and transported the girls to the Native AC2A Workshop. Both Tatiana and Kia also attended regular pow wows in their community and participate in the selling of fireworks during the summer.

*Lack of Native American cultural representation in public school.* At the school level, they received minimal opportunities to celebrate their culture even during multi-cultural days or weeks. At Kia's school, they had an Indian club, but because of sports she was unable to attend. Tatiana said they did not have an Indian club at her school. The girls shared about their disappointment at the lack of Native American representation in their school's multicultural celebrations. Kia stated, "There was no Natives. There was just clubs at my school they have Korean club, Polynesian club, Spanish club and stuff like that. But there was a Native American club, like two people in it. They didn't do anything... It's kind of like, I was disappointed. Because if I had time to do it I would like to show something from my culture, to have the confidence to talk about something and sing a song like the other clubs. I mean the people who were in it didn't do anything. I thought, 'Are you not proud or something?'" (Referring to the two Native Americans in the club). It just like disappointed me." Tatiana agreed with Kia, "Yeah by the time of the presentations, the Natives didn't have anything." Kia did not seem to be bothered that the school did not represent or teach about Native cultural. She stated, "It doesn't bother me

cause Natives have their own school where they learn about their culture. So if I really wanted to know about my culture, I could just go back to” the BIE school.

*Knowledge of Native Historical Experiences.* Tatiana and Kia expressed limited knowledge of Native historical experiences. Unfortunately, they were not available for the follow up interview to further expand upon comments made that inferred a lack of understanding of historical trauma. This is further discussed in the next section and in Chapter 6.

*Impact on Native identity and school belonging.* The girls’ minimal knowledge of historical experiences seemed to contribute to some of their negative views on Native Americans.

Kia said, “I don’t think Native achieve that much because they are lazy.” They both “Natives get handed everything to them.” It is unclear whether or not the public school environment had a direct affect on Tatiana and Kia developing a negative perspective on Native Americans, but it appears their perspective are different from the boys who attended the BIE School all of their lives.

Tatiana expressed that she feels connected to school, but Kia strongly stated that she does not feel like she belongs. They both have limited friendships at school. Kia plays sports and said that she has three teachers she has been connected with. However, she does not appear to spend “one on one” time with her teachers. Kia seemed unsure why she did not feel connected. She felt that it was *not* because of lack of friendships at school, but perhaps getting involved in extra curricular activities “like ASB” could help her feel more connected to school.

### **Concluding Highlights on Native American Boys and Girls**

The boys and girls defined educational success quite differently. McCord and Daniel who are from a BIE School described educational success primarily from a collectivist

viewpoint, based on measurements of cooperation amongst their teachers and peers.

Secondarily, they believed self-discipline and responsibility were also important in achievement.

Tatiana and Kia emphasized the individualistic and cognitive aspects, describing educational success in terms of “thought out” or “being goal oriented.” Similarly, both groups discussed the need to “keep up” as an important aspect to achieve success. Overall, the boys and girls perceived educational success as being the same for Native Americans versus non-Native American students and believe the mentoring needs are similar. However, in the next couple chapters there is evidence that there are some unique mentoring needs for Native Americans.

All four students appeared to have minimal knowledge of Native American historical events and lacked awareness of the cultural differences than mainstream society. They all mentioned negative stereotypes regarding Native American students values and practices in education. The boys used terms like, “tend not to not care,” “goof off,” and “miss class.” The girls used the terms like “not achieve that much” and “lazy.” The difference is the boys shared many positive examples of Native American students who did not display these attributes. The boys also expressed compassion at different points for Native American experiences. The girls did not share one positive story about another Native American student, nor did they use compassionate language for the condition of Native Americans in education. In fact, they seemed to believe that Native Americans have it easier in many ways and have “everything handed to them.”

The quality of mentoring relationships played a key role in school engagement and academic success. The students all considered themselves educationally successful, except for McCord who felt he was moderately achieving success. Ironically, McCord did not appear to have a mentoring relationship outside of school that he felt connected to. Daniel, Kia, and

Tatiana had strong mentoring and interpersonal relationships that they spoke fondly about. Daniel relied heavily on both of his parents, sister and previously a grandfather before his death. Kia spent hours talking with her uncle seeking guidance. Tatiana said her mom was her best friend and they talk about everything. All three of these students had outside relationships they trusted enough to be honest and respected enough to listen to their direction in life and academically. McCord turned more to his peers and teachers.

The teacher relationship proved to be the most influential in motivating academic achievement and engagement in school. The quality of the relationship with a teacher made a difference in how each student responded in school and whether or not they would ask for help. The boys provided more specific examples of situations that a teacher provided “one on one” support after school, which resulted in direct improvements on their grades. McCord also shared how a personal relationship with a teacher motivated him to get more involved in extra-curricular activities. The girls provided more specific detail on the attributes that helped them feel connected to a teacher, such as, humor, niceness, personable, and their ability to discuss topics outside of academics. All of them emphasized the importance of feeling connected to the teacher and this made a difference in their motivation and performance.

## Chapter 5

### Findings

#### Native Family and Tribal Support

In Chapter 5, the important role of parents, extended family (aunts, uncles and grandparents), and the tribal community plays in supporting the students to educationally succeed will be discussed. All four students are from a two-parent household. Overall, the students had a strong support system from their Native American family members and the local tribal community. This was evident not only from the student interviews, but my interactions with the parents and the tribal community. Both groups were eager to get their students registered for the Native AC2A Workshop and support this research. As researcher who is part insider because I am Native American but registered member from another tribe, my assertions are that both the family and tribal community would be eager to support any researcher who seeks to benefit the Native American community.

**Parental involvement and support.** All the students expressed appreciation for their parents and described different aspects of parental involvement that helped them towards achieving educational success. McCord did not talk much about his father, but said his mom supported him in school by checking up on his grades regularly, providing help with homework, asking him questions and encouraging him to seek academic help. McCord's mom is the one that registered him for the Native AC2A Workshop and personally dropped him off and picked him up for the event. She also sent several emails asking questions about the event along with sending a follow up 'thank you' email. Daniel stated, "My parents pretty much attend every school thing." When I asked the boys about a time they felt most successful in middle school, Daniel discussed a time when he went from failing a state test to later doing well. He attributed

his ability to overcome to parental support. He said, “my parents told me that it was going to be alright and that the tests didn’t really matter.” His parents’ reassurance minimized his nervousness and pressure so that he was confident in taking the test.

