

THE NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION ISSUE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY
EXAMINING THE SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES OF PUBLIC RESERVATION
SCHOOLS

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Education

With a

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Northwest Nazarene University

by

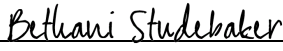
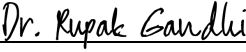
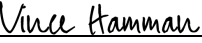

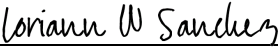
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May 2022

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AUTHORIZATION TO SUBMIT
DISSERTATION

This dissertation of Dirk Coon, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership with a major in Educational Leadership and titled “The Native American Education Issue: A Qualitative Study Examining the Successes and Challenges of Public Reservation Schools,” has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates given below, is now granted to submit final copies.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation and my doctorate to my family. They have given me so much support and help as I have gone through this process. Kylie, Dawson, Dakota, Kolby, Creighton, Jarrett, Kyler, and Cooper: I cannot thank you enough for understanding the time that it takes to undergo a doctoral program and the writing of a dissertation. You gave me inspiration during those times that I felt like I couldn't finish, and for that I am forever grateful.

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ABSTRACT

Research confirms that Native American students struggle with graduating high school at a greater rate as their non-Native American peers. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the lived experiences of Native American students who graduated from a public school located on a federal reservation. This examination looked to determine the factors that impact their academic success and their ability to transcend academic barriers. The need for additional literature exists within the accomplishments of Native Americans who have overcome their challenges and persevered until graduating high school. It was determined that a qualitative study would gather the most useful information. Eight participants that fit the study criteria (graduated high school located on a federal reservation located in the Midwest United States from 2016-2021, and at least 18 years old) were chosen to lend their voices to this study. To ensure that the information that was gathered for this study was valuable, purposeful sampling was first used to find participants by looking on Native American Facebook groups, then snowball sampling was utilized from there. Interview questions were determined effective by using face validity and piloting. The study relied on finding commonalities in participant responses and coding them. These commonalities were used to group the data into specific themes which were determined to be 1) belonging 2) legacies 3) impediments and 4) location.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
Chapter I Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	4
Background	7
Research Questions	9
Description of Terms	10
Significance of the Study	10
Overview of Research Methods.....	11
Chapter II Review of Literature	13
Introduction.....	13
Chronic School Absenteeism.....	15
Native Americans and the Education System.....	18
Native American Culture	21
Native American Needs in Education.....	22
"Rez Life"	22
Representations of Native Americans.....	27
Realities of Attending a Reservation School	28
Special Issues that Affect Native American Communities.....	32
Conclusion	60
Chapter III Design and Methodology	62
Introduction.....	62
Research Questions	63
Research Design.....	64
Participant Selection	65
Data Collection	67
Data Analysis Plan.....	69
Validity and Reliability	71
Role of the Researcher	73

Limitations	73
Chapter IV Results	75
Introduction	75
Emergent Themes	76
Interview Participants	81
Semi-Structured Interview Validity and Reliability	83
Results for Research Question #1: Strengths and the Ability to Graduate High School	86
Support Systems.....	87
Participating	92
Results for Research Question #1b: Overcoming Academic Challenges	93
Culture.....	94
Results for Research Question #2: Challenges in the Ability to Graduate High School	100
Outside and Inside Influences on Academic Success	101
Results for Research Question #3: Impact of Public Reservation Schools.....	108
Reservation School Attributes	109
Selected Significant Statements	114
Chapter V Discussion	116
Introduction.....	116
Summary of Results	118
Research Question #1 Summary of Results and Discussion	125
Research Question #1b: Summary of Results and Discussion	128
Research Question #2: Summary of Results and Discussion	130
Research Question #3: Summary of Results and Discussion	133
Conclusion	135
Recommendations for Further Research.....	138
Implications for Professional Practice	140
References	143
Appendix A Qualitative Informed Consent	184
Appendix B Facebook Recruitment.....	188
Appendix C ACRP Training Certificate	189
Appendix D Northwest Nazarene University Institutional Review (IRB) Approval	190
Appendix E Interview Protocol	191
Appendix F Introduction Presentation	193
Appendix G Verbatim Opening Interview Instructions.....	197

Appendix H Criteria Form	198
Appendix I Verbatim Interview Closing.....	199
Appendix J Member Checking Email.....	200

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. <i>Distribution of the U.S. Resident Population 5 to 17 years old, by Race/Ethnicity</i>	19
Table 2. <i>List of Themes and Categories</i>	79
Table 3. <i>Participant Profile Information</i>	82
Table 4. <i>Content Validity Index</i>	84
Table 5. <i>Categories and Codes for Research Question 1</i>	87
Table 6. <i>Category and Codes for Research Question 1b</i>	94
Table 7. <i>Category and Codes for Research Question 2</i>	101
Table 8. <i>Category and Codes for Research Question 3</i>	109
Table 9. <i>Participant Statements</i>	114

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. <i>High school graduation rates ages 18-24, by race/ethnicity in 2016</i>	3
Figure 2. <i>Dropout rated of 16-to-24-year olds by race/ethnicity, and sex in 2016</i>	5
Figure 3. <i>Percentage of 8th graders absent from school by race/ethnicity, in a month in 2017</i> ...	18
Figure 4. <i>Race/ethnicity of public school teachers</i>	20
Figure 5. <i>Percentage of children under 18 living in poverty by race/ethnicity</i>	40
Figure 6. <i>Living arrangements of children under age 18 by race/ethnicity</i>	42
Figure 7. <i>Average NAEP reading scores by race/ethnicity in 2017</i>	46
Figure 8. <i>Percentage of 3-to-21-year-olds served under IDEA in 2015-2016</i>	48
Figure 9. <i>Percentage of undergraduate student enrollment by race/ethnicity in Fall 2000, 2010, and 2016</i>	55
Figure 10. <i>College graduation rates at 4-year institutions by race/ethnicity in 2010</i>	56
Figure 11. <i>Snowball sampling</i>	66
Figure 12. <i>The qualitative process of data analysis</i>	70

Chapter I

Introduction

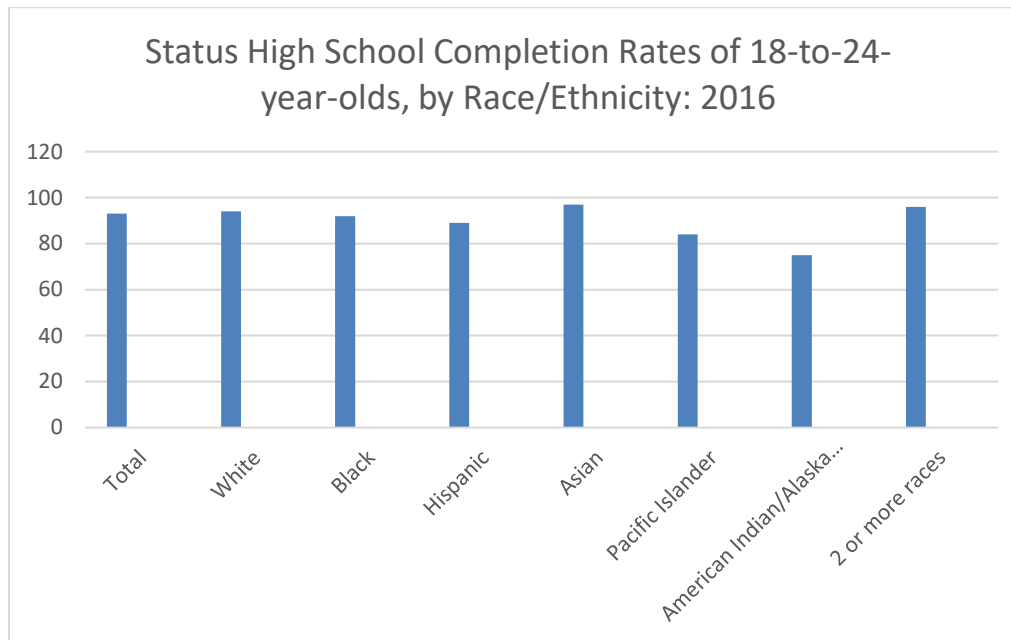
It has been proven that reaching the milestone of high school graduation has a positive impact on individuals (Buckley et al., 2020; Jha & Stearns, 2018; Locklear et al., 2020; Lovelace et al., 2017). Earning a high school diploma can lead to a better job, career or even continuing their education at a postsecondary institution (Buckley et al., 2020; Lovelace et al., 2017; Lawrence et al., 2016; Zaff et al., 2017). The more education that a person has, the higher income that person earns (Fortin et al., 2013; Jha & Stearns, 2018; Sutin et al., 2017). Individuals who have received a high school diploma have been shown to have a more positive outlook on life (Sutin et al., 2017; Zaff et al., 2017), as well as having better support systems in place and lower levels of stress (Lynch, 2003; Rogers et al., 2010). People who graduate high school are also more likely to participate in elections and volunteer in the community (Buckley et al., 2020; Sutin et al., 2017; Zaff et al., 2017).

Individuals who do not obtain a high school diploma are more likely to live in poverty and be incarcerated (Jimerson et al., 2016; Zaff, et al., 2017; Zajacova, 2012). Higher rates of poverty also lead to more people on welfare (Buckley et al., 2020; Fortin et al., 2013; Kearney & Graczyk, 2013). Additionally, educational attainment affects the physical well-being of people, with lower educated people having more health issues than higher educated people (Buckley et al., 2020; Kaplan et al., 2017; Locklear et al., 2020; Sutin et al., 2017). The education level that a person achieves is also connected to the lifespan of that individual with more educated people living longer (Everett et al., 2013; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Lawrence et al., 2016; Sutin et al., 2017).

Despite overwhelming evidence that graduating high school has positive benefits (Buckley et al., 2020; Jha & Stearns, 2018; Locklear et al., 2020; Lovelace et al., 2017), there is still a percentage of students who do not succeed in earning a diploma (de Brey et al., 2019, Musu-Gillette, 2017). Overall, the United States high school graduation rate is around 88% (NCES, 2021). When breaking down the graduation rates by ethnicity, minority students graduate at a lower rate than White students (de Brey et al., 2019, Musu-Gillette, 2017). The percentage of Native American students who graduate high school is the lowest of all ethnicities (NCES, 2021; Ni et al., 2017; McFarland et al., 2017). In some states, less than 40% of Native American students graduate high school (Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017). Native American children are failing in the current United States public education system (Bo, 2016; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017). Figure 1 shows the rate of high school completion in 2016 in the United States, divided by race and ethnicity for 18-to-24 –year-olds.

Figure 1.

High School completion rates of 18-to-24-year-olds divided by race and ethnicity in 2016



Note. From “Status High School Completion Rates of 18-to-24-year-olds, by Race/Ethnicity: 2016,” by U.S. Department of Education. 2019. (<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019038.pdf>)

Consistent school attendance has a direct impact on the ability of a student to succeed academically (Ansari & Gottfried, 2018; Ansari, & Purtell, 2018; Breaz, 2020; Mancini, 2017; Pijl et al., 2021). High rates of absenteeism have been proven to have many consequences for students (Breaz, 2020; Pflug & Schneider, Pijl et al., 2021; van den Toren et al., 2021). The grade point average of a student has been shown to be lower for students with chronic absenteeism (Ansari & Purtell, 2018; Mancini, 2017).

Regular school attendance is a cause for concern for Native American students (de Brey et al., 2019; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Yetter & Foutch, 2014). Native American students have the lowest attendance rates of any ethnicity (de Brey et al., 2019; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017), causing many to underperform (Cvencek et al., 2018; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Wilcox, 2015). Despite

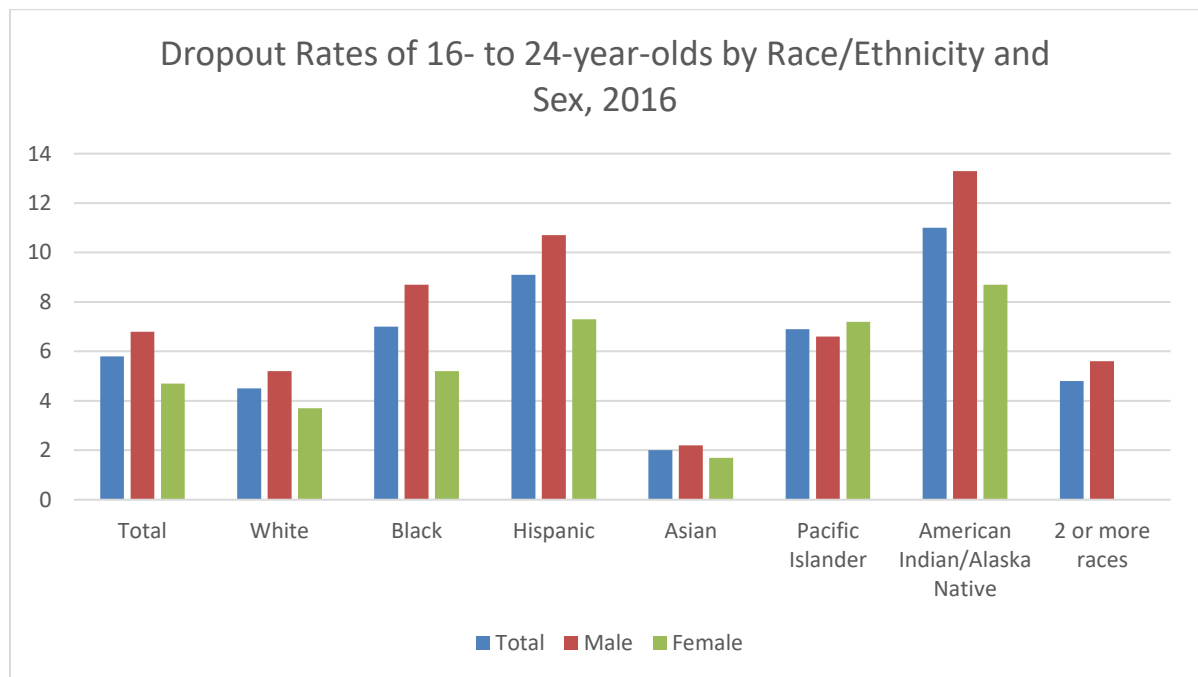
issues that Native American students have to deal with such as mental health (Garcia, 2020; McKinley et al., 2020; O’Keefe et al., 2021), substance abuse (Albuja et al., 2021; Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020; Schick et al., 2020), and poverty (Garrett et al., 2013; Glick & Han, 2015; Mathers, 2012), many are still able to successfully graduate high school (de Brey et al., 2019; Musu-Gillette, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

Native Americans make up approximately 1.5% of the population of the United States (Blair et al., 2021; Garcia, 2020; Herrick & Mendez, 2019; Whitford, 2017), and around 1% of the total population of school students (de Brey et al., 2019; Musu-Gillette, 2017). This means that there are approximately 530,000 Native American students (de Brey et al., 2019; Musu-Gillette, 2017). At the current graduation rate of around 84%, this means that more than 85,000 Native American students are leaving schools every year without graduating (de Brey et al., 2019; Musu-Gillette, 2017).

Figure 2 displays the school dropout rates of 18-to-24-year-olds based on race and ethnicity and divided by gender.

Figure 2.

Dropout Rates of 16-to-24-year-olds by Race/Ethnicity and Sex, 2016

Note. From “Dropout Rates of 16-to-24 year-olds by Race/Ethnicity and Sex, 2016,” by U.S. Department of Education. 2019.
(<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019038.pdf>)

There are numerous reasons for Native American students to drop out of school before graduating (Ansari & Gottfried, 2018; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Johnson-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017). Bullying is a big issue that many Native American students face daily (Ansari & Gottfried, 2018; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Stripling, 2019). Native American students don’t like to be in this type of damaging environment (Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017; Turner et al., 2019). The majority of Native American students do not feel a sense of belonging in educational settings (Fryberg & Stephens, 2010; Rees et al., 2014; Serafini et al., 2017). Native American students also have high rates of teenage pregnancy which causes many to leave school before graduating (Garcia, 2020; Griesse et al., 2016; McCarron et al., 2018). The high rate of mobility has also been shown

to have an immense impact on the ability of Native American students to attend and graduate school (Clemens et al., 2016; Knopf, 2019).

Extensive research confirms that graduating high school improves the life of individuals (Buckley et al., 2020; Clemens et al., 2016; Jha & Stearns, 2018; Locklear et al., 2020; Lovelace et al., 2017). High school graduates are able to open the door to further education and have higher earnings than dropouts (Buckley et al., 2020; Lovelace et al., 2017; Zaff et al., 2017). The education level a person attains also correlates to their lifespan and overall health, with those that are more educated having better outcomes in both areas (Buckley et al., 2020; Kaplan et al., 2017; Locklear et al., 2020).

Research has also shown a correlation between consistent class attendance and academic success (Ansari & Purtell, 2018; de Brey et al., 2019; Mancini, 2017). Truancy issues are very common for students that are at risk of not graduating (Gubbels et al., 2019; Lovelace et al., 2017; Pflug & Schneider, 2016). A common problem that hinders the ability of Native American students to perform well in school is the inability of many to consistently attend school and be on time (Cvencek et al., 2018; Demmert, McCardle, et al., 2006; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Wilcox, 2015).

Although the value of graduating high school is well known and various initiatives have been attempted to specifically help them graduate high school, Native American students continue to be left behind by their peers of other ethnicities (Boyer, 2000; Gunn et al., 2011). Presently, the high school graduation rate for Native Americans in the United States is under 85% (Gion et al, 2018; Locklear et al., 2020; McFarland et al., 2017; Ni et al., 2017), which is the lowest percentage of any ethnicity (McFarland et al., 2017).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the lived experiences of Native American students who attend public school located on federal reservations to determine the factors that impact their academic success and ability to transcend academic barriers. The information that is gathered from this study can help inform educational institutions that work with Native American students on how to better determine their challenges and how to support students to become successful with their schooling.

Background

Research has shown that attaining a high school diploma is very beneficial (Buckley et al., 2020; Jha & Stearns, 2018; Locklear et al., 2020; Lovelace et al., 2017). Individuals who are able to graduate high school have more options available to them as they proceed through life (Buckley et al., 2020; Lovelace et al., 2017; Lawrence et al., 2016; Zaff et al., 2017). In contrast, those who decide to drop out of school before graduating face a host of issues (Jimerson et al., 2016; Zaff et al., 2017; Zajacova, 2012). Some of the more common challenges that dropouts deal with include unemployment, incarceration (Jimerson et al., 2016; Zaff et al., 2017; Zajacova, 2012), and poor physical and mental health (Buckley et al., 2020; Kaplan et al., 2017; Locklear et al., 2020).

Many students in the United States struggle to graduate high school (de Brey et al., 2019; Musu-Gillette, 2017). This is especially true for minority students (de Brey et al., 2019; Musu-Gillette, 2017). But, when broken down even further, the divide between majority students and minority students is most evident in the graduation rates comparing White students to Native American students, as Native American students have the lowest high school graduation rate of all ethnicities (NCES, 2021; Ni et al., 2017; McFarland et al., 2017). The current high school

graduation rate for Native American students is approximately 85% (Gion et al., 2018; Locklear et al., 2020; McFarland et al., 2017).

The most prevalent challenge that Native American students encounter in regards to their education is chronic absenteeism (de Brey et al., 2019). The inability to reliably attend school causes students enormous problems as they work their way to graduation (Cvencek et al., 2018; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Wilcox, 2015). Many students that have truancy concerns are often retained (Ansari, & Gottfried, 2018; Gubbels et al., 2019; Kirksey & Gottfried, 2018) as their educational achievement has been shown to not be up to the standards set forth for each grade level (Ansari & Gottfried, 2018; Mancini, 2017; van den Toren et al., 2020). In the end, many students that have trouble with chronic absenteeism choose to drop out of school before graduation (Breaz, 2020; Gubbels et al., 2019; Mallett, 2015).

Other concerns can plague Native American students as they try and reach their goal of graduating high school (Ansari & Gottfried, 2018; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017). They have many out of school commitments, usually related to their culture, which can take up a lot of their time (Demmert et al., 2006; Safran & Safran, 1994; Soldier, 1997). They also face cultural differences with school personnel that may not understand the struggles that they encounter (Aschenbrener & Johnson, 2017; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Masta, 2018; Pierce, 2018).

Additional hurdles are seen in the differences between public schools on reservations and public schools off reservations (Lees et al., 2016; Mette & Stanoch, 2016; Richardson & Dinkins, 2014). The education that is offered at public schools on reservations is taught at a lower level (Andrade, 2014; Flynn et al., 2012; Lopez, 2018; Wilcox, 2015). This leads to Native American students on reservation schools scoring lower on standardized achievement

tests (Dupuis & Abrams, 2017; Lees et al., 2016). The majority of reservation schools are in remote areas that lack quality places of employment, and many tribal members see school as being unnecessary (Huyser et al., 2018; Richardson & McLeod, 2011). Public schools that are located on reservations also have to consider the distinct tribal culture that envelopes the school and how to operate within the local government and community (Mette & Stanoch, 2016; Richardson & McLeod, 2011). School leadership can often feel constraints from tribal members and the local system of government (Richardson & McLeod, 2011). These schools are also well-known for having a high employee turnover rate (Amiotte, 2008; Richardson & Dinkins, 2014; Thompson et al., 2008).

Research Questions

The intent of this study was to create research questions that address the lack of research regarding Native American students and their schooling experiences (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The successful graduation of Native American students is critical for the United States to undo inequities and promote social justice (Page et al., 2019). The research questions that this study aimed to answer included the following:

1. What do Native American students identify as their strengths in their ability to graduate high school within four years of starting?
- 1b. How do Native American high school students overcome academic challenges?
2. What do Native American students identify as their challenges in their ability to graduate high school within four years of starting?
3. To what extent did attending a public reservation school impact one's ability to graduate on-time without dropping out?

Description of Terms

The following key terms and definitions will be useful in better understanding this research proposal. The following words were deemed to be vital to the study and are used throughout (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). These key terms were chosen as to provide the reader with other words to define a term (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008).

Acculturation. The degree to which individuals identify with and adhere to the cultural practices both of their heritage communities and of the dominant societies in which they live (Yetter & Foutch, 2017).

Chronic absenteeism. Excused or unexcused absences that accumulate to more than 10% of the school year (Knopf, 2019).

Extracurricular participation. Structured participation in organized group activities outside of the regular school curriculum (Schwartz et al., 2015).

Resiliency. The ability to adapt in the face of adversity which helps buffer the negative effects on both mental and physical health (Schure et al., 2013).

School truancy. Any intentional unauthorized or illegal absence from school (Gase et al., 2016).

Significance of the Study

Native American students have the greatest risk of dropping out of school when compared to all other ethnicities (Aschenbrener, & Johnson, 2017; Buckley et al., 2020; Yetter, & Foutch, 2017). Individuals who graduate high school tend to have more fruitful lives than those who do not (Buckley et al., 2020; Jha & Stearns, 2018; Locklear et al., 2020; Sutin et al., 2017). Earning a high school diploma is the main reason that individuals are able to attain a better job and have the option of attending college (Buckley et al., 2020; Jimerson et al., 2016;

Lawrence et al., 2016; Lovelace et al., 2017). Although many research studies have been performed regarding the success (Mosholder et al., 2016; Tachine et al., 2017; McFarland et al., 2017) and failure rates (Lowe, 2005; Lundberg, 2007; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004) of Native American students in all levels of schooling, the purpose of this study was to investigate Native American high school students and how some are able to graduate despite the numerous challenges that they face. Data obtained from this study may help those who work with Native American students. Determining the educational needs of Native American students and working to bridge the gap between them and other groups of students can help Native American students to integrate into the dominant culture more easily while still not losing their past. This way Native American people can be prosperous both in education and in the workforce. More would be able to serve as positive role models for those who will follow in their footsteps. This research will contribute to the examination while advancing existing knowledge. The data obtained can help give more insight into aiding Native American students improve their attendance while refining schools that work with from Native American tribes.

Overview of Research Methods

Increasing the graduation rates for Native American students is a widespread issue for the United States education system (de Brey et al., 2019; Musu-Gillette, 2017). Although the percentage of Native American students earning their high school diplomas has been increasing, they still lag behind non-Native American students (de Brey et al., 2019; Musu-Gillette, 2017). Contributing to the problem is the low attendance rates of many Native American student (de Brey et al., 2019). High rates of absenteeism restricts the ability of students to keep up with their peers and continue on until graduation (Cvencek et al., 2018; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Wilcox, 2015).

A qualitative methodology was chosen for this study because it stresses the participants' lived experiences and viewpoints (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Qualitative research design can be used to determine the common experiences of a group of people and allows for participants to describe their lives (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). It relates with studies that seek to find out about people and cultures that are different from them, and it is able to identify, examine, and understand a group over time (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Information that is learned from qualitative data can lead to smaller sample sizes in comparison to other studies; however, the knowledge obtained is very beneficial (Lanka et al., 2021).

The researcher used a purposeful sampling to find the first wave of participants and then used snowball sampling to obtain the rest. The researcher conducted interviews with each participant to obtain the data used in the study. The information was transcribed, coded, and grouped based upon common themes. These common themes presented a story that showed the challenges and successes that Native Americans experience regarding their education.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Introduction

Earning a high school diploma has been proven to have a significant impact on individuals (Buckley et al., 2020; Jha & Stearns, 2018; Locklear et al., 2020; Lovelace et al., 2017). It allows for a person to access higher education and a better job with more income (Buckley et al., 2020; Lawrence et al., 2016; Lovelace et al., 2017; Zaff et al., 2017), while those who are unable to successfully complete their schooling face more instances of poverty and confinement (Jimerson et al., 2016; Zaff et al., 2017; Zajacova, 2012). Additionally, it has been shown that those who do not graduate high school suffer from more negative health issues (Buckley et al., 2020; Kaplan et al., 2017; Locklear et al., 2020) and a shorter lifespan (Everett et al., 2013; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Sutin et al., 2017).

High school graduation rates in the United States can vary based on the ethnicity of a student (de Brey et al., 2019; Musu-Gillette, 2017). For the most part, minority students have a more difficult time completing high school than their non-minority counterparts (de Brey et al., 2019; Musu-Gillette, 2017). Overall, Native American students have the lowest graduation rates when comparing all ethnicities in the United States (de Brey et al., 2019; Musu-Gillette, 2017). Currently, less than 85% of Native American students earn a high school diploma (Gion et al., 2018; Locklear et al., 2020; McFarland et al., 2017). When breaking the numbers down even further, some areas of America have shown that only roughly 40% of Native Americans have successfully completed high school (Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017).

One of the greatest issues that Native American students face in their schooling is consistent attendance (de Brey et al., 2019). Chronic absenteeism has been shown to have

significant consequences for students in their quest to graduate high school (Cvencek et al., 2018; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Wilcox, 2015). The inability to consistently attend school can lead to lower grades (Ansari & Gottfried, 2018; Mancini, 2017; van den Toren et al., 2020), conduct issues (Breaz, 2020; Gubbels et al., 2019; van den Toren et al., 2021), poor peer relationships (Breaz, 2020; Epstein et al., 2020; Pijl et al., 2021), and ultimately dropping out of high school (Breaz, 2020; Gubbels et al., 2019; Mallett, 2015).

However, many other issues persist that negatively affect Native Americans and their ability to complete their schooling (Ansari & Gottfried, 2018; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017). Native American culture pushes them to spend their time on activities other than schooling (Demmert et al., 2006; Safran & Safran, 1994; Soldier, 1997). Another common issue that many Native American students face that cause them to drop out of school is teenage pregnancy (Garcia, 2020; Griese et al., 2016; Hanson et al., 2014; McCarron et al., 2018). Native Americans also have the highest rates of being identified as need special education services (Gion et al., 2018; Hussain et al., 2018; Locklear et al., 2020; McFarland et al., 2017). Native American students feel like out of place in educational settings (Fryberg & Stephens, 2010; Rees et al., 2014; Serafini et al., 2017) due to high interactions with educators of different cultures (Aschenbrener & Johnson, 2017; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Masta, 2018; Pierce, 2018).

The literature review will offer comprehensive information as it relates to Native American students. The main areas that can affect their ability to do well educationally include the following:

- 1) Chronic absenteeism at school
- 2) How their culture fits with schools

- 3) The lifestyle of those who live on reservations
- 4) How the media represents Native Americans and gives them poor role models
- 5) The realities of attending a school located on a Native American reservation
- 6) The specific issues that Native American students face, and
- 7) How to adapt current educational trends to help Native American students attain success in their education.

This review provides an understanding of the current research available, including gaps in research validating the need for this study.

Chronic School Absenteeism

Chronic school absenteeism is a major problem in the education system (Breaz, 2020; Kirksey & Gottfried, 2018; van den Toren et al., 2020). The ability of a student to consistently attend school directly correlates to their academic achievement (Ansari, & Purtell, 2018; Breaz, 2020; Cosgrove et al., 2018; Pijl et al., 2021) with lack of consistent attendance leading to the disengagement of a student (Goldstein et al., 2003; Kirksey & Gottfried, 2018; Schoeneberger, 2012). In fact, absenteeism in early elementary school proved to be an indicator of a student dropping out in high school (Breaz, 2020; Kirksey & Gottfried, 2018; Knopf, 2019; London et al., 2016). Learners who have higher rates of absenteeism have lower grades than those who are consistently present (Ansari & Gottfried, 2018; Mancini, 2017; van den Toren et al., 2020). Those pupils also have lower gains on standardized tests when compared with peers who regularly attended school (Ansari & Purtell, 2018; Goldstein et al., 2003; London et al., 2016). Research has shown that regular attendance had a higher impact on a student's grade point average than any other variable (Ansari & Purtell, 2018; Mancini, 2017).