Tatiana described her mom as her best friend. She said, “I don't know, we just have a good relationship. We can talk about really anything and if there is something wrong, she will come straight to me and tell me what's wrong... like if I am getting bad grades, she will be like, ‘you need to get your grades up because this and that’. Then like, if she is having a problem she will come and talk to me about it. So my mom is like a really good relationship. We act like sisters.” Kia talked mostly about her father over her mother. She said, “The accomplishments that I did have... My dad always tells me that ‘you did good in this but you always have to remember you can work on this’. Through out the school year my dad and me would have talks like that... So I'm like yeah, I need to get an "A" this time”.

The parents passed down certain values that helped the students do well in school. Daniel said his parents taught him to *listen* to his teacher and *ask for help*. He also learned “something that pays the bills is a job, something that you actually like to do is a career.” He learned the value of pursuing *meaningful* work. Daniel’s dream is to become a scientist, which has meaning to him. McCord learned *gratitude* from his mom. His mom taught him to appreciate his educational opportunities because she did not have the same advantages growing up. Tatiana leaned the valued of *friendship* and the expectation of *achievement*. Kia received *encouragement* from her father, along with the expectation of *achievement*. All these values were passed down through a special relationship and connection they had with a parent.

**Sibling involvement.** Only one of the four students talked about their siblings. Daniel shared a great deal about his two half-sisters. One sister brought him encouragement, while the

others caused stress in his life. He discussed how one of his sisters helped him overcome a standardized test. “She encouraged me and told me that it was going to be alright.” His other sister ran away and temporarily dropped out of school to live in an abandoned house and got into drugs; he was highly distressed when talking about his sister. If Daniel did not have close parental relationships and professional counseling, it was evident that the stress from his sister’s situation and grief from loss could have hindered his academic performance at school.

**Grandparents, uncles, and aunts involvement.** Daniel, whose parents did not graduate from high school, had an aunt who attended an Ivy League university. His aunt passed down the values of *achievement* and *hope* to Daniel. He stated, “she grew up on the rez all her life and she was talking about how she always loved school.” He was able to visualize success as he watched her graduation ceremony. He also stated, “It makes me think if my family can do it, then so can I. I can accomplish what they can.” Daniel also talked about the valuable role his grandpa played in his life before his death. He got silent and choked up at one point from the grief of losing his grandpa after all the amazing memories he had of their Saturday morning breakfasts together.

Kia stated, my “uncle is kind of like my best friend. He is like my older brother... we have really good talks sometimes, so it’s easier to listen to him than my parents because he understands me a lot more.” “How he talks to me sometimes. My parents are sometimes just, (she laughed) tell me to do something, where my uncle lays it out and shows me how to do it better, he’s just there for me a lot. He is just like my best friend I guess. He has just helped me a lot with a lot of things.” he just, he asks me like, "How are my grades?" How have you been doing at school?" And, "What kind of friends I am hanging out with in school?" To make sure that I am hanging with the right people, just make sure that I am doing good all around. He's

just, he doesn't yell at me, he just wonders and just cares I guess.” Kia’s uncle was one of her primary relationships that kept her on the right track socially and motivated her academically.

**Tribal community support.** The local tribal community played an indirect role in providing cultural support for McCord and Daniel who were not tribal members, and a more direct role with Tatiana and Kia who were members.

**Indirect role.** The boys were not members of the tribal community in which they lived. They did not have access to the tribal youth programs and benefits like Kia and Nancy. The tribe supported the BIE school that McCord and Daniel attended. Through the school, the students received supplemental education and cultural activity opportunities. For instance, Daniel’s family was struggling financially and would not otherwise be able to afford Sylvan Learning Center. Both of the boys received tutoring through Sylvan after school, sponsored by the school. The school also facilitated the majority of McCord’s cultural ceremony experiences. He shared about participating in drumming and singing during the BIE school’s summer camp. The BIE school also collaborated with many other Native American leaders to educate the children on different cultural traditions and history during the school year. The BIE school was a conduit for McCord and Daniel to engage in traditional ways of learning and cultural activities, which seemed to enhance the overall enjoyment of school.

**Direct role.** As earlier discussed, the tribe provided many youth services, supplemental education, and wrap around support for Tatiana and Kia. They also provided incentives and transportation to increase Native American youth engagement in the services offered. Tatiana and Kia did not seem aware of the impact that the additional services/support from the Tribe had on their academic achievement. The Native American community also passed down the value of *respect*. The girls said they learned to “respect their elders, each other” and “the things you are

given” from the tribal community events and interactions. They also had opportunities to practice *respect* during cultural activities and ceremonies. Kia said, “I’ve been taught more to respect my elders just because I have been around my elders a lot, so things like helping an elder out to the car, not making them walk by themselves, or giving an elder your seat.” Tatiana added, and “serving them.” The girls were able to translate these values into understanding how to respect teachers even though the Native American community did not directly tell them to respect their teachers.

### **Concluding Highlights on Family and Community Support**

The family members were very influential in numerous aspects in helping the students achieve educationally and instilling important values. The mom’s role appeared to be the most common family relationship that inspired academic engagement and achievement. Three out of the four students shared extensively about the impact of their mom. The practices of their mom that helped the students most was; asking questions, listening, supporting, reminding student of responsibilities, and holding them accountable. Kia was the only person, who did not talk much about her mom, but she did discuss two key times her mom gave her advice and she listened. The male relationships in Kia’s life seemed to motivate her most academically; especially her uncle’s friendship. Her dad’s firmness also helped her at times.

The students distinguished some family members as “mentors”. For instance, Kia said her uncle was a mentor to her and Tatiana said her mom was a mentor. The difference in these relationships compared to the normal family relationships appeared to be the level of intimate conversation and the consistency of “one on one” time. Both Kia and Tatiana described those relationships as a “best friend” and like a “brother” or “sister”.

The level of tribal and community support varied depending on whether or not the Native American student was a tribal member of the local tribe. The tribe played an indirect role in supporting McCord and Daniel by sponsoring the BIE school. For the boys, their cultural ties heavily depended on the BIE school, since they lived away from their own tribal community. The importance of the school culture and support will be further discussed in Chapter 6. Because Kia and Tatiana lived in their own tribal community, the tribe had a direct impact on them through the youth services program, providing educational incentives, and hosting regular cultural activities/ceremonies. Kia and Tatiana seemed to have a better understanding of the values passed down from the Native community than McCord and Daniel. For instance, Kia and Tatiana went into detail describing how their tribal community taught them *respect*. The majority of Kia and Tatiana's cultural experience and teachings came directly from their tribal community.