Students with poor attendance are also much more likely to be retained and have to repeat their schooling (Ansari, & Gottfried, 2018; Gubbels et al, 2019; Kirksey & Gottfried, 2018). Students considered at-risk for not graduating high school had more school truancy issues than those students who were on track to advance with their peers (Gubbels et al., 2019; Lovelace et al., 2017; Pflug & Schneider, 2016). Schoolchildren were more likely to attend school when it was either mandatory or strongly encouraged (Hickman et al., 2008; Kearney & Graczyk, 2013; Mancini, 2017). The ability of a student to reliably make it to school every day is an indicator of their motivation towards academic achievement (Balkis et al., 2016; London et al., 2016; Mancini, 2017). High absenteeism also shows a high association with behavior concerns (Breaz, 2020; Gubbels et al., 2019; Knopf, 2019; London et al., 2016; van den Toren et al., 2021).

Some common reasons for school truancy include personal emergencies and school issues (Breaz, 2020; Epstein et al., 2020; Knopf, 2019; Stripling, 2019; van den Toren et al., 2020). Mobility has also been shown to have an immense impact on the ability of a student to consistently attend school (Clemens et al., 2016; Knopf, 2019). Students who exhibit chronic absenteeism have also shown mental health issues (Breaz, 2020; Epstein et al., 2020; Knopf, 2019; Stripling, 2019). These mental health issues can extend into adulthood and increase the chance that a person will make risky life choices (Finning et al., 2017; Mallett, 2015; Skedgell & Kearney, 2016).

High rates of absenteeism also cause students to miss out on building relationships with classmates (Breaz, 2020; Epstein et al., 2018; Epstein et al., 2020; Pijl et al., 2021), as schools are hubs for children to meet others and create bonds (Pijl et al., 2021; Rees et al., 2014). For many students, the inability to consistently attend school can cause psychosocial stress (Epstein et al., 2020; Pflug & Schneider, 2016; van den Toren et al., 2020) while also lowering the self-

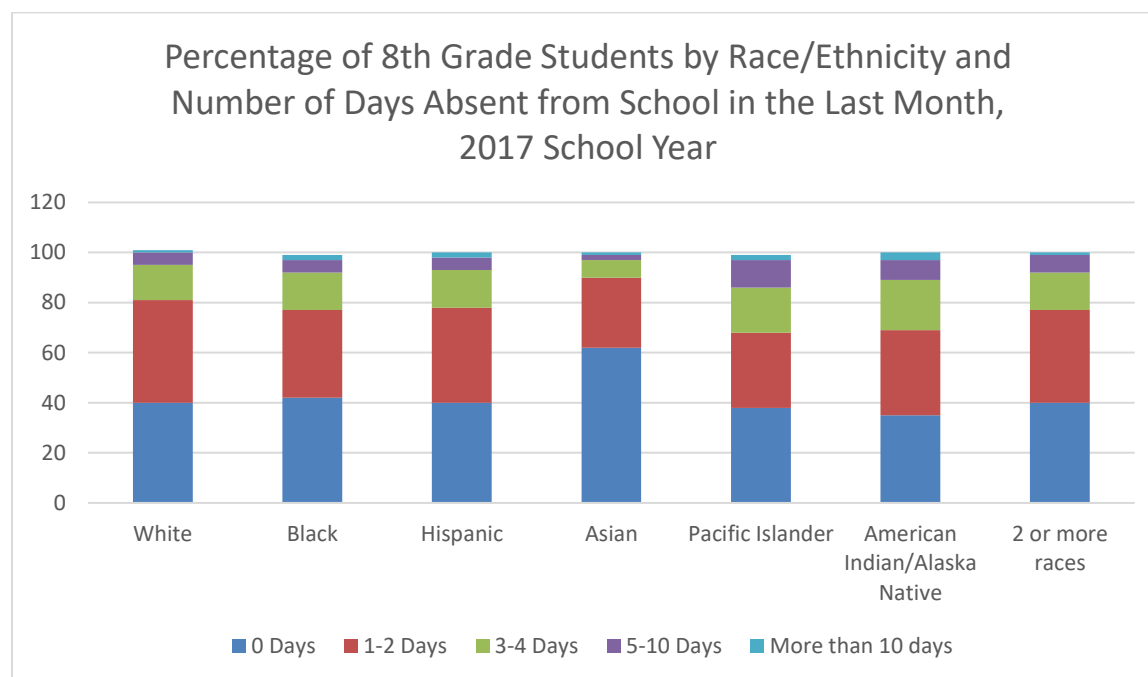
esteem of said students (London et al., 2016; Reid, 2012). In the long run, chronic school truancy can lead to a host of other issues (Breaz, 2020; Epstein et al., 2020; Gubbels et al., 2019; van den Toren et al., 2020). Some of the more common issues include dropping out of school, unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse (Breaz, 2020; Gubbels et al., 2019; Mallett, 2015), health concerns (Breaz, 2020; Epstein et al., 2020; Pflug & Schneider, 2016), and problems in future relationships (Epstein et al., 2020; Pflug & Schneider, 2016).

Chronic Absenteeism and Minority Students

Overall, minority students have more chronic school absentee issues than non-minority students (Cvencek et al., 2018; Gubbels et al., 2019), and Native American students have the lowest attendance rates of any ethnicity (de Brey et al., 2019). Chronic absenteeism interferes with the capability of Native American students to perform well in school (Cvencek, et al., 2018; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Wilcox, 2015). Some common reasons for the high rate of absenteeism include attending cultural activities, and family issues (Ortiz & Boyer, 2003; Wilcox, 2015). Figure 3 presents the percentage number of days absent from school for 8th grade students living in the United States in the last month of the 2017 school year and is divided by race and ethnicity.

Figure 3

Percentage of 8th Grade Students by Race/Ethnicity and Number of Days Absent from School in the Last Month, 2017 School Year



Note. From “Percentage of 8th Grade Students by Race/Ethnicity and Number of Days Absent from School in the Last Month, 2017 School Year,” by U.S. Department of Education. 2019.
(<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019038.pdf>)

Native Americans and the Education System

Native Americans currently comprise about 1.5% of the total population in the United States (Blair et al., 2021; Garcia, 2020; Herrick & Mendez, 2019; Whitford, 2017). Table 1 displays the percentage of the population of the United States by race and ethnicity in 2000 and 2017.

Table 1

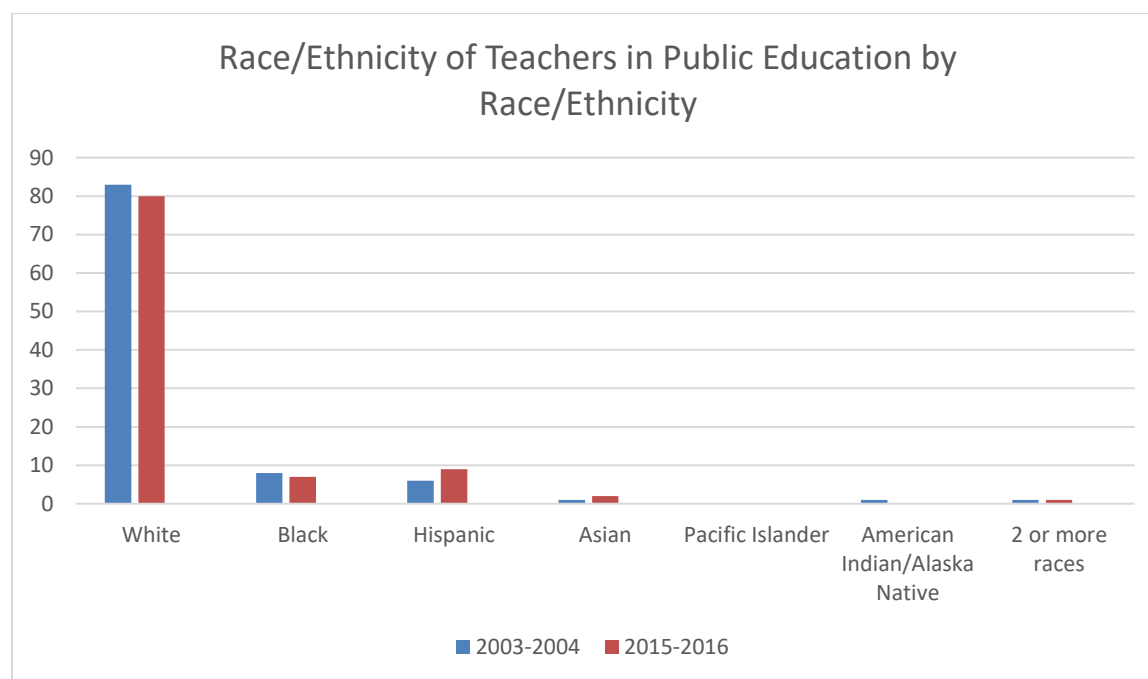
Percentage Distribution of the U.S. Resident Population 5 to 17 years old, by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	2000	2017
White	62%	51%
Black	15%	14%
Hispanic	16%	25%
Asian	3%	5%
Pacific Islander	Less than 1%	Less than 1%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1%	1%
2 or more races	2%	4%

Note. From “Percentage Distribution of the U.S. Resident Population 5 to 17 years old, by Race/Ethnicity,” by U.S. Department of Education. 2019. (<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019038.pdf>)

Out of that percentage, nearly one third of Native Americans are under the age of 18 (O’Keefe et al., 2021; Sarche et al., 2009; Zyromski et al., 2011). Native American students who attend public schools have been shown to struggle more than students of other ethnicities (Aschenbrener & Johnson, 2017; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Locklear et al., 2020). The majority of public school teachers have a different ethnic background and Native Americans struggle trusting people from outside their culture (Aschenbrener & Johnson, 2017; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Masta, 2018; Pierce, 2018). Figure 4 expresses the race and ethnicity of public education schoolteachers in the United States during the 2003-2004 school year and the 2015-2016 school year.

Figure 4

Race/Ethnicity of Teachers in Public Education by Race/Ethnicity

*Pacific Islander 2003-2004, 2015-2016, and American Indian/Alaska Native 2015-2016 rounds to zero

Note. From “Race/Ethnicity of Teachers in Public Education by Race/Ethnicity,” by U.S. Department of Education. 2019.
(<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019038.pdf>)

A traditional view of education is not valued in most Native American tribes (Buckley et al., 2020; Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2014; Huyser et al., 2018). A major reason why Native American students have lower achievement scores is because they use their free time doing traditional activities such as ceremonies, learning their Native American language, exploring spirituality, and being in nature (Demmert et al., 2006; Safran & Safran, 1994; Soldier, 1997). This creates a gap when other students are doing homework, reading, or learning more about the world around them (Demmert et al., 2006). Historically, Native American youths were educated by someone in their tribe, preferably a family member or elder (Demmert et al., 2006; House et

al., 2006; Quijada Cerecer, 2013; Tharp, 2006). Lessons were based around either skills that they would need as an adult or clan/family history (Demmert, Grissmer, & Towner, 2006; Pierce, 2018). This could explain why many Native American students are unable to list many people they know who have attended college (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2014; Fryberg & Stephens, 2010). Instead of learning what we now typically think of as traditional subjects, they would learn life skills to help them survive (Bowman, 2003; Demmert, McCardle, et al., 2006; House et al., 2006).

Native American Culture

Native American culture encourages a variety of different ideals including a harmonious relationship with nature, cooperation not competition (with success being seen as a group effort--even if it is just an individual), strong family ties, and a high respect for elders (Guardia & Evans, 2008; House et al., 2006; Wynia, 2001). Native American youth also dislike disagreements as they do not like to bring shame upon others (Brayboy, 2004; Lowe 2002; Safran & Safran, 1994). They don't like to share their feelings as privacy is highly valued, nor do they like to ask questions (Bolea, 2012; Brayboy, 2004; Safran & Safran, 1994). These differences are most often observed when a teacher confronts a student's behavioral issues, as Native American students do not like to be disciplined in front of a group (Masta, 2018; Safran & Safran, 1994). It makes them feel awkward as they don't like to be singled out (Aragon, 2004; Griner & Smith, 2006; Harman, 2017). They also do not look people in the eyes as it is a sign of disrespect in their culture (Coleman et al., 2001; Guardia & Evans, 2008; Wynia, 2001). Native Americans see verbal communication as meaningful and do not often engage in small talk; although as a group, they have a great sense of humor (Thornton & Sanchez, 2010; Wynia, 2001). As a group, they also learn differently (Bolea, 2012; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Tharp, 2006;

Wilcox, 2015). Native American people are careful observers and learn best by doing things (Jeffries et al., 2002; Safran & Safran, 1994). Teachers also need to use a more holistic approach to educating Native American students by including a balance of social, cultural, and emotional theories (Richardson & Dinkins, 2014; Safran & Safran, 1994; Thompson et al., 2008).

Native American Needs in Education

Native Americans have struggled educationally, especially in postsecondary education (Demmert, 2005; Fish et al., 2017; Lundberg, 2014; McClellan et al., 2004). Native American people make up a small portion of the population in the United States, and they make up an even smaller percentage of students who attend college (Jackson et al., 2003; Lowe, 2005; McClellan et al., 2005). Educators who teach Native American students need to have a good understanding of their culture and values (Masta, 2018; Torres, 2017; Whitford, 2017). Native American students need to have a sense of belonging (Dolezal et al., 2021; Harman, 2017; Hussain et al., 2018; Tachine et al., 2017). They do not like to stand out and do things individually, making it harder for them to actively participate in classroom activities (Masta, 2018; Verbos et al., 2011; Williams & Shipley, 2018). Teachers need to use different teaching methods as Native American students learn differently (Morgan, 2009; Wynia, 2001). Many Native American students struggle with activities pertaining to time (Guardia & Evans, 2008; Lowe, 2002; Pewewardy & Fitzpatrick, 2009), such as taking assessments in a predetermined duration (Soldier, 1997; Thomason, 2012). Educators also need to encourage Native American students to feel proud of their heritage (Masta, 2018; Soldier, 1997).