## Chapter 6

### Findings

#### **Bureau of Indian Education Verses Public Schools' Impact on Educational Experiences**

The findings in Chapter 6 will compare and contrast the BIE and Public Schools' impact on Native American students values, identity and achievement. The major sections that will be analyzed are the differences in the mission and vision statements between the BIE and public schools, then how those guiding principles translate into Native American cultural opportunities at school or lack there of. The last section of the chapter will address the school values and practices that the students experienced, such as, values instruction, teacher relationship and pedagogy, and academic expectation and rigor of each school.

The BIE and public schools varied in values and practices that led to different educational experiences for the four Native American students. The demographics between the BIE and public school also drastically differed. The boys attending the BIE school reported that 80-90% of their school population are Native American students. There are some students who are Caucasian, African American and Hispanic, but even those students are part Native American. Both of the girls stated that the Native American population at their public schools was extremely low, but there was much ethnic diversity.

*The School's mission and vision guiding the school culture and practices.* The emphasis for the BIE school appears to be primarily focused on the student's educational experiences, meaningful existence and contribution for the future; while the public school stresses the importance of excellent instruction for student achievement. Both school types highlight partnerships, but the perspective on partnerships differs with whom they include in their relationship circle.

*BIE school.* The mission and vision of the BIE school verses the public school varies in the ideals driving educational success for the students. The BIE school's mission emphasizes cooperation with the local tribe, Native American community and the community at large. It seeks to create an atmosphere of trust and respect along with providing challenging educational opportunities. It also seeks to inspire students to achieve personal growth and cultural pride, and help students to value life long learning and to become responsible citizens contributing to their community. Their vision for Native youth is helping students develop meaningful careers, cultural identity and a successful pathway of their choice.

*Public school.* In contrast, the public school districts mission that both of the girls attended is to provide excellent instruction to promote student achievement and to create dynamic partnerships with parents and our community. Their vision is to establish and maintain alliance with students, school district, parents and the community with the willingness to adapt and help prepare students for the challenges of life.

*Native American cultural opportunities at school.* The following statement by Kia captures the overall discussion with the boys and girls regarding the difference between BIE and public school culture - the BIE school "was more about just Natives and when I went to public it was more like about all the cultures."

*BIE school.* Overall, McCord and Daniel appreciated the culturally supportive environment of the school that reinforced their individual growth. The school provided the majority of their Native American cultural teachings and ceremonial opportunities. They had opportunities to drum, dance and sing, along with some teaching of Native American history. When discussing values passed down from the school, McCord was thankful that the BIE school had programs that others schools did not have. For instance, they had a gang resistance program

that was created for Native American students. The boys also mentioned many positive examples of other Native American students, along with examples of students slacking off.

*Public school.* According to the girls, the public schools effort to promote diversity was providing a multicultural week or day where all ethnicities had an opportunity to share their culture – “Everyone did what their cultural does. They showed a little bit of their culture.” Kia said they only had one day to honor different cultures, while Tatiana’s school had a week. Kia described the multicultural focus, as “it’s really weird.” Yet she was really excited to see other ethnicities sharing her culture. Unfortunately, both of the girls expressed their disappointment that the Native American culture was not represented at either of their schools during the multicultural celebration. However, they did not seem to blame the school, instead Kia seemed to blame the other two Native American students who were in the Native Club for not doing anything.

**The schools values and practices.** In many schools and organizations, the mission and vision are ideals that do not always translate into practices. Based on the boys’ responses, most of the BIE school’s mission and vision translated into practice except for providing challenging educational opportunities. According to the girls, the public school delivered more rigorous instruction than the BIE school which promoted achievement, but they did not build dynamic community partnerships (at least not with the Native American community).

*Values instruction:* The girls did not seem influenced by direct values education from the public school. The boys both discussed the BIE school’s values, which they both seemed to incorporate in their definition of educational success. When McCord was defining educational success he included the schools values model. He said, “It’s a kind of achieve thing.. Like "A"

will stand for something and "C" will stand for curriculum... And "H" is like help." Part of Daniel's view of educational success was the ability to "seek help".

*Teacher relationship and pedagogy.* According to McCord and Daniel the teachers were fairly accessible and approachable at the BIE school. They frequently talked about how the teachers helped them "one on one". When they were asked if the teachers approached them or did they have to ask for help, McCord said sometimes you have to ask, but they are willing to help one on one. If the students do not approach the teachers, Daniel said that they will approach the student if they see them struggling. McCord responded, "Sometimes they just think that you just don't care, so they will just leave you alone, sometimes." Then, Daniel agreed with McCord and restated, "But, if they notice that you are struggling, then sometimes they will help you. They usually will." In public school, Tatiana and Kia mainly discussed the attributes that they liked about teachers but did not mention that they ever met a teacher "one on one". Although, Kia mentioned that her ASB teacher once asked her to conduct a speech for the group, which meant a lot to her. It appeared that the teachers were not as hands on as the BIE teachers.

*Academic expectation and rigor.* The academic rigor appears to be greater in the public school than the BIE school. Kia stated, "when I go to public school it was harder, but I can still do it. So it's more like a challenge. When I go to BIE school, I feel like I am not doing anything there." Kia went from being in the gifted and talented program at the BIE school to the general education classes at public school. She said that it was not a difficult transition because she was learning more than most students at BIE. Tatiana said there are higher expectations at public school verses BIE school. McCord and Daniel said that middle school in the BIE school was not that difficult and that they did not have as much homework as expected.

### **Concluding Highlights on BIE Verses Public School Impact on Native American Students**

The differing mission and vision that guided educational policies and practices for the BIE and public schools appeared to have a dramatic impact on the students. Both school types seemed to accomplish their primary goals of their mission and vision statements, but not necessarily their secondary goals. For instance, the BIE school promoted Native American pride and cultural engagement that helped the students feel a strong sense of belonging and positive Native American identity with the academic rigor not meeting all four of the students' expectations as "higher achieving" students. The public school succeeded in providing academic rigor that inspired performance for Tatiana and Kia, but the lack of cultural responsiveness and partnership with the Native American community seemed to negatively affect their Native American identity. Kia also strongly expressed that she did not feel a sense of belonging at public school.

In both schools, the instruction on Native American historical experiences in education was minimal. McCord received the most instruction (two different presentations) at the BIE school and was aware of the boarding school experiences and some historical trauma issues. This knowledge helped him develop a sense of compassion for Native Americans. The lack of historical teaching seemed to have the most negative impact on the girls at public school without the other positive Native American student examples and cultural experiences at school.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Discussion**

Regardless of the overwhelming evidence that cultural responsive mentoring and programming more effectively supports minority youth development (DuBois & Karcher, 2013; Wexler, 2011; Spencer, 2007; Klinck et al, 2005), there are few studies that provide research and practice guidelines on mentoring specific ethnic cultures (DuBois & Karcher, 2013). As a Native American researcher and program director that has developed numerous youth mentoring programs for over 11 years, the mentoring resources available for the Native American youth population is scarce. This study is one of the few qualitative studies examining the mentoring needs of Native American youth from the students' perspective along with analyzing their unique needs based on school types. This study highlights the opposing values between Native American and mainstream culture that has been well documented (Garrett et al., 2003; Cleary & Peacock, 1998; Garrett et al., 1995) and further expands to the implications on identity in different school environments. This research also emphasizes the challenge of psychosocial wellbeing and acculturative stress that Native American students face in order to be successful in traditional Native American ways and mainstream society, which has also been discussed by Jones and Galliher (2007).

In this current study, there were strong indicators showing that the culture and practices of the school can promote a positive or negative identity and shape the students underlying values of educational success. The study also highlights the benefit of educators gaining knowledge of Native American historical experiences (McCarty & Watahomigie, 1998) and culturally competency (Cleary & Peacock, 1998) to increase the overall success of Native American students. Conversely, the findings showed harm to the students' identity when

historical trauma issues were not taught to the Native American students and/or students did not have opportunities in the school environment to engage in their cultural heritage. The schools mission and vision also played a key role in shaping the culture of the school and therefore having a different effect on the students' identity. BIE schools appeared to show the most collaboration with Native American communities incorporating traditions and culture, which supports the findings of the National Indian Education Study 2011 (National Center of Educational Statistics, 2012). The students at the BIE school shared more positively and less negatively about other Native American students than the students from public school.

Lastly, the mentoring provided a bridge for the cultural incongruence in American schools and helped address psychosocial challenges that can hinder academic performance. DuBois et al. (2011) discussed that mentoring has shown to help students achieve on multiple domains. This research supports DuBois et al. (2011), but further expands the analysis by examining the specific mentoring needs of Native American youth. One major difference between mainstream and Native American students is the types of mentoring relationships they tend depend on and the specific attributes they are drawn to. This is further discussed in the implication section. One key relationship that had an immediate impact on academic achievement was the teachers that the students considered a "mentor." Erickson et al. (2009) found that teachers as mentors had a greater impact on academic achievement for disadvantaged minority youth than advantaged youth. The distinguishing factor between teacher and teacher "as mentor" is when they go beyond their normal role and personally help the student beyond a usual capacity (Erickson et al., 2009). This research supports Erickson et al. (2009) in that the four Native American students all identified an immediate grade improvement once a teacher (as mentor) supported the students "one on one" after school or initiated a personal connection in the

classroom. The Native American students identified teachers “as mentors” if they exhibited specific cultural attributes.

### **Implications for Native American Education**

The following are the key implications listed below. The descriptions follow the list.

1. The school culture shapes Native American students values and identity.
2. Native American students lack knowledge of historical trauma events.
3. Culturally responsive mentoring can help bridge the gap between Native American cultural needs and mainstream expectation in schools
4. The teacher as “mentor” provides direct impact on academic performance for Native American students.

**1. The school culture shapes Native American students values and identity.** There was evidence that the school culture of the BIE and public schools in part shaped the development of values and identity of all four students. The primary goals of the each school’s mission and vision translated into educational practices that influenced the students’ values and definition of educational success and their perceptions of Native American identity.

*The school culture shaped the students perception of educational success.* McCord and Daniel who attended public school defined educational success quite differently than Kia and Tatiana who attended public school. Their definition of success seemed to be aligned with their school’s mission and vision statements. The boys’ educational ideals supported the Native American value system, while the girls’ were more similar to the mainstream value system. Garrett et. al (2003) stated:

Native values generally consist of sharing, cooperation, noninterference, sense of being, importance of the tribe and extended family, harmony with nature, a present-time

orientation, preference for explanation of natural phenomena according to the spiritual realm, and a deep respect for elders.... and by contrast, mainstream values emphasize saving, domination, competition, aggression, doing, individualism and the nuclear family, mastery over nature, a future-time orientation, a preference for scientific explanations of everything, “clock-watching,” winning, and a reverence for youth (p. 226).

McCord and Daniel defined educational success for Native American students in terms of *cooperation* and *present-time orientation* with *achievement* being secondary. Tatiana and Kia shared a more mainstream ideology of educational success by describing a more *individualistic* and *future-time orientation* approach to achievement. Simultaneously, the girls also developed traditional Native American values from their interactions within their tribal community. Their respect for elders is an example of a value they brought into school that translated into respect for their teachers.

***The school culture shaped perceptions of Native American student identity.*** The development of a positive identity plays an essential role to educational success in the lives of Native American students. Research has found an interrelationship between self-esteem and Native American identity, and a direct relationship between Native American identity and academic success (Whitesell, Mitchell, & Spicer, 2009). Whitbeck, Hoyt & Stubben (2001) discussed the relationship between Native American identity and educational success from the perspective of the enculturation hypothesis, “traditional culture imbues children with pride in cultural heritage and gives them the direction they need to negotiate their way through the cultural contradictions inherent in their contacts with European American society (p. 6). Therefore, the reinforcement of cultural values and practices seem to cultivate resiliency factors amongst Native American youth when faced with opposing ideologies.

Based on this research, it appears that the schools reinforcement of cultural values and practices greatly influenced the development of how Native American students perceive other Native American students. Through Kia's and Tatiana's rich cultural experiences learning how to respect and interact with elders, which transferred to respect for teachers and yet they lacked positive perceptions of Native American students. The public schools did not appear to partner with the neighboring tribe even to provide a minimal level of Native American representation during multicultural week. Although there are specific governing laws, like the Native American Language Act (1990, 1992) that requires preservation of Native language and culture in schools, and acknowledges the evidence of this direct impact on achievement, performance, and school pride.

Conversely, the BIE school provided regular cultural experiences and there were many positive examples of Native students achieving educational success. There was also some limited teaching of historical trauma issues. The boys only had a couple negative comments about their classmates mixed with many positive observations. The negative statements made were not directed towards Native American students, just students in general. There was a drastic difference between how the boys in BIE school and the girls in public school perceived Native students.