“Rez Life”

For Native Americans who live on reservations, life is very different compared to the lives of people who reside elsewhere (Albuja et al., 2021; Collings Eves, 2014; Paul et al., 2017;

Richardson & Dinkins, 2014). Native American reservations were created to serve as a new area for evacuated people, a prison site for the suppression of precarious individuals, and a re-education place for the conversion of all people (Burhansstipov, 2008; Collings Eves, 2014). Native Americans were removed from their homelands to areas that were not being used by White Europeans (Connolly et al., 2019; Huyser et al., 2018; Tuitt et al., 2019). The United States government wanted any land with valuable resources (Bo, 2016; Connolly et al., 2019; Jacobs, 2019). Native Americans were forced to live on land that had poor soil and were taught to farm it (Bo, 2016; Collings Eves, 2014; Davis et al., 2016). This had a big impact on Native Americans as land not only provided them with food but, it also connected them with nature and their spirituality (Bo, 2016; Collings Eves, 2014; Connolly et al., 2019). The formation of reservations caused disturbance to the traditional routine that Native Americans enjoyed (Collings Eves, 2014; DeMarni et al., 2017).

Historically, the United States government had different stages on how it dealt with Native Americans, which were removal, reservations, reorganization, termination, and self-determination (Carstarphen & Sanchez, 2010; Talley, 2018). During the time of termination, many Native Americans moved to cities and off of reservations (Davis et al., 2016; Lujan, 2014; Tuitt et al., 2019). At the time, the United States government believed this relocation was a positive thing, as they saw the extreme poverty that existed on reservations (Collings Eves, 2014; Davis et al., 2016). The government hoped to train Native Americans so that they could be gainfully employed—usually in factories and other blue collar jobs (Burhansstipov, 2008; Soldier, 1997). Although, it is very common for Native Americans to move back and forth between cities and reservations (Burhansstipov, 2008; Tuitt et al., 2019), Native Americans who live on reservations sometimes consider those who move off to no longer be a part of the tribal

community (Burhansstipov, 2008; Dickerson et al., 2016; Jacobs, 2019). This is due to having less opportunities to practice their customs and less ancestral ties than those who continue living on reservations (Serafini et al., 2017; Stumblingbear-Riddle & Romans, 2012).

Reservation life offers a setting in which Native Americans can carry on some of their traditions, especially passing down their language, stories, and the arts (Collings Eves, 2014; Huyser et al., 2018; Paul et al., 2017). Living on a reservation allows Native Americans to live a freer lifestyle with less social division (Brown et al., 2017; Huyser et al., 2018). Also, by living in proximity with people who have the same ethnicity as them, they feel less stress than they would living in a more diverse community (Richardson & Dinkins, 2014; Williams & Merten, 2014). However, many outcomes are worse for those Native Americans who choose to live on a reservation as opposed to any other locale (Campbell & Troyer, 2007; Garcia, 2020), including higher levels of substance abuse (Doria et al., 2021; Landers et al., 2017; Stanley et al., 2021).

The United States government has done many things to try and help reduce unemployment on Native American reservations (Davis et al., 2016; MacEachron & Gustavsson, 2005). They have set up vocational training and offered help in finding jobs (Davis et al., 2016; Soldier, 1997). Yet, the unemployment rate on some reservations is around 80% (Davis et al., 2016; Richardson & Dinkins, 2014; Stowe, 2017), and reservation living Native American students also have higher poverty rates than those living elsewhere (Brown et al., 2017; Sarche, & Spicer, 2008; Thornton & Sanchez, 2010). Some tribal communities have poverty rates that exceed 60% (Davis et al., 2016; Richardson & Dinkins, 2014; Stowe, 2017). Throughout all of this, Native American people who live on reservations have been proven to be more positive about their lives than those who live elsewhere (Sahota, 2019a; Stumblingbear-Riddle & Romans, 2012).

Ethnic Identity and the Melting Pot

A sense of identity is important, as it helps Native American people feel like they are a part of a group (Hoffman et al., 2021; Ore et al., 2016; Smokowski et al., 2014). It helps connect them to their past and gives them a sense of community (Cech et al., 2019; Herrick, 2018; Hoffman et al., 2021). This strong connection to their past can help serve as a protective element to the adversity that they face in the present (Garcia, 2020; Hoffman et al., 2021; Munnely & Hishinuma, 2020). The ability of Native American youth to strengthen their ethnic identity is related to their capability to build up their resilience and self-worth (Hoffman et al., 2021; Ore et al., 2016; Smokowski et al., 2014). Native American students who have a strong sense of ethnic identity have been shown to perform better academically (Lopez & Bobroff, 2019; Thompson et al., 2013; Ward et al., 2014). Ethnic identity has also been linked to the ability to have a positive outlook for an individual's future (Lewis et al., 2017; Smokowski et al., 2014). The best way for Native Americans to feel a greater attachment to their ethnicity is to participate in traditional activities (Paul et al., 2017; Schiefer & Krahe, 2014; Smokowski et al., 2014). As Native Americans get older, their sense of ethnic identity strengthens (Kenyon & Carter, 2011; Ore et al., 2016). Native American females have been shown to have a greater sense of ethnic identity than males (Cech et al., 2019; Herrick, 2018; Hoffman et al., 2021). However, many Native Americans start to feel predicaments pertaining to their culture when they are in their early teens (Hoffman et al., 2021; Ore et al., 2016; Zyromski et al., 2011).

Native Americans are a varied group of people who encompass many cultures (Jacobs, 2019; Ore et al., 2016; Shinstine et al., 2015). Although a person may identify as Native American, the people who encompass that ethnicity are very diverse (Jacobs, 2019; Liebler & Ortyl, 2014; Liebler et al., 2016). Among all ethnicities, they have the highest proportion of

intermarriage, as over 50% are married to non-Native Americans (Herrick & Mendez, 2019; Jacobs, 2019; Munnelly & Hishinuma, 2020). The mixing of cultures can cause confusion in Native American children as they struggle with other peoples' perception of their heritage (Asdigian et al., 2018; Brown et al., 2017; Jacobs, 2019). Intermarriages can also lead Native Americans to lose their Native American identity, as many are assumed to be from the other ethnicity (Asdigian et al., 2018; Dickerson et al., 2016; Yetter & Foutch, 2017). Issues with mental health are common for Native Americans as many struggle with finding their identity (Campbell & Troyer, 2007; Smokowski et al., 2014; Yetter & Foutch, 2013). Microaggressions can be especially harmful for Native American people as they are aimed at their ethnic identity (Bombay et al., 2014; Gloppen et al., 2018; Lewis et al., 2017). Many Native Americans are currently trying to regain their culture after centuries of oppression including genocide, colonialism, and other atrocities (Connolly et al., 2019; Jacobs, 2019; Kelley, & Lowe, 2018).

More recent census data shows that the number of people who claim Native American ancestry greatly fluctuates (Connolly et al., 2019; Herrick, 2018; Leroux, 2018). People who are part Native American have been shown to change their identified race (Glick & Han, 2015; Liebler, & Ortyl, 2014; Liebler et al., 2016). It is believed that many Native Americans who are of mixed ethnicities have claimed to be non-Native American instead (Herrick, 2018; Liebler & Ortyl, 2014; Liebler et al., 2016). This shows how disconnected some Native American people are to their Native American ancestry (Liebler et al., 2016). Many other people with Native American ancestry downplay their culture in order to fit in with people of the majority (Liebler & Ortyl, 2014; Walton & Cohen, 2007).

Representations of Native Americans

The national media has not been kind towards Native Americans, which has severely affected their ability to find positive role models (Butler, 2018; Rodesiler & Premont, 2018; Turner, 2015). By using stereotypes and distorting how current Native Americans are viewed, the media has created an inaccurate representation of the history of Native American people (Butler, 2018; Cech et al., 2019; Silva et al., 2018). The most common depictions of Native Americans are either stereotypical 18th century inhabitants or present day addicts, such as alcoholics, drug abusers, or lower-class inhabitants (Leavitt et al., 2015; Mastro, 2015; Murtaza, & Bhatti, 2017).

The majority of Native American people believe that they are negatively portrayed on television and that the representations are incorrect as all Native Americans are homogeneous and no respect is given to the differences between Native Americans from different tribes (Butler, 2018; Green, 2017; Merskin, 1998; Merskin, 2014). Damaging depictions reinforce stereotypes of Native Americans and non-Native Americans that have long-lasting effects (Butler, 2018; Gonzalez et al., 2021; Huyser et al., 2018), making a clear point that a marginalized group of people is still worth less than the dominant culture (Butler, 2018; Johnson, 2011; Turner, 2015). Another issue that many see is that actors who depict Native Americans on television and movies are not Native American people (Baltazar, 2016; Butler, 2018; Murtaza & Bhatti, 2017).

Out of all groups of people, Native Americans were the least represented and had the most negative depictions on mainstream media (Fryberg & Stephens, 2010; Mastro, 2015; Tukachinsky et al., 2015). Non-minority people who were subjected to the negative interpretations of minorities were more likely to be prejudiced and antisocial towards people of

different cultures, while minority groups who saw how they were shown negatively by mass media were more likely to have poor self-esteem than their peers (Erhart & Hall, 2019; Green, 2017; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017; Mastro, 2015; Merskin, 2014).

Not only has the national media portrayed negative Native American stereotypes, but images and caricatures show up elsewhere, too (Erhart & Hall, 2019; Green, 2017; Murtaza & Bhatti, 2017; Turner, 2015). Businesses use outdated pictures and cartoons to try and sell their products, usually tobacco or food related (Green, 2017; Jacobs, 2019; Merskin, 2014). This occurs at the same time as professional and collegiate athletic teams use unfair representations of Native Americans as mascots (Butler, 2018; Elm et al., 2019; Erhart & Hall, 2019; Huyser et al., 2018). Symbols used are usually portrayed as cruel, untamed, and harsh (Rodesiler & Premont, 2018; Silva et al., 2018). These mascots have enough influence to remind Native American people of their past oppression (Johnson, 2011; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017; Turner, 2015) and stir up negative connotations in the minds of Native Americans and non-Native Americans (Burkley et al., 2017; Henderson et al., 2015; Leavitt et al., 2015).

Realities of Attending a Reservation School

Public schools located on Native American reservations are very different from non-reservation schools (Lees et al., 2016; Mette & Stanoch, 2016; Richardson & Dinkins, 2014). Native American students who attend public schools located on reservations score lower on standardized tests than their peers (Dupuis & Abrams, 2017; Lees et al., 2016), and many believe that the education received on reservation schools is subpar (Andrade, 2014; Flynn et al., 2012; Lopez, 2018; Wilcox, 2015). These factors contribute to the lack of educational success many Native Americans attain (Flynn et al., 2012; Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). Some of the main concerns of Native American students attending reservation schools include the following: help

seeking, low self-esteem, psychological distress and suicide ideation (Bee-Gates et al., 1996; Paul et al., 2017).

Native American students need to find a place where they feel like they belong (Bowman, 2003; Iverson, 2007; Masta, 2018). The worldviews of Native American students are also much different than youth of European descent, as are the things that they value, such as family, spirituality, and nature (Guardia & Evans, 2008; Richardson & Dinkins, 2014; Talley, 2018). Native American students are influenced educationally by elders, ancestral schooling departments, and tribal lawmaking (Bowman, 2003; Thompson et al., 2008). Many students also admit that they feel like they don't belong in their school (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015; Iverson, 2007).

Regular school attendance is a major issue for Native American students (de Brey et al., 2019; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Yetter & Foutch, 2014). Statistics show that Native American 8th grade students have the lowest attendance rates of any ethnicity (de Brey et al., 2019; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017). The main reason students chose not to attend classes pertained to a bad classroom environment (Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017; Turner et al., 2019). Bullying also played a role in students skipping school, with a greater impact in younger grades (Ansari & Gottfried, 2018; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Stripling, 2019). This comes with the majority of harassment aimed at minority students (Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017; Konold et al., 2017). Some of the most pressing needs Native American students deal with include school attendance, behavior issues, and academics (Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Flynn et al., 2012; Yetter & Foutch, 2014). Public schools located on reservations also have a high amount of unruly students (Flynn et al., 2012; Iverson, 2007; Thornton & Sanchez, 2010) and higher rates of violence than schools located elsewhere (Amiotte, 2008; Iverson, 2007; Pu et al., 2013).

Native Americans who live on reservations have a lower level of education than those who live in a different setting, as only approximately 67% have a high school diploma (Kitcheyan et al., 2017; Richardson & McLeod, 2011). Most reservations are located in isolated areas with the common viewpoint that traditional school is irrelevant and jobs are scarce (Huyser et al., 2018; Richardson & McLeod, 2011). Schools that are located on reservations must traverse unique cultures as well as other distinctive issues pertaining to economic, governmental, scholastic, and community (Mette & Stanoch, 2016; Richardson & McLeod, 2011). The main goal of these schools is to graduate as many Native American students as possible (Jeffries et al., 2002; Richardson & McLeod, 2011).

Educators in reservation schools must not only be able to function as quality teachers, but must also understand the history and values that the tribe espouses (Bird et al., 2013; Richardson & McLeod, 2011; Thompson et al., 2008). Administrators at reservation schools believe that their ability to lead is constrained by other challenges unique to reservation schools, such as the overreach of tribal government, too much bureaucracy, school funding, culture, and stakeholders who are resistant to change (Richardson & McLeod, 2011). Another issue that arises for school leaders is that many do not live in the community in which they work (Henderson et al., 2015). The turnover rate of employees at schools located on reservations is also high (Amiotte, 2008; Richardson & Dinkins, 2014; Thompson et al., 2008).

Extracurricular Participation

Native American high school students are less involved in before and after school-activities than peers of other ethnicities (Friese et al., 2015; Iverson, 2007). A common reason for this is the lack of resources in educational institutions that serve Native American students (Miller, 2013; Moilanen et al., 2014). This is especially true for Native American students that

attend schools located on reservations (Iverson, 2007; Moilanen et al., 2014). In many instances, the opportunity for extracurricular participation does not exist due to the school's lack of resources or the inability of students to find ample time with their cultural expectations (Frieese et al., 2015; Moilanen et al., 2014).

A student's extracurricular participation in activities has been shown to increase the chance of earning a high school diploma (Buckley et al., 2020; Hensen et al., 2017; Zaff et al., 2017). Future ambitions were also more positive for those who participated in extra-curricular activities compared to those of students who did not participate (Andrade, 2014; Bohnert & Garber, 2007; Darling, 2005). These activities provide opportunities for students to create positive relationships with peers and coaches (Buckley et al., 2020; Jimerson et al., 2016; Moilanen et al., 2014; Zaff, et al., 2017). Additionally, extra-curricular activities helps participants feel a greater sense of belonging, something especially important for students who come from poverty or are a minority (Schwartz et al., 2015; Zaff et al., 2017).