**2. Native American students lack knowledge of historical trauma events.** All four students lacked direct teaching on historical trauma events that pertained to the history of Native American education. From the Native American community, the students received many opportunities to experience and practice their culture along with being taught key cultural values. For the boys, they received these experiences and teaching primarily from the BIE school since they did not live in their own tribal community, and the girls directly from their own tribal

community. The BIE school provided two educational experiences on historical teaching that helped McCord develop understanding and compassion for Native Americans, at the same time he did not express negative attitudes towards Euro-Americans.

The most alarming concern of this research was the students' lack of awareness of historical trauma implications on current educational issues for Native Americans. This lack of knowledge can produce a negative image of Native Americans students amongst Native and non-Native students. McCarty and Watahomigie (1998) stressed the need for educators to gain an historical understanding of various government policies and procedures that have contributed to the assimilation and/or cultural discontinuity for Native Americans in federally run schools. Not only should educators become knowledgeable on these historical issues, this information needs to be accurately passed down to students so that they will better understand and process the alarming statistics of Native American student current failures in the educational system. For instance, the average graduation rate for Native Americans being reported at 46.6% the lowest amongst any other ethnic group (Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010).

Although Tatiana and Kia had many rich cultural experiences in their tribal community, they used many negative terms when describing other Native American students. For instance, Kia said, "I don't think Natives achieve that much because they are lazy." And, both Kia and Tatiana stated, "Natives get handed everything to them." Although, research has linked some of the current academic hardships of Native American youth to historical experiences like the boarding schools (Dejong, 2007) and Native Americans struggle with the highest rate of poverty amongst any ethnic groups at more than 10 percentage points over the national average (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013), the girls seem to attribute the current conditions to negative attributes of Native Americans without showing much compassion for their hardships. The boys also shared

about other Native American students slacking off in their school, but they also shared many positive examples of Native students. I believe the major difference in their responses to their lack of awareness and/or understanding of Native American historical trauma events can be attributed, in part, to their school culture and practices.

**3. Culturally responsive mentoring can help bridge the gap between Native American cultural needs and mainstream expectation in schools.** Culturally responsive mentoring is vital to the successful development of youth (DuBois & Karcher, 2013; Spencer, 2007; Klinck et al., 2005). This study highlights specific aspects of important qualities required for culturally responsive mentoring for Native American youth. Mainstream research and education tends to limit mentoring relationships for students to non-parental relationships (DuBois & Karcher, 2013; Erickson et al. 2009; Klinck et al., 2005). For instance, Klinck et al (2005) stated that mentors are often adults who “provide friendship, guidance, and support for children and youth outside of their own immediate families” (p. 110). DuBoise and Karcher (2013) specifically mention “non-parental” relationships. This research expands the role of mentor to immediate family members who were identified as “mentor” by the student and exemplified specific qualities that motivated them towards educational success.

***Motivating mentor attributes.*** The overriding attribute of a mentor that motivated the four Native American students on multiple levels was *friendship*. The other key attributes were humor, talking in depth, cooperation, personable (sharing personal information), and willing to meet “one on one” time. Through mentoring relationships, all the students overcame an academic challenge, found motivation to achieve, and dealt with socio-emotional issues that could have impeded their engagement or performance in school. This research supports the findings of DuBois et. al (2011) that mentoring has the ability to help students across multiple

domains. However, this study focused on the mentoring needs of Native Americans students where DuBois et. al (2011) did not.

**4. The teacher as “mentor” provides direct impact on academic performance.** The teacher’s impact on student achievement has been well researched (Castagno, 2008; Cleary, 2008; Cleary & Peacock, 1998). Native American students in particular have been shown to care deeply about teacher support and approval even over peer support (Bock, 2006). When the boys in the study were asked about a time they felt most successful or overcame in a challenging subject, the immediate grade improvement was mostly attributed to a teacher helping them “one on one” after school. There were only able to ask for help because they felt like they already had a good relationship with the teacher. Kia and Tatiana described spent more time describing the attributes that are most endearing to them in a teacher, such as, humor, talks outside the box, personable, etc. However, they acknowledged a teacher who exhibits these qualities motivates them in learning and engaging in school.

### **Limitations**

The limitations of this study include the minimal number of Native American students who participated in the interview that only represent one geographic area in the Northwest. Each tribal community has different cultural practices and resources. Two of the four students do however attend public school in an urban area. According to Faircloth and Tippeconnic (2010), there are approximately 644,000 American Indian/Alaska Native students in the entire school system and approximately 92% of those students attend public schools. Lastly, two Native American boys attended a BIE school and two of the girls attended public school. Some of the difference referred to between public schools and the BIE school could possibly be gender differences.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

When addressing educational issues for Native American students, such as, “narrowing the achievement gap” in American schools, the lens of analysis should be through Native American cultural values and practices. To reiterate, Native American values greatly differ from mainstream society (Garrett et. al, 2003; Garrett, 1995) and as a result Native American educators and leaders have indicated more culturally supportive definitions of educational success (ChiXapakaid et. al, 2011). The implications of this study reinforces the growing concern that if governing laws and acts that were meant to rectify the historical assaults on Native American education do not translate into practice on the grass roots level.

Both BIE and public schools have the responsibility to provide cultural competent curriculum and pedagogy for Native American students. The public school has a more daunting task when their Native American students are minimal and they have to serve diverse group of students. They may also feel disconnected from the Native American community. Regardless, teacher training on Native American historical implications, current contemporary values of educational success, and how to partner with Native American communities is crucial. Lynch and Hanson (2011) explained important aspects of cultural competency, “Because cultural influences are such an integral part of our lives, they are often invisible and elusive. When we are out of touch with our own culture and its influence on us, however, it is impossible to work effectively with people whose cultures differ from our own” (p. 23).

This study also highlights the importance for Native American communities to re-examine their own cultural practices to make sure that accurate teachings of Native American historical events are being passed down to help students develop a positive Native American identity. If the school does not approach the local tribal community, then the hopes would be for

the tribal community to initiate with each school in their area to ensure cultural teaching are positively shared with Native American and non-Native students. The Native American communities could also incorporate opportunities for elders to teach the community on historical events, although this could be painful for the elders, it could help a new generation to develop a sense of pride for their culture rather than disappointment. This research also suggests for tribal organizations to reconsider the use of monetary incentives and per capita to motivate students because this does not necessarily align with Native American cultural values.