Participating in extracurricular activities also teaches youth how to handle adversity (Darling, 2005; McHale et al., 2005; Moilanen et al., 2014) and adjust emotionally to new situations while also increasing confidence (Bohnert & Garber, 2007; Fredericks & Eccles, 2005; McHale et al., 2005). Extracurricular participation helps students define their identity by participating in endeavors with peers (Bohnert & Garber, 2007; McHale et al., 2005; Schwartz et al., 2015). Those who join after-school athletics and clubs have also shown to have a more optimistic view of schooling (Andrade, 2014; Darling, 2005; Fredericks & Eccles, 2005). It has also been shown to lower the amount of substance abuse among those that participate (Bohnert & Garber, 2007; Hensen et al., 2017; Moilanen et al., 2014), while reducing depression (Bohnert & Garber, 2007; Fredericks & Eccles, 2005).

Special Issues that Affect Native American Communities

Native American students have much more to deal with compared to students of other ethnicities (Bullock et al., 2017; Hoyer, 2018; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017). They experience high rates of hardship and persecution, poverty, and deep-rooted suffering (Harman, 2017; Huyser et al., 2018; McKinley et al., 2020). Native Americans also face discrimination from people of European descent (Blair et al., 2021; Buckley et al., 2020; Majeno et al., 2020). This has an extremely negative impact on them, causing them to feel as though they have less worth than other people; it also makes them cynical when they encounter people of other cultures or ethnicities (Murtaza, & Bhatti, 2017; Thompson, 2013). Native American people have the highest rate of reported child abuse and neglect of any ethnicity (Brockie et al., 2015; Garcia, 2020; Sarche & Spicer, 2008).

Native American Women

Traditionally, the main role of Native American women is to develop their children to be productive members of the tribe (Hossain et al., 2011; McLeod, 2002; Napholz, 2000). Minority women face many issues in general society as well as within their own cultural communities (Campbell, 2016; Hardy & Brown-Rice, 2016; Hoyer, 2018). They frequently experience racism from the dominant culture and sexism from both the dominant culture and their own (Hardy & Brown-Rice, 2016; Smith, 2005). Minority women also face high rates of domestic abuse, as their cultures often see men as having more power and status (Hardy & Brown-Rice, 2016; Oetzel & Duran, 2004; Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020; Smith, 2005). Domestic violence is a major social issue in Native American communities, as Native Americans have the highest rate of reported partner violence (Chmielowska & Fuhr, 2017; Hardy & Brown-Rice, 2016; Rivera et al., 2018). The death rate due to domestic violence for Native American women is also higher

than every other ethnicity (Oetzel & Duran, 2004; Smith, 2005). Most minorities also have higher levels of poverty which makes women more dependent on men for financial reasons and has additionally been proven to correlate to higher instances of domestic violence (Campbell, 2016; Hardy & Brown-Rice, 2016).

Native American women have faced many other hardships, including the loss of their land, the killing of their families and tribes, and the denial of religious practices all due to the United States government (Campbell, 2016; Payne et al., 2018; Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020). Native American women who face domestic violence also feel like law enforcement ignores their claims, which leaves them with fewer options on how to handle their situations (Campbell, 2016; Hoyer, 2018). They also have to deal with cultural values and norms that encourage women to stay with abusive partners for the good of the family (Campbell, 2016; Hardy & Brown-Rice, 2016; Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020). This can leave them feeling unaccepted by their family and tribe (Campbell, 2016; Kasturirangan et al., 2004).

The rate of aggravated assault of Native Americans is more than two times the rest of the population in the United States (Hoyer, 2018; Hardy & Brown-Rice, 2016; Matamonsa-Bennett, 2015). In Native American culture, women are seen as less important than males, making it easier for them to be the victims (Matamonsa-Bennett, 2015; Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020). A woman who resides on reservation land also has more hoops to jump through when determining who has jurisdiction in reporting violence (Campbell, 2016; Connolly et al., 2019; Hoyer, 2018). Tribal governments and law enforcement also struggle when trying to bring Native American perpetrators to justice (Chmielowska & Fuhr, 2017; Hoyer, 2018; Martin & Danner, 2017). These issues can be related to funding, loss of authority, and forms of discrimination (Martin & Danner, 2017; Matamonsa-Bennett, 2015). When looking at domestic violence occurring

between Native Americans, substance use was a common factor in many instances (Campbell, 2016; Hardy & Brown-Rice, 2016; Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020). Along those lines, alcohol consumption is the most common denominator for those likely to commit domestic violence (Matamonasa-Bennett, 2015; Oetzel & Duran, 2004). Substance abuse has been proven to intensify domestic violence problems (Chmielowska & Fuhr, 2017; Hardy & Brown-Rice, 2016; Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020). Many men who self-identify as abusive towards their partners also report growing up in dysfunctional households with child abuse, neglect, and alcoholic parents (Matamonasa-Bennett, 2015). All of these issues can help contribute to Native American women being the most at risk for being identified with major depression (Wei et al., 2008).

Violence

In general society, Native Americans have experienced being the victims of violence more than every other cultural and ethnic group (Garcia, 2020; McKinley et al., 2020; Munnelly & Hishinuma, 2020; Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020). Native Americans, especially those among the ages of 12 and 19, are more likely than non-Native American people to be the targets of brutal crimes and assaults (Brockie et al., 2015; Garcia, 2020; Paul et al., 2017). Native American children are more likely than their peers of other races to have an accidental death (Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020; Sarche & Spicer, 2008). Native American youth are also much more likely than other ethnicities to engage in risky behaviors, such as not wearing seat belts, drinking and driving, and riding with a driver who has consumed alcohol (Amiotte et al., 2016; Sarche & Spicer, 2008; Shinstine et al., 2015). The rate of early death for Native Americans is over twice as high than non-Native Americans (O'Keefe et al., 2021; Sarche et al., 2009). Native Americans who have been the victim of violence have shown a strong link to bad health,

depression, and committing crimes (Hardy & Brown-Rice, 2016; McKinley et al., 2020; Turanovic & Pratt, 2016).

Physical Health

Native Americans are also prone to poor health (Connolly et al., 2019; Elm et al., 2019; Kelley & Lowe, 2018). The amount of Native American youths who are classified as obese is higher than non-Native American youths (Brown et al., 2018; Bullock et al., 2017; Kulinna et al., 2017). From 1998 to 2011, the rate of overweight Native American children rose from around 16% to over 21% (Sinley & Albrecht, 2016). It is believed that a lack of proper nutrition is a big reason why the health of Native American children is so poor (Connolly et al., 2019; Kulinna et al., 2017; Sinley & Albrecht, 2016). They also have a higher risk of lasting illnesses, including cancer, diabetes, and heart disease, when they are compared to other ethnicities (Connolly et al., 2019; Sinley & Albrecht, 2016). Poor health also has an impact on finances, as money needs to be spent on medication and doctor visits (Elm et al., 2019; Sinley & Albrecht, 2016). Being in poor health can also cause physical, psychological, and emotional problems (Asdigian et al., 2018; Raglan et al., 2015; Sinley & Albrecht, 2016).

Other health issues that greatly impact Native Americans include a fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) rate that is around 30 times higher than the rest of the United States (Paul et al., 2017) (which can cause bodily, intellectual, developmental, and behavior problems) (Cleversey et al., 2017; Garcia, 2020; Zobotka et al., 2017), higher rates of heart disease, HIV, diabetes (Locklear, 2017), chronic liver disease, cirrhosis, tuberculosis, pneumonia, and influenza (Braun & LaCounte, 2015; Sarche & Spicer, 2008; Sarche et al., 2009). Additionally, Native American people have high rates of sexually transmitted diseases compared to non-Native Americans (de Ravello et al., 2012; Pearson et al., 2015).

The average life expectancy for a Native Americans is lower than other ethnicities (Connolly et al., 2019; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Joe, 2001). Over 2% of Native American men die within the ages of 15 and 24 (Joe, 2001). The main ways that Native American men die are through mishaps, suicide, murder, cancer, heart disease, and alcohol abuse (Jacobs-Wingo et al., 2016; Joe, 2001). Accidents, including ones connected with vehicles, are one of the main reasons for death for Native American, especially in association with alcohol (Connolly et al., 2019; Joe, 2001). Some reasons people attribute to this include the following: many Native American reservations have poor roads, vehicles are usually unsafe, and many reservations outlaw the sale of alcohol meaning they have to drive farther to purchase it (Joe, 2001; Moilanen et al., 2014; Shinstine et al., 2015). Other mishaps that cause death for Native Americans include high risk jobs and dangerous athletic competitions (Hardy & Brown-Rice, 2016; Joe, 2001). Suicide and homicide are common violent deaths for Native American men (Braun & LaCounte, 2015; Qiao, & Bell, 2017, Sarche et al., 2017). Common reasons for suicide include family difficulties, low self-esteem, sadness, and feeling overwhelmed (Dolezal et al., 2021; Harman, 2017; Joe, 2001).

Mental Health Issues

Mental health issues are also more common in Native Americans than in the general population (Garcia, 2020; McKinley et al., 2020; O'Keefe et al., 2021). Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and major depression rates are much higher for Native American adults when compared to the rest of America (Garcia, 2020; McKinley et al., 2020). Many Native Americans who are victims of domestic violence are often also diagnosed with PTSD (Paul et al., 2017; Rivera et al., 2018; Sarche et al., 2017). Many Native American youths also suffer from mental health issues, the more common areas identified as disorderly conduct disorders (ODD), anxiety

conditions, and temperament disorders (Kopak & Kulick, 2017; Yetter & Foutch, 2017). Some common adverse juvenile experiences that can create long lasting psychological issues include high rates of emotional abuse, neglect, or witnessing violence (Cayir et al., 2018; Hardy & Brown-Rice, 2016; Sarche et al., 2017). Native American youths also have more documented instances of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (Sarche & Spicer, 2008; Yetter & Foutch, 2017). Issues related to mental health are also a leading cause for high school students to withdraw from school (Fortin et al., 2013; Freudenberg & Ruglis, 2007). Part of this is because the microaggressions that Native American students face at school can lead to physical and mental health issues (Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017; Majeno et al., 2020).

Many mental health issues experienced by Native Americans can be traced to historical trauma, a loss of identity, and how they were treated by Europeans and the people in power of the United States (Doria et al., 2021; Elm et al., 2019; Garcia, 2020; O’Keefe et al., 2021; Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020). Historical trauma has had an enormous negative impact on the lives of Native American people, creating internalized persecution (Doria et al., 2021; Garcia, 2020; Hussain et al., 2018; Paul et al., 2017; Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020; Talley, 2018). The main ways it is currently seen is in the areas of excessive drug use (Doria et al., 2021; Fish et al., 2017; Garcia, 2020; O’Keefe et al., 2021), high rates of alcohol dependence (Garcia, 2020; O’Keefe et al., 2021; Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020; Swaim & Stanley, 2020), and the loss of Native American languages (Carjuzaa, 2017; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Stowe, 2017; Williams & Shipley, 2018). However, Native American students who have a greater sense of cultural identity have been shown to have better mental health (Hoffman et al., 2021; Kelley et al., 2015; Sahota, 2019a).

Substance Abuse

Many Native American youths have issues with substance abuse, making up one of the highest percentages of their population that use drug and alcohol (Albuja et al., 2021; Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020; Schick et al., 2020; Stanley et al., 2021; Swaim & Stanley, 2020). A leading cause of substance abuse in Native Americans can be traced back to the persecution and trauma their ancestors faced (Albuja et al., 2021; Gonzalez et al., 2021; O’Keefe et al., 2021; Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020). Other reasons for the high amount of alcohol abuse include less law enforcement, the inability of their community to have shared objectives, the lower stigma placed upon heavy drinkers by the public (Friese et al., 2015), the high amount of stress they experience (Cole et al., 2020; Whitesell et al., 2014; Yetter & Foutch, 2013), and the way they are treated by other racial and ethnic groups (Gonzalez et al., 2021; Rees et al., 2014). Most Native American youth are first offered alcohol by people they are related to or an unrelated grownup rather than a peer (Rees et al., 2014; Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020). Programs that some tribes have adopted include peer counseling, involving parents, various recreational activities, and anti-drug and alcohol speakers (Moore et al., 2018; Navarro et al., 1997). More parental supervision has shown to lower the use of marijuana for Native American youth (Ni et al., 2017; Moon et al., 2014; Whitesell et al., 2014).

Peers were a big influencer on whether a student used illegal substances (McCarron et al., 2018; Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020; Swaim & Stanley, 2020). Those students who had strong friendships at school were much less likely to have peers use narcotics (Garrett et al., 2013; Whitesell et al., 2014). Parents also play an important role in deterring youth to partake in illegal substances (Ni et al., 2017; Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020; Swaim & Stanley, 2020). When determining how to best combat illegal drug use among Native American youths, it was determined that mediations should be family-based (Garrett et al., 2013; McCarron et al., 2018).

In addition, the Native American death rate when alcohol is involved is much higher than other ethnicities (Gonzalez et al., 2021; Lucero & Bussey, 2015; Whitesell et al., 2014).

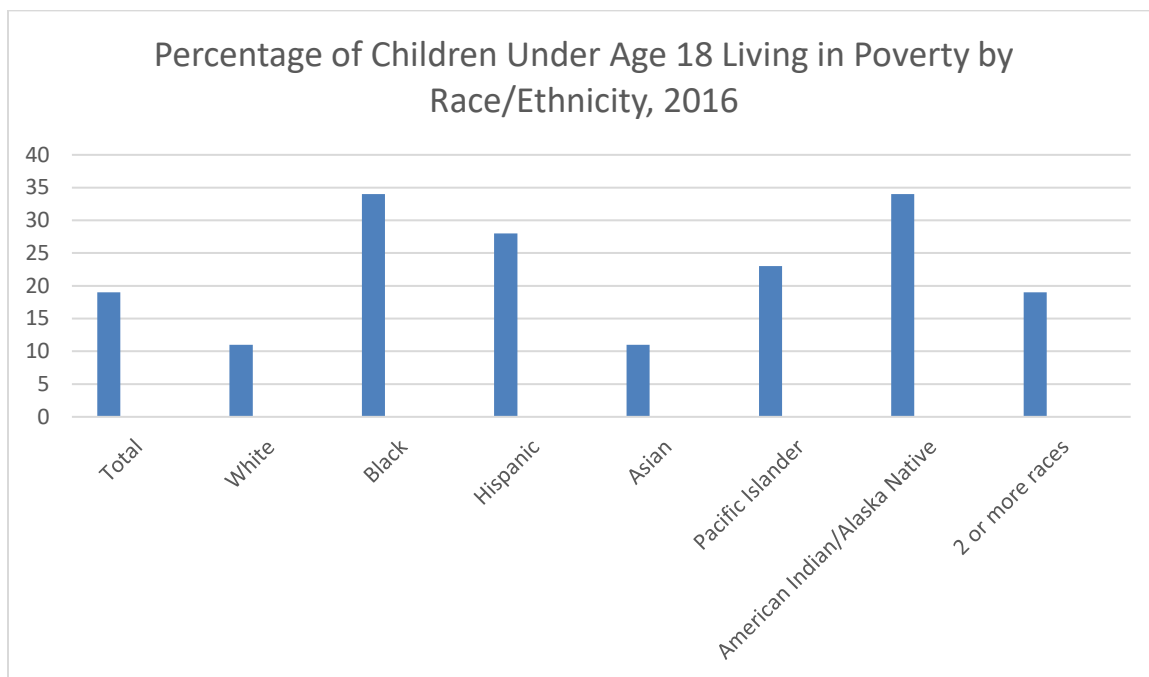
Poverty

Native American families also have issues that can lead to students' poor academic performances (Logan & Burdick-Will, 2015; Richardson et al., 2011; Thompson, 2013).

Minority students had higher poverty rates than non-Native Americans, showing a high correlation between poverty and lower academic achievement (Brown et al., 2018; Dupuis & Abrams, 2017; Kitcheyan et al., 2017). Native American people have the highest rate of poverty in the United States (Garrett et al., 2013; Glick & Han, 2015; Mathers, 2012). Homelessness is another issue for many Native Americans (Cole et al., 2020; Connolly et al., 2019; Toombs et al., 2021). Some of the suspected causes of homelessness for Native American people include unaffordable housing, dense reservation population, lack of jobs or skillset needed, and the higher than average percentage of people that do not have jobs (Cole et al., 2020). Figure 5 displays the percentage of children under the age of 18 that live in poverty in the United States in 2016 by race and ethnicity.

Figure 5

Percentage of Children Under Age 18 Living in Poverty by Race/Ethnicity, 2016



Note. From “Percentage of Children Under Age 18 Living in Poverty by Race/Ethnicity, 2016,” by U.S. Department of Education. 2019. (<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019038.pdf>)

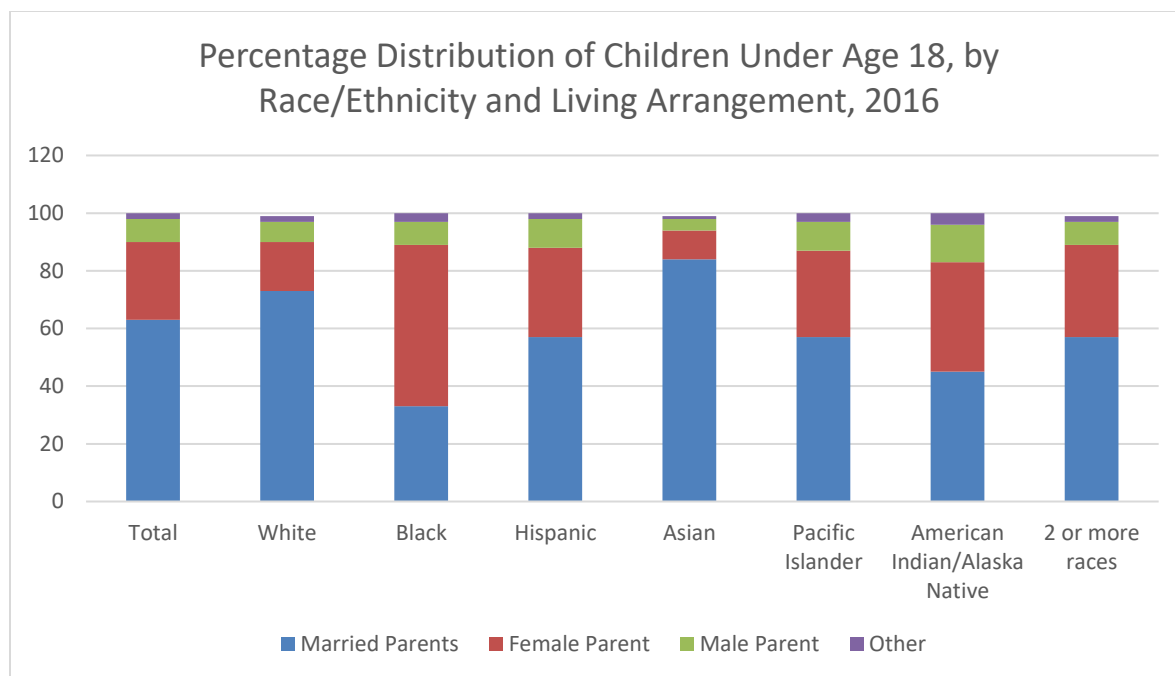
Those living in poverty have a higher rate of chronic absenteeism than their peers (Breaz, 2020; Knopf, 2019; London et al., 2016; Pflug & Schneider, 2016). A high rate of poverty has a proven relationship with a student dropping out of school (Bowers et al., 2013; Fortin et al., 2013). Due to growing up in poverty, many Native American high school students prioritize getting a job over regularly attending school (Jeffries et al., 2002). Families with more income are able to provide children with more experiences which in turn helps with their development (Duncan et al., 2013; Sutin et al., 2017). Higher quality educational institutions are also more accessible as income increases (Duncan et al., 2013). Mental health is also better for people that

are not associated with poverty (MacDonnell et al., 2021; Toombs et al., 2018). The parenting style used most by people that live in financial hardships is based more on punishments rather than learning, which can hinder a child's growth (Duncan et al., 2010; Duncan et al., 2011; Duncan et al., 2013).

The low socioeconomic rate of Native Americans is more than twice the rest of the United States, including 27% of Native American families with children and over 30% with children that are 5 years old and younger (Sarche & Spicer, 2008; Sarche et al., 2017). The percentage of Native Americans who live in poverty is around 30% which is higher than any other ethnicity (Locklear, 2017; McFarland et al., 2017; Sarche et al., 2017). Poverty also impacts the amount of people that reside together (Elm et al., 2019; Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Sahota, 2019b; Sarche et al., 2017; Toombs et al., 2021). This creates a lot of stress when small houses have large families living together (Elm et al., 2019; Sahota, 2019b; Sugrue et al., 2016). Native Americans also have a lot of housing instability (Jeffries et al., 2002; Lujan, 2014; Pearson et al., 2015; Toombs et al., 2021). Figure 6 presents the percentage distribution of children under the age of 18 by race and ethnicity and their living arrangements in 2016.

Figure 6

Percentage Distribution of Children Under Age 18, by Race/Ethnicity and Living Arrangement, 2016



Note. From “Percentage Distribution of Children Under Age 18, by Race/Ethnicity and Living Arrangement, 2016,” by U.S. Department of Education. 2019. (<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019038.pdf>)

Family

Native Americans have the youngest mothers, the least amount of two-parent households (Dippel et al., 2017; Ginsburg et al., 2008; Raglan et al., 2015), and the most children (Demmert, Grissmer, Towner, 2006). In addition, they have high rates of inadequate pre-natal care and post-natal death, which amounts to around two times the rates for Americans of European descent (Johansson et al., 2013; Raglan et al., 2015; Sarche et al., 2009). They also have elevated rates of preterm babies (Ferranti et al., 2019; Heaton et al., 2018; Raglan et al., 2015).

The diet of expectant Native American women has been shown to lack key nutrients needed for healthy babies (Ferranti et al., 2019). Contraceptives are also used by Native Americans at a lower rate than non-Native Americans (de Ravello et al., 2012; Hanson et al., 2014; Tuitt et al., 2019). Pregnancies in Native American culture is also celebrated, as opposed to most other cultures (Dippel et al., 2017; Hanson et al., 2014; Ore et al., 2016). Higher rates of sexual abuse also contribute to the extraordinary amount of Native American teenage pregnancies (Garcia, 2020; Griesse et al., 2016; McCarron et al., 2018).

Pregnancy is one of the most common reasons for a student to drop out of high school (Addo et al., 2016; Buckley et al., 2020; Hendrick & Maslowsky, 2019). The demands of parenting while also trying to be a student can be difficult for a teenager to handle (Dalla et al., 2009). The education level of a mother has been shown to be a stout forecaster of a child's development (Eshbaugh, 2008; Hendrick & Maslowsky, 2019; Oxford et al., 2010). Additionally, the children of teenage mothers are also at a much higher risk of not graduating high school than peers born to mothers who were older when they became pregnant (Addo et al., 2016; Meade et al., 2008). Children of teenage mothers have a higher-than-normal frequency of having a low birth weight (Madkour et al., 2014; Meade et al., 2008). These same children are also more likely to become teenage parents themselves (Eshbaugh, 2008; Hendrick & Maslowsky, 2019; Meade et al., 2008).

Pregnant Native American women have higher rates of stress in their lives (Chmielowska & Fuhr, 2017; Ferranti et al., 2019; Griesse et al., 2016). This can partially be attributed to the fact they have high rates of unplanned pregnancies (Dippel et al., 2017; Hanson et al., 2014; Raglan et al., 2015). These stresses can lead to mental health issues, including depression (Chmielowska & Fuhr, 2017; Garcia, 2020; Ginsburg et al., 2008). Many pregnant Native

American women with mental health issues have a poor social support system which makes their lives increasingly more difficult, as pregnant Native American women have many needs that must be met (Ginsburg et al., 2008).

Native American children aged 1 to 4 have a death rate three times higher than non-Native Americans; this includes preventable deaths, which make up over 50% of all deaths (Sarche & Spicer, 2008; Sarche et al., 2009). The higher levels of mental health issues have been linked to historical trauma (Garcia, 2020; Gloppen et al., 2018; McKinley et al., 2020; Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020). Many Native American people blame boarding schools for their lack of parenting skills (Garcia, 2020; Hussain et al., 2018; Talley, 2018) as Native American children that are kept with their families are taught how to take care of others when they are young (Dickerson et al., 2016; Hussain et al., 2018 Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017).

Academics

All of these problems contribute to the overall lack of academic success Native American students experience (Demmert et al., 2006). Native American children start school well behind other ethnicities (Demmert et al., 2006) with low reading and math skills (Amiotte, 2008; Demmert et al., 2006; Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2013). These subpar scores continue as they get older (Amiotte, 2008; Marley et al., 2010; Miller, 2013). Native American students have the highest dropout rate of any ethnicity and the lowest percentage of students who attend any type of college (Aschenbrener & Johnson, 2017; Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2013; Flynn et al., 2012). They also have the lowest percentage of adults with a bachelor's degree when compared to other ethnicities (Ni et al., 2017; McFarland et al., 2017; Thornton & Sanchez, 2010). Native American guardians are less engaged in their childrens' learning as

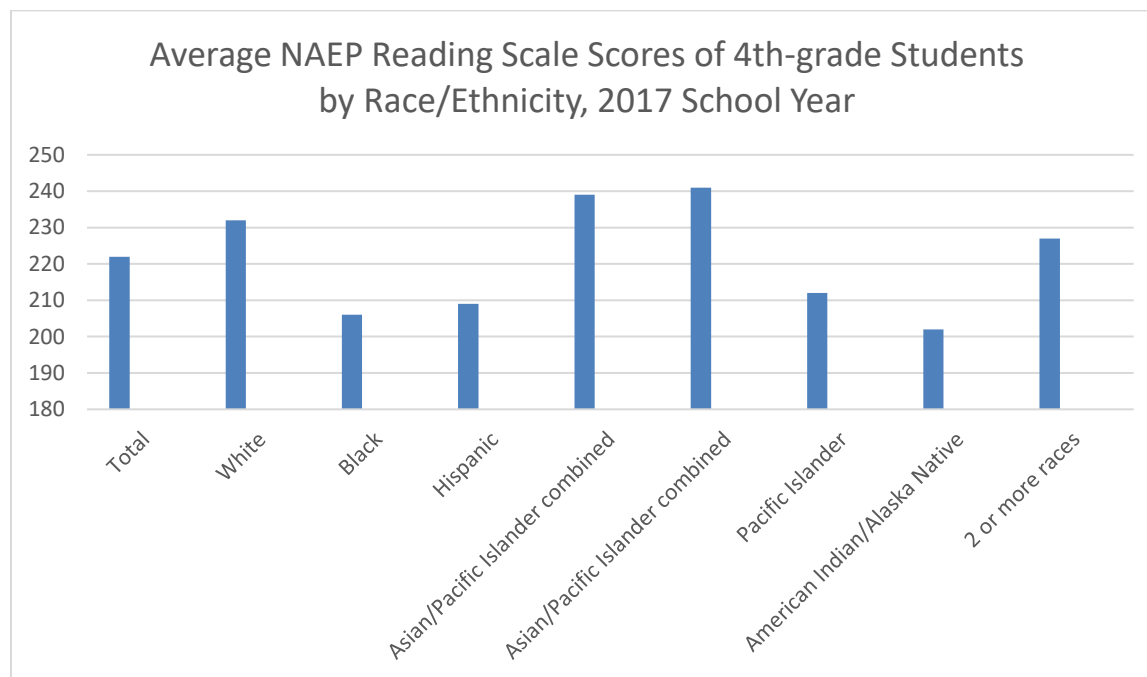
many parents have not continued direct participation in, nor taken time to monitor the educational process of their children; There has been a loss of language skills and inadequate attention paid to early development among young children; There has been a deterioration of skills and knowledge necessary for our cultural and social well-being: and political, economic and spiritual situations have changed drastically. (Demmert et al., 2006, p. 21)

Some reasons as to why this is true include the following parental educational attainment, high poverty level (Demmert, McCardle et al., 2006; Shinstine et al., 2015), issues at birth, disabilities (especially hearing or speech), parents who do not regularly read to their children (Demmert, McCardle et al., 2006), and languages other than English being used in the home (Carjuzaa & Ruff, 2016; Demmert, McCardle et al., 2006; Kitcheyan et al., 2017).

Native American students have the largest deficiencies when compared to non-Native American students in the subjects of reading, writing, and history (Demmert, 2005; McFarland et al., 2017). Figure 7 demonstrates the average reading scores of 4th grade students according to NAEP by race and ethnicity during the 2017 school year.

Figure 7

Average NAEP Reading Scores of 4th-grade Students by Race/Ethnicity, 2017 School Year



Note. From “Average NAEP Reading Scale Scores of 4th-grade Students by Race/Ethnicity, 2017 School Year,” by U.S. Department of Education. 2019. (<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019038.pdf>)

Some explanations for the scholastic struggles of Native American pupils are high rates of mobility (Demmert, 2005; Locklear et al., 2020; Tuitt et al., 2019) and the high turnover rate of teachers and administrators in reservation schools (Amiotte, 2008; Richardson & Dinkins, 2014; Thompson et al., 2008). Some different factors that need to be considered when evaluating Native American schoolchildren include the following:

home language, the perspective from which questions are asked, compatibility between the background knowledge of the student and the questions asked of the student, the values and priorities of the community from which students come, the ability of the

assessor to create an atmosphere in which the student feels comfortable, and the vocabulary of the student and whether he or she understands the meaning of the words used in the assessment tool. (Demmert, 2005, p. 21)

These all need to be done in order for Native American students to give their best effort, which in turn will allow educators to better assess and gauge the students' abilities and learning (Demmert, 2005).