Similar to Native Americans, other ethnic groups that share a common threat to cultural preservation and Native identity in American schools are Native Hawaiians and Samoans. Lynch and Hanson (2011) state, “In light of history of oppression and cultural change, contemporary Native Hawaiians and Samoans struggle with cultural preservation as a basic way to maintain identity and integrity (p. 371). In American schools, all three of these ethnic groups are constantly required to adapt to mainstream culture and expectations that clashes with traditional ways. As evidence from this study, schools are influential in shaping students cultural identity and values for the good or negatively. For instance, when these ethnic groups’ values encircle family, community, and cooperation, the primary focus on individualistic goals, incentives, and achievement can hinder their motivation and engagement in school.

In the midst of a changing and diverse society, mentoring has the capacity to bridge some of these cultural gaps and address the every day struggles that adolescents face attending middle school. This research is one of the few studies that focus primarily on the mentoring needs of Native American middle school youth from the students’ perspective. Based on their voices, in the midst of grief and loss, cultural challenges and academic hardships, a caring mentor could be

the most influential factor to help a student on multiple levels to achieve their definition of educational success.

|

## References

- Andrews, T. G. (2002). Turning the tables on assimilation: Oglala Lakotas and the Pine Ridge day schools, 1889-1920s. *The Western Historical Quarterly*, 33(4), 407-430.
- Banks, J. A., Au, K. H., Ball, A. F., Bell, P., Gordon, E. W., Gutierrez, K. D., . . . Zhou, M. (2007). *Learning in and out of school in diverse environments: Life-long, life-wide, life-deep*. (LIFE Center report).
- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. (Eds.). (2007). *Qualitative research for education: Introduction to theories and methods* (5th edition ed.) Allyn & Bacon, Inc.
- Bill, W. E. (1988). From boarding schools to self determination. *Washington Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction*.
- Bock, T. (2006). A consideration of culture in moral theme comprehension: Comparing Native and European American students. *Journal of Moral Education*, 35(1), 71-87.  
doi:10.1080/03057240500495310
- Brady, P. (1996). Native dropouts and non-native dropouts in Canada: two solitudes or a solitude shared?. *Journal Of American Indian Education*, 3510-20. Retrieved from <http://jaie.asu.edu/v35/V35S2nat.htm>
- Yellow Horse Brave Heart, M. & DeBruyn, L. M. (1998). The American Indian holocaust: Healing historical unresolved grief. *American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research*, 8(2), 60-82.

- Cardinal principles of secondary education (1918). *United States Bureau of Education. Bulletin*, 1-32.
- Castagno, A. E., & Brayboy, B. M. J. (2008). Culturally responsive schooling for Indigenous youth: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(4), pp. 941-993. doi:10.3102/0034654308323
- ChiXapkaid, Inglebret, E., & Krebill-Prather, R. (2011). *Views and perspectives of Native educational success: A national survey of American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians and others associated with Indian education*. National Indian Education Association.
- Cleary, L. M. (2008). The imperative of literacy motivation when Native children are being left behind. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 47(1), 96-117. Retrieved from <http://jaie.asu.edu/>
- Cleary, L. M., & Peacock, T. D. (1998). *Collected wisdom: American Indian education*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Dejong, D. H. (2007). "Unless they are kept alive": Federal Indian schools and student health, 1878-1918. *American Indian Quarterly*, 31(2), 256-282. doi:10.1353/aiq.2007.0022
- DeVoe, J. F., & Darling-Churchill, K. (2008). *Status and trends in the education of American Indians and Alaska Natives: 2008*. (NCES 2008-084). U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences.

- DuBois, D. L., & Karcher, M. J. (Eds.). (2013). *Handbook of youth mentoring* (Second Edition ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd.
- DuBois, D. L., Portillo, N., Rhodes, J. E., Silverthorn, N., & Valentine, J. C. (2011). How effective are mentoring programs for youth? A systematic assessment of the evidence. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 12(2), 57-91. doi:10.1177/1529100611414806
- Erickson, L. D., McDonald, S., & Elder, J., Glen H. (2009). Informal mentors and education: Complementary or compensatory resources? *Sociology of Education*, 82(4), 344-367. doi:10.1177/003804070908200403
- Faircloth, S. C., & Tippeconnic, J. W., III. (2010). *The dropout/graduation crisis among American Indian and Alaska Native students: Failure to respond places the future of Native peoples at risk*. Los Angeles, CA: The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles at UCLA. Retrieved from [www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu](http://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu)
- Garrett, M. T. (1995). Between two worlds: Cultural discontinuity in the dropout of Native American youth. *School Counselor*, 42, 186-195.
- Garrett, M. T., Bellon-Harn, M., Torres-Rivera, E., Garrett, J. T., & Roberts, L. C. (2003). Open hands, open hearts: Working with native youth in the schools. *Intervention in School & Clinic*, 38(4), 225.
- Gibson, M. (1988). *Accommodation without assimilation: Sikh immigrants in an American high school*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Huffman, T. (2010). *Theoretical perspectives on American Indian education: Take a new look at academic success and the achievement gap*. Lanham: AltaMira Press.
- Huffman, T. (2001). Resistance theory and the transcultural hypothesis as explanations of college attrition and persistence among culturally traditional American Indian students. *Journal of American Indian Education, 40*(3), 1-23. Retrieved from [jaie.asu.edu](http://jaie.asu.edu)
- Indian Education Act. (1972). Public Law 92-318.
- Indian Self-determination and Education Assistance Act. (1975). Public Law 93-638.
- Jones, M. D., & Galliher, R. V. (2007). Ethnic identity and psychosocial functioning in Navajo adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescence (Blackwell Publishing Limited), 17*(4), 683-696. doi:10.1111/j.1532-7795.2007.00541.x
- Kenyon, D. B., & Carter, J. S. (2011). Ethnic identity, sense of community, and psychological well-being among northern plains American Indian youth. *Journal of Community Psychology, 39*(1), 1-9. doi:10.1002/jcop.20412
- Klinck, J., Cardinal, C., Edwards, K., Gibson, N., Bisanz, J., & Costa, J. (2005). Mentoring programs for aboriginal youth. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health, 3*(2), 109-129.