Some current trends for Native Americans in the United States include the following a high school graduation rate of under 85% (Gion et al., 2018; Locklear et al., 2020; McFarland et al., 2017) with less than 20% earning a Bachelor's degree (Gion et al., 2018; Ni et al., 2017; McFarland et al., 2017); an average yearly income that is about \$15,000 less than the rest of the nation; a poverty rate of 30%, which is almost twice as high as the rest of the US; an unemployment rate of 45%, with some reservations showing it to be around 90% (Garrett et al., 2013; McFarland et al., 2017); and a rate of alcoholism that is much higher than non-Native American people (Garrett et al., 2013; Lucero & Bussey, 2015; Sarche et al., 2017).

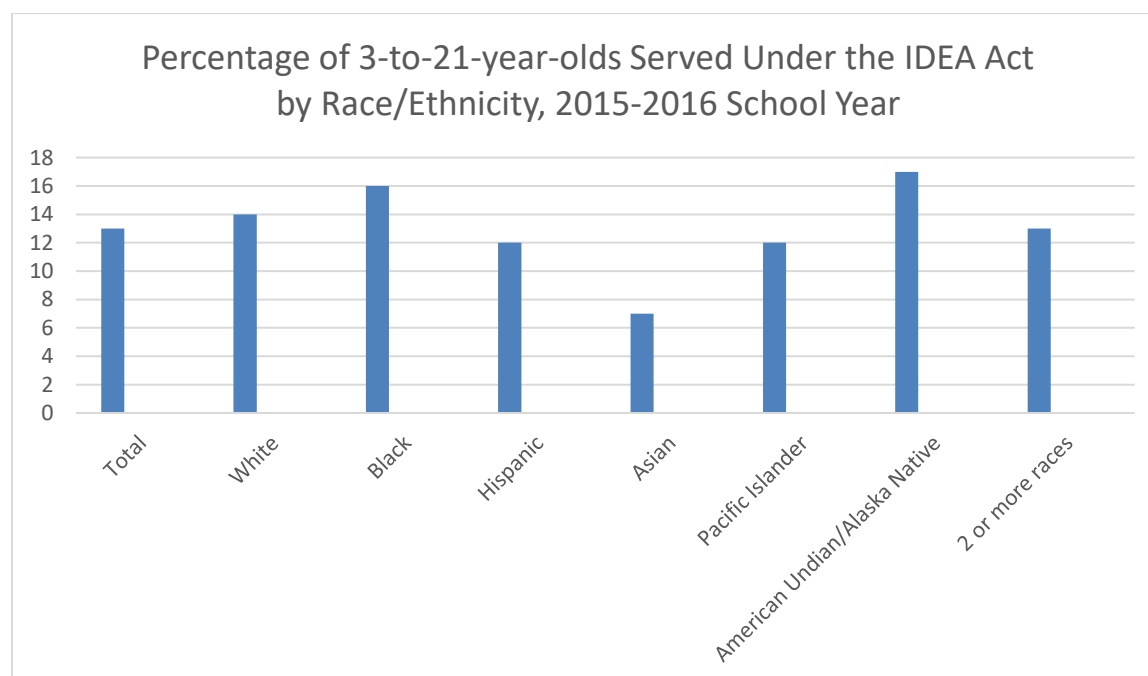
Native Americans also push different ideals including a harmonious relationship with nature, cooperation (not competition, as success is seen as a group effort), strong family ties, and high respect for elders (Guardia & Evans, 2008; House et al., 2006; Wynia, 2001). Native American youth also dislike disagreements, as they do not like to bring shame upon others (Brayboy, 2004; Lowe 2002; Safran & Safran, 1994). They don't like to share their feelings as privacy is highly valued, nor do they like to ask questions (Bolea, 2012; Brayboy, 2004). Native American students do not like to be disciplined in front of others (Masta, 2018; Safran & Safran, 1994). It makes them feel awkward as they like to be part of a group and don't like to be singled out (Masta, 2018; Morgan, 2009). This can make it harder for them to actively participate in

classroom activities (Masta, 2018; Morgan, 2009; Wynia, 2001). Teachers need to use other methods, like cooperative learning or learning from peers, in order to help Native American students attain success (Morgan, 2009; Soldier, 1997).

Native American children are overrepresented in special education classrooms in public schools (Hussain et al., 2018; McFarland et al., 2017; Morgan et al., 2018; Whitford, 2017). They have the highest recommendation and placement rate of any ethnicity in special education (Gion et al., 2018; Hussain et al., 2018; Locklear et al., 2020; McFarland et al., 2017). Figure 8 displays the percentage of 3-to-21-year-olds that receive special education services, divided by race and ethnicity during the 2015-2016 school year.

Figure 8

Percentage of 3-to-21-year-olds Served Under the IDEA Act by Race/Ethnicity, 2015-2016 School Year



Note. From “Percentage of 3-to-21-year-olds Served Under IDEA Act by Race/Ethnicity, 2015-2016 School Year,” by U.S. Department of Education. 2019. (<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019038.pdf>)

The biggest cause for overrepresentation in special education for Native American students is that so many are identified with a learning disability (Dever et al., 2016; de Brey et al., 2019). Some recognized reasons for the excessive amount of Native American people receiving special services include the following poverty, high percentage of reported low birth weight, increased rates of fetal alcohol syndrome, anxiety from numerous risk factors (Morgan et al., 2018), and language barriers (Carjuzaa & Ruff, 2016; Costa-Guerra & Costa-Guerra, 2016). Some factors that have helped Native American students with disabilities succeed academically include household unity, clear communication, emotional confidence, and community support (Pewewardy & Fitzpatrick, 2009).

Minorities believe that they receive unfairly harsh discipline at school compared to White students (Gion et al., 2018; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017; Konold et al., 2017; Locklear et al., 2020). Compared to all other ethnicities Native American students have the highest rates of school expulsion and suspension (Friese et al., 2015; Locklear et al., 2020; Whitford, 2017). This overrepresentation is influenced by the fact that Native American students are dealt with more harshly than White students (Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017; Locklear et al., 2020; Sprague et al., 2013). This is especially true if the Native American student is also receiving special education services (Brown & Tillio, 2013; Whitford, 2017). These disciplinary actions mean that Native American students are losing valuable instructional time (Sprague et al., 2013; Whitford, 2017). Native American students who are not expelled or suspended are also more frequently placed in alternative education settings (Sprague et al., 2013). Students identified as having behavioral problems are more likely to have poor peer relationships (Hickman et al., 2008). They also have a higher dropout rate than those without conduct issues (Buckley et al., 2020; Locklear et al., 2020).

Native American families see specific cultural principles, such as religion, ethnic customs, Native American language, and ancestral identity, as needed to raise children (Huyser et al., 2018; Pewewardy & Fitzpatrick, 2009). These cultural differences can come into play when teachers try to form relationships with students and families (Hussain et al., 2018; Pewewardy & Fitzpatrick, 2009; Turner et al., 2019). Educators need to form positive connections with Native American families based on respect and trust (Hussain et al., 2018; Lees et al., 2016; Mette & Stanoch, 2016). Some factors to consider when dealing with the families of Native American students include the following: determining time and location of meetings for things such as MDT's, IEP's, and parent/teacher conferences; understanding that family will take priority over school; empowering families by making sure they understand how their child's education will be affected by identifying as a Native American; being an active listener; and trying to get the family involved in educational activities (Pewewardy & Fitzpatrick, 2009).

Feeling a Sense of Belonging

The feeling of being a part of a social group is a basic human need (Shaw et al., 2019; Walton & Cohen, 2007). Adolescents who have a high sense of belonging are able to get more sleep at night and have a greater sense of feeling safe (Majeno et al., 2018). Feeling like they fit in at school has been shown to be an important part of academic success for students, especially for minority students (Jimerson et al., 2016; Majeno et al., 2018; Masta, 2018; Walton & Cohen, 2007). Students who struggle academically can feel as though they do not belong with their peers while at school (Hickman et al., 2008; Majeno et al., 2018; Thompson et al., 2013). This distress is compounded with the fact that most minorities feel that their relationships with staff are worse than their peers (Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017; Konold et al., 2017). Many times these students feel as though schooling provides them with no rewards for the work that they put

in (Hickman et al., 2008; Jeffries et al., 2002). This lack of engagement can lead to students dropping out (Hickman et al., 2008; Jeffries et al., 2002). School climate also has an impact on how well a student performs academically (Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017; Konold et al., 2017; MacDonnell et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2021). Overall, minorities believe that schools provide them less assistance when compared to non-minority students (Konold et al., 2017). It is not surprising that they feel less connected to their school than peers (Konold et al., 2017; Rees et al., 2014). Hostility towards minorities is also reported more frequently in schools that have poor school culture (Buckmiller & Cramer, 2013; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017; Konold et al., 2017).

When compared to their peers, Native American students do not feel like they fit in as well as non-Native Americans (Fryberg & Stephens, 2010; Rees et al., 2014; Serafini et al., 2017). This is true even when the focus is on the teacher and not just peers (Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017; Sprague et al., 2013; Walton & Cohen, 2007). Many Native American students struggle with the concept of belonging because they feel out of place in a different culture (Hussain et al., 2018; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017; Kelley & Lowe, 2018; Masta, 2018). Native American youths who have a solid sense of belonging in an educational system and an optimistic view of their culture are much less likely to partake in illegal substances such as drugs, tobacco, and alcohol (Frieze et al., 2015; Sahota, 2019a; Serafini et al., 2017; Yetter & Foutch, 2017). The ability of Native American people to feel a sense of belonging also helps to lower their chance of depression (Dolezal et al., 2021; Sahota, 2019a; Serafini et al., 2017; Shaw et al., 2019) and violent behaviors (Hensen et al., 2017; Pu et al., 2013).

The idea of not belonging increases feelings of stress for people (Shaw et al., 2019; Walton & Cohen, 2007). People who are part of a minority have more uncertainties about the

awareness of being connected with others (Jeffries et al., 2002; Walton & Cohen, 2007). Native American students know they are a minority and perceive prejudice from non-Native Americans they encounter (Jeffries et al., 2002; Walton & Cohen, 2007). Many Native American people feel as though they will be rejected due to their connection with a different culture (Walton & Cohen, 2007).

One specific thing that teachers can do to help Native American students succeed is to build positive relationships with the students, their families, and their communities (Buckley et al., 2020; Hussain et al., 2018; Stripling, 2019). This means making more positive contacts, such as phone calls, stopping by, putting information out on a website, and attending activities (Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017). Teachers should also find ways to work with students one-on-one and focus on one issue at a time (Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017). Schools should be seen as a safe place for students to learn and grow (Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Jeffries et al., 2002). Schools also need to adapt their teaching strategies, find ways to better engage students, form cultural individuality, offer a student-centered education, use an all-inclusive method to teaching, introduce positive Native American mentors, and build an environment with a rounded methodology (Bowman, 2003; Stowe, 2017). Native American people view time differently than non-Native Americans (Coleman et al., 2001; Lowe, 2002; Wilcox, 2015). It is seen as a sequence of transactions, with no real start or finish (Coleman et al., 2001; Lowe, 2002; Wynia, 2001). Due to this, they struggle with assessments that are timed (Soldier, 1997).

Resiliency

Native American students can often feel overwhelmed at school (Andrade, 2014; Yetter & Foutch, 2014). Teachers need to help students build up their resiliency, as this has been shown to be a key factor in determining if students are able to transition from being at-risk to

graduating high school (Andrade, 2014; Jimerson et al., 2016; Thornton & Sanchez, 2010).

Resilience can be built up if people are able to grow after negative experiences (Buckley et al., 2020; McKinley et al., 2020; Ore et al., 2016). The capability to build resilience is very important for adolescents as it greatly impacts their aptitude to handle the hardships they will encounter when they are older (Andrade, 2014; Williams & Merten, 2014).

Some characteristics of children who have been identified as resilient are steady peer interactions, problem-solving skills, accurate impending plans, optimistic sense of aptitude, positive experiences, skill to communicate successfully, positive connections to at least one adult, and the ability to hold themselves responsible for their actions (Kitano & Lewis, 2005; Thornton & Sanchez, 2010). Another factor in having a high level of resilience is a strong support system (McKinley et al., 2020; Sahota, 2019a; Shaw et al., 2019). High levels of resiliency have been shown to have a positive impact on relationships and social behaviors while also showing a decrease in behavior issues (Kitano & Lewis, 2005; Sahota, 2019a). Many factors contribute to building resiliency in Native American students, including the following: creating a comfortable environment; maintaining consistent communication; providing encouragement; finding ways to keep students actively involved in lessons; creating and following clear rules; and forming positive relationships with students, families, and the community (Jeffries et al., 2002; Thornton & Sanchez, 2010). In fact, three major components of resiliency were identified--intelligence and temperament of the student, family support, and external support (such as in schools) (Kitano & Lewis, 2005; Thornton & Sanchez, 2010). Those who exhibited the ability to acculturate also showed higher levels of resiliency (Griese et al., 2016; Hensen et al., 2017; Stumblingbear-Riddle & Romans, 2012).

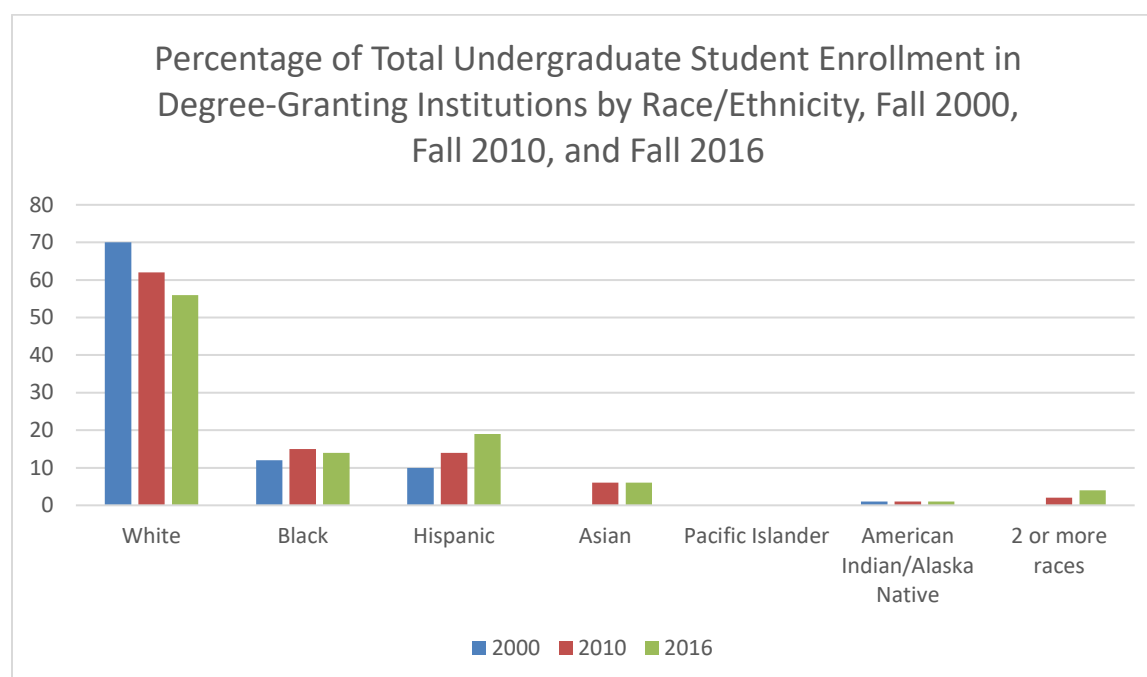
Higher levels of resilience have been shown to have a positive effect on both the physical and mental health of individuals (Schure et al., 2013). Native American students also need to feel a connection to their past (Hussain et al., 2018; Munnelly & Hishinuma, 2020; Sahota, 2019a), as students who are more aware of their culture have also been shown to have more resilience (Moilanen et al., 2014; Ore et al., 2016; Sahota, 2019a). The ability of a student to be resilient can affect many areas of their schooling, including their attendance and grades (Stumblingbear-Riddle & Romans, 2012; Thornton & Sanchez, 2010).

Native Americans at College

Today, there are around 145,000 students of Native American descent attending college (Lowe, 2005; Ortiz & Boyer, 2003). Unfortunately, many who are working on an undergraduate degree will dropout before completion (Flynn et al., 2012; Lopez, 2018; McFarland et al., 2017). The transition away from living at home during primary and secondary school seems difficult to overcome (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Huffman, 2008; Lopez, 2018; Thompson et al., 2013). This is especially true for Native American pupils who attend a college that is far away from their home (Lowe, 2005; Zyromski et al., 2011). Depression, a lack of feeling of belonging, and issues with racism are common reasons for not completing college (Buckmiller & Cramer, 2013; Lopez, 2018; Thompson et al., 2013). Native Americans have the lowest percentage of students enrolled in colleges, which is around 1%, and the lowest graduation rates (Buckmiller & Cramer, 2013; Chee et al., 2019; McFarland et al., 2017). Figure 9 compares the percentage of total undergraduate student enrollment in degree-granting institutions by race and ethnicity in the Fall of 2000, 2010, and 2016.

Figure 9

Percentage of Total Undergraduate Student Enrollment in Degree-Granting Institutions by Race/Ethnicity, Fall 2000, Fall 2010, and Fall 2016



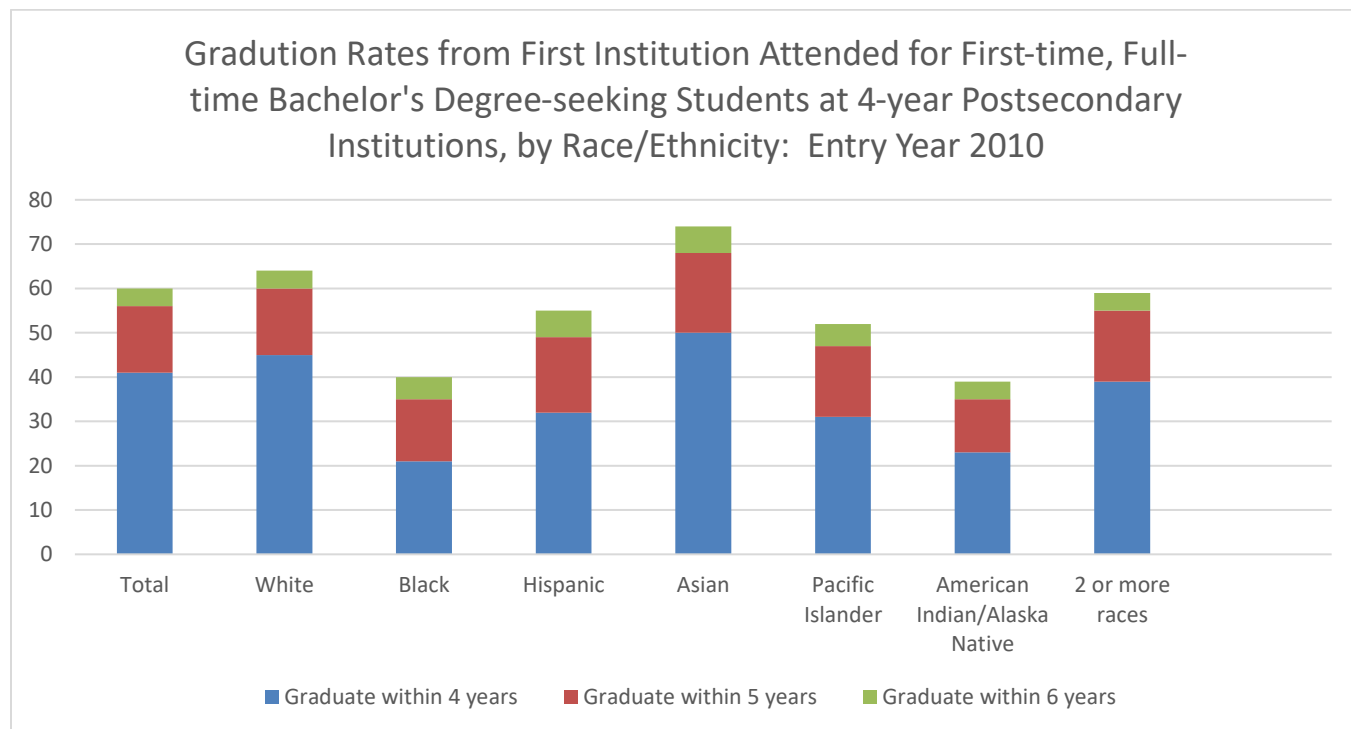
Not available-Asian 2000, Pacific Islander 2000, and 2 or more races 2000
Rounds to zero

Note. From “Percentage of Total Undergraduate Student Enrollment in Degree-Granting Institutions by Race/Ethnicity, Fall 2000, Fall 2010, and Fall 2016,” by U.S. Department of Education. 2019.
(<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019038.pdf>)

The percentage of Native Americans who graduate within six years is under 40%, while non-Native Americans graduate over 55% of enrollees in the same timeframe (Andrade, 2014; Cech et al., 2019; Guillory, 2009; McFarland et al., 2017). Figure 10 displays the graduation rates from the first institution attended for first-time, full-time bachelor’s degree-seeking students at 4-year postsecondary institutions by race and ethnicity who started school in 2010.

Figure 10

Graduation Rates from First Institution Attended for First-Time, Full-time Bachelor's Degree-seeking Students at 4-year Postsecondary Institutions, by Race/Ethnicity: Entry Year 2010



Note. From “Graduation Rates from First Institution Attended for First-time, Full-time Bachelor’s Degree-seeking Students at 4-year Postsecondary Institutions, by Race/Ethnicity: Entry Year 2010,” by U.S. Department of Education. 2019. (<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019038.pdf>)

Overall, Native Americans earn less than 1% of all college degrees such as associates, bachelor’s degrees, master’s degrees, and doctorates (Buckmiller & Cramer, 2013; Guillory, 2009; McFarland et al., 2017).

Although the demographics of college students continue to change and become more diverse, the majority of professors are non-Native American (Buckmiller & Cramer, 2013; Flynn et al., 2012; Goforth et al., 2016; McFarland et al., 2017). Due to this discrepancy, minority students frequently interact with people of different ethnicity and culture (Buckmiller & Cramer,

2013; Flynn et al., 2012). Frequent communication and positive relationships help improve student engagement and achievement (Stripling, 2019; Turner et al., 2019; Zaff et al., 2017). Native American students especially need to have a trusting relationship with someone who works at the school they attend (Huffman, 2016; Hussain et al., 2018; Turner et al., 2019; Zyromski et al., 2011). Native American students feel like their heritage is not appreciated, and this feeling causes them to lose interest in classes (Flynn et al., 2012; Lowe, 2005; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004). Interactions with staff members who were deemed positive have a great impact on the resiliency of Native American students (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Motl et al., 2018). Students believe that more personal relationships help them feel a sense of belonging in their classroom (Zaff et al., 2017; Zyromski et al., 2011). Overall, Native American students felt like their relationships with teachers was inferior to peers and expressed that they would be more comfortable learning from people who shared their heritage (Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Wynia, 2001).

Colleges also must adapt to make Native American students feel welcome (Buckmiller & Cramer, 2013; Goforth et al., 2016; Tachine et al., 2017). The freshman year of college is the most significant year in determining whether a student will graduate (Tachine et al., 2017; Zyromski et al., 2011). This is particularly accurate for Native American students, as they have the lowest retention rate among all ethnicities (Lopez, 2018; Tachine et al., 2017), purported to be around 15% (Flynn et al., 2012; Larimore & McClellan, 2005; Lopez, 2018). Depression has been reported as a contributing factor to dropping out of school, as Native American students feel disregarded due to racism and stereotyping (Harman, 2017; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017; Tachine et al., 2017). Keeping in contact with their family and community has proven to help Native American students persevere with through their education (Lopez, 2018; Lopez,

2020; Motl et al., 2018; Tachine et al., 2017). This is easier for students who attend college that is in proximity to their hometown, as Native American students like to go back to their family (Lundberg, 2007; Motl et al., 2018; Tachine et al., 2017). Positive actions that universities are taking to attract and keep Native American students include reaching out to invite family members to university programs, providing an older Native American student to serve as a mentor, providing opportunities for socializing with peers, and providing more informal ways to communicate with them (Mosholder et al., 2016; Wenzlaff, 1996). By having even one Native American graduate college, the tribe as a whole is positively impacted (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Lowe, 2005; Montgomery et al., 2000).

Ethnicity and poverty have an enormous impact on academic achievement, especially for minorities, and social-emotional capability is linked to academic success for every student (Chain et al., 2017). Due to this fact, mediations need to be put in place that encourages development of social-emotional abilities for all children (Chain et al., 2017). Overcoming microaggressions has shown to be a significant obstacle for minority students (Buckley et al., 2020; Cech et al., 2019; Majeno et al., 2020). The curriculum provided by schools should also try to incorporate as much about each students' culture as possible (Ali et al., 2014; Chain et al., 2017; Stowe, 2017; Ward et al., 2014). Native American students have shown a great ability to be resilient and overcome obstacles (Cech et al., 2019; Chain et al., 2017; Kelley & Lowe, 2018). They are expected to live in at least two different cultures—the one they were born into, and the one society has thrust upon them (Ayers et al., 2017; Cech et al., 2019; Chain et al., 2017; Doria et al., 2021; Gloppen et al., 2018). Commonalities appear when looking at reasons why Native American students drop out of college or persist until graduation (Flynn et al., 2012; Tachine, et al., 2017; Thompson et al., 2013). Reasons they stay in school include family support from far

away and affirmation (Flynn et al., 2012; Lopez, 2018; Lopez, 2020; Tachine et. al., 2017; Turner et al., 2019). Many Native Americans are first generation college students, which often means they are unprepared for the differences that higher institutions require—especially since they have to learn to get along with people very different from themselves (Schmidt & Akande, 2011; Turner et al., 2019). The major reasons for dropping out include seclusion and being apart from their family, missing out on tribal celebrations, and racially-charged confrontations (Flynn et al., 2012; Tachine et al., 2017). The biggest indicators of a Native American student dropping out of college are absenteeism, bad relationships with professors, poor support systems, trouble acclimating to different cultures, boredom with college life, and substance abuse (Demmert, McCardle, et al., 2006). Many Native American college students have a lot of family issues they have to deal with as well, including taking care of children and working to pay bills (Goforth et al., 2016; Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). Although financial problems persist among Native American college students, money is not the main reason that most do not graduate college (Goforth et al., 2016; Guillory, 2009; Guillory & Wolverton, 2008).

Many Native Americans who attend college want to do so in order to advance their expertise and better serve their people by being actively involved (Chain et al., 2017; Lopez, 2018; Lopez, 2020). They choose areas of study that support their Native American culture and values (Buckley et al., 2020; Chain et al., 2017; Huffman, 2011). Teachers need to create strong relationships with Native American students and let them know that their culture is celebrated, as it helps with student engagement (Huffman, 2016; Lees et al., 2016; Stowe, 2017). All students need to know that differences are accepted (Lowe, 2005; Lundberg, 2007). Some other factors that lead to a Native American student graduating college are a strong support system, basic

educational skills, awareness of other cultures' social expectations, and mentors (Demmert, McCardle, et al, 2006; Guillory, 2009).

Conclusion

The literature review for this study exposed the necessity for schools with Native American students to concentrate on changes that need to be made to their educational systems (Ali et al., 2014; Guillory, 2009; Lundberg, 2014; Lundberg & Lowe, 2016). The United States government treated the Native Americans very poorly, causing historical trauma that is seen today (Garcia, 2020; McKinley et al., 2020; Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020; Talley, 2018), the current ways Native Americans are discriminated against (Bullock et al., 2017; Harman, 2017; Huyser et al., 2018; Sarche et al., 2017), and the ways they are represented today (Butler, 2018; Leavitt et al., 2015; Rodesiler & Premont, 2018; Turner, 2015). Many people distrust others who are of a different ethnicity/culture (Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Neutuch, 2018; Payne et al., 2017). These issues can also lead to substance abuse (Aschenbrener & Johnson, 2017; Moore et al., 2018; Serafini et al., 2017; Urbaeva et al., 2017) and mental health issues (Hardy & Brown-Rice, 2016; McKinley et al., 2020; Sarche et al., 2017).

A common finding from research shows public schools that Native American students attend need to include a cultural component (Lundberg & Lowe, 2016; Stowe, 2017; Torres, 2017), help build up Native American students' resiliency (Sahota, 2019a; Schure et al., 2013; Williams & Merten, 2014), and find ways to make them feel a sense of belonging (Sahota, 2019a; Serafini et al., 2017; Walton & Cohen, 2007). Teachers need to be able to adjust their lessons to help fit the needs of Native American students (Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Sparks, 2000; Thomason, 2012; Torres, 2017). Positive relationships need to be created between educators and Native American stakeholders so they can work together for the good of the student (Demmert,

McCardle, et al., 2006; Garrett et al., 2013; Quijada Cerecer, 2013; Thomason, 2012). Educators need to reach out to the community to find Native American role models (Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Mosholder et al., 2016; Ward et al., 2014).

Chapter III

Design and Methodology

Introduction

Graduating from high school can lead to many positive experiences, including securing