- Ledesma, R. (2007). The urban Los Angeles American Indian experience: Perspectives from the field. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work, 16*(1), 27-60.  
doi:10.1300/J051v16n0102
- Ledlow, S. (1992). Is cultural discontinuity an adequate explanation for dropping out? *Journal of American Indian Education, 31*, 21-36. Retrieved from [jaie.asu.edu/v31/v31s3cul.htm](http://jaie.asu.edu/v31/v31s3cul.htm)
- Lomawaima, K. T. (1994). *They called it prairie light: The story of Chilocco Indian school*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Lynch, E. W., & Hanson, M. J. (2011). *Developing cross-cultural competence: A guide for working with children and their families (fourth edition)*. Brookes Publishing Company.
- McCarty, T. L., & Watahomigie, L. J. (1998). Language and literacy in American Indian and Alaska Native communities. In B. Pérez, & B. Pérez (Eds.), *Sociocultural contexts of language and literacy (2nd ed.)*. (pp. 69-98). Mahwah, NJ US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Meriam, L. (1928). *Problems of Indian administration*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- National Center for Educational Statistics. (2012). *National Indian education study 2011: The educational experiences of American Indian and Alaska Native students at grades 4 and 8. NCES 2012-466*. National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2012466>
- Native American Education Act (1990, 1992). Public Law 101-477.

- Oyserman, D. (2009). Identity-based motivation: Implications for action-readiness, procedural-readiness, and consumer behavior. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 19*(3), 250-260.  
doi:10.1016/j.jcps.2009.05.008
- Powers, K., Potthoff, S. J., Bearinger, L. H., & Resnick, M. D. (2003). Does cultural programming improve educational outcomes for American Indian youth? *Journal of American Indian Education, 42*(2), 17-49. Retrieved from  
<http://jaie.asu.edu/abstracts/abs2003>
- Reyhner, J., & Hurtado, D. S. (2008). Reading first, literacy, and American Indian/Alaska Native students. *Journal of American Indian Education, 47*(1), 82-95. Retrieved from  
[http://jaie.asu.edu/abstracts/jaie\\_v47n1\\_abstracts.pdf](http://jaie.asu.edu/abstracts/jaie_v47n1_abstracts.pdf)
- Spencer, R. (2007). 'It's not what I expected' A qualitative study of youth mentoring relationship failures. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 22*(4), 331-354. doi:10.1177/0743558407301915
- Stiffman, A. R. (2009). Cultural sensitivity and cultural disparities: Ethical dilemmas, legal issues, and IRB requirements. In A. R. Stiffman (Ed.), *The field research survival guide*. (pp. 104-126). New York, NY US: Oxford University Press.  
doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195325522.003.0006
- Suárez-Orozco, C. (2004). Formulating identity in a globalized world. In M. M. Suárez-Orozco, & D. B. Qin-Hilliard (Eds.), *Globalization: Culture and education in the new millennium*. (pp. 173-202). Berkeley, CA US: University of California Press.

- U.S. Census Bureau. (2013). *Poverty rates for selected detailed race and Hispanic groups by state and place: 2007–2011* by Macartney, S., Bishaw, A. Fontenot, K. (American Community Survey Briefs No. ACSBR/11-17). U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration.
- U.S. Department of the Indian Affairs. (2013). Retrieved April 1, 2103, from <http://www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre/BIE/index.htm>
- Wexler, L. (2011). Behavioral health services 'don't work for us': Cultural incongruities in human service systems for Alaska native communities. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 47*(1), 157-169. doi:10.1007/s10464-010-9380-3
- Whitbeck, L. B., Hoyt, D. R., & Stubben, J. D. (2001). Traditional culture and academic success among American Indian children in the upper Midwest. *Journal of American Indian Education, 40*(2), 48-60. Retrieved from <http://jaie.asu.edu/v40/V40I2A3.pdf>
- Whitesell, N. R., Mitchell, C. M., & Spicer, P. (2009). A longitudinal study of self-esteem, cultural identity, and academic success among American Indian adolescents. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 15*(1), 38-50. doi:10.1037/a0013456
- Whitesell, N. R., Mitchell, C. M., Kaufman, C. E., & Spicer, P. (2006). Developmental trajectories of personal and collective self-concept among American Indian adolescents. *Child Development, 77*(5), 1487-1503. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2006.00949.x

Yellow Horse Brave Heart, M. & DeBruyn, L. M. (1998). The American Indian holocaust: Healing historical unresolved grief. *American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research*, 8(2), 60-82.

**Appendix A**  
**Focus Group Interview Sample Questions**

1. How do you define educational success as a Native student?
2. Does your definition of success as a Native student seem to differ from other cultures?
  - a. If so, what are the differences you see?
  - b. What cultures differ most?
  - c. How do the differences in cultures towards success make you feel at school?
3. Can you think of a time that you felt successful at school? Explain the situations.
  - a. What helped you achieve that success?
4. Can you think of a time that you felt unsuccessful at school or that you felt like you wanted to quit or stop trying at school?
  - a. What made you feel that way?
5. What are the cultural values you have been taught?
  - a. Does those values help you achieve success at school?
  - b. Are there any cultural values that conflict with your success or sense of belonging at school?
6. Who is the most important relationship that helps you to succeed at school?
  - a. What about that relationship helps you to succeed.
7. Is there a relationship that makes succeeding hard or makes you want to stop trying or give up at school?
  - a. What about that relationship makes it hard or makes you want to stop trying or give up at school?
8. Do you feel a sense of belonging or connection at school?
  - a. What helps you feel a sense of belonging to school?
  - b. What makes you feel disconnected to school?
9. Did you have a mentor in middle school?

A mentor is someone you trust that helped you in school. It could have been a teacher, a family member, an afterschool program person, a friend, etc.

  - a. If so, who was that person?
  - b. What about that person helped you most?
  - c. Did that person help you do better in school?
  - d. In what way did you wish they had helped you more?
  - e. For those who did not have a mentor, do wish you did? And, do you think it would have helped you to do better school? In what way?
10. For students in middle school, do you think it is important that Native students to have mentors to help them succeed in school?

- a. What qualities are most important for mentors to help you succeed in school?
- b. Do they need to be Native? Or does it matter?
- c. Would you prefer a Native mentor if there was one available?

**Appendix B**  
**Workshop and Research Recruitment Flyer**



## Native AC2A Workshop

August 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> 2012

Location TBA

Time TBA

Contact info: Zoe Higheagle Strong

zoe@teamworksacademy.org | 206.769.4841

Dear parents or guardians,

Your student is invited to attend the Native AC2A Workshop led by Mack Strong a former Seattle Seahawk and Zoe Strong a Nez Perce tribal member. The TEAM-WORKS foundation has provided Native youth academies and camps for over 10 years. Many Native leaders in the community are gathering together to prepare your student to successfully enter high school in the public schools while having a lot of fun together. The goal is to help students establish a positive Attitude, make a personal Commitment to school and their community, set goals for academic Achievement and for learning Acceleration (AC2A).

Camp is free of cost. Lunch and snack will be provided

Eligible Students: Incoming Native freshman high school students  
Entire application and waiver has to be completed and signed by parent/guardian

Activities: Sports, games, leadership and cultural activities

Attire: Athletic attire

Closing Ceremonies: Seattle Seahawks hosting "Day at Training Camp"

**Notification of research study:** During camp, the University of Washington, Department of Educational Psychology will be conducting a study on the mentoring needs of Native middle school students for educational success in the public school system from the student's perspective. Attached is a research consent form that provides details of the study. Please read the consent form carefully and sign the research consent section on student application if you choose to allow your student to participate. Your student can still attend camp activities if you choose to decline participation of the study. Please contact the leading researcher Zoe Higheagle Strong if you have any questions or concerns at (206) 769-4841 (cell) or zoe@teamworksacademy.org (email).

Hope to see your student there!

Sincerely,  
Mack & Zoe Strong

**Appendix C**  
**Parent/Guardian Follow Up and Recruitment Letter**

**Native Youth AC2A Workshop - Aug 28, 2012**  
**Announcement**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Thank you for registering your child for the Native Youth AC2A Workshop on August 28<sup>th</sup> hosted by the Mack Strong TEAM-WORKS Foundation. We are excited to have your student participating in this workshop! Our hope is to assist them in entering high school as successfully and prepared as possible.

**Notification of research study:** During camp, I (Zoe Higheagle Strong) will be conducting a research study on the mentoring needs of Native middle school students for educational success in the public school system as my master's thesis at the University of Washington, Educational Psychology Department. When Native students only represent a small percentage of the public school population, their voices are rarely heard. The purpose of this study is to provide a platform for students to voice their perspectives on school experiences and the culturally supportive mentoring needed to achieve educational success. Please read the attached consent form that provides details of study. Your student can attend camp regardless of whether or not they participate in the study. Please contact me directly with any questions or concerns. If you provide consent for your student to participate in the study, please email or fax signed consent letter to my below contact info. Or, you can notify me in advance and send consent letter with student to camp.

Sincerely,

Zoe Higheagle Strong  
Co-founder | Youth & Family Services Director  
Mack Strong TEAM-WORKS foundation  
P: 206.769.4841 F: 206.923.3344  
E: zoe@teamworksacademy.org

Principal Investigator/Researcher  
M.Ed Candidate - University of Washington  
Department of Educational Psychology  
Learning Sciences and Cognition

## Appendix D

### Follow Up Interview Sample Questions

1. What do you know or understand about historical trauma that Native Americans/Alaska Natives have experienced in America?

If students have knowledge of historical trauma, then ask the following questions.

- a. Who has taught you about historical trauma?
- b. Has it been talked about at home?
- c. How do you feel about the historical trauma Native American/Alaska Native peoples have experienced?
- d. Do you think historical trauma has an effect on American Indian/Alaska Native student's educational success? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?

2. Do you participate in Native cultural activities?

If so, then ask the following questions? (If not, why not?)

- a. What type of cultural activities do you attend?
- b. Who brings you or invites you to cultural activities?
- c. How often do you attend each year?

3. In the after-school tutoring you received in middle school, who organized or provided your tutoring? (For instance, your school, tribe, parent, Native organization, etc.) And, who encouraged you to get tutoring?

4. Who provided or organized the after-school activities that you attended in middle school? (Your school, tribe parents, Native organizations, etc.) And, who encouraged you to attend these activities?

5. How does your parents get involved and help you in school?

- a. in after school activities?
- b. in sports or athletics?
- c. cultural activities?
- d. making moral or everyday life decisions?

Additional questions for boys:

6. Clarify which tribe they are from and are they registered tribal members.

- a. Is the tribe you are from the same or different tribal community you have been raised in?
- b. (If they are from a different tribe than their current tribal community). Does living in a different tribal community than your own effect the amount of resources, support or opportunities you have to succeed educationally?
- c. Would you attend more or the same cultural activities if you were on your home tribal land? Does it make a difference?

**Appendix E**  
**Research Advisory Stakeholders Committee Invite Sample Letter**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ ,

Re: Research study for mentoring Native middle school youth for educational success in the public schools

I graciously invite you to join the Research Advisory Stakeholders Committee (RASC). The RASC is an informal research advisory committee to support a study conducted by the University of Washington, Educational Psychology Department. This qualitative study is examining the mentoring needs of middle school Native youth for educational success in the public schools from the students' perspective. Native is defined in this study as: parents/guardians who identify their student as American Indian (AI) or Alaska Native (AN), First Nations, Native Hawaiian or Samoan. You are a respected Native community member and your wisdom is greatly valued. Your advice will help ensure the study is culturally supportive and play an important role to the success of the study. The research will be conducted on July 8 and 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at the Native Youth AC2A camp hosted by the Mack Strong TEAM-WORKS foundation, which I am a cofounder along with my husband Mack Strong. This committee is created for research purposes only and is not considered a subcommittee of the TEAM-WORKS foundation. See camp details in box below.

Native Youth AC2A Camp  
 July 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> 2012  
 Location & Time (TBA)

Camp is free of cost. Lunch and snack will be provided  
Eligible Students: Incoming Native freshman high school students  
 Entire application and waiver has to be completed and signed by parent/guardian  
 Activities: Sports, games, leadership and cultural activities  
 Attire: Athletic attire

Closing Ceremonies: Seattle Seahawks hosting "Day at Training Camp"

The expectation of a RASC member is to attend three conference calls on mutually agreeable dates from June 1 to November 1 of 2012 led by the principal investigator Zoe Higheagle Strong, a Nez Perce tribal member. You will be asked questions to support the design of study. In order to protect your confidentiality, your name will not be released in any reports to the public. I will type notes during all conference calls. Only Dr. Jegatheesan and myself will have access to any original documents with your name or comments and this data will be stored in secured cabinet at the University of Washington. You will not have access to direct data, but I will provide you a report of the research findings. Please consider this important role and email or call if you accept my invitation.

Sincerely,

Principal Investigator  
 Zoe Higheagle Strong  
 Department of Educational Psychology  
 Learning Sciences and Cognition  
 (206) 769-4841

**Appendix F**  
**Notes on Protection of Student and Tribal Identity**

1. In Chapter 6, I did not use direct quotes of the mission and vision statements of the Bureau of Indian Education and/or public school. I also did not used citations of the materials that I used to gather the mission and vision statement in order to protect the confidentiality of the tribal community, students, and their families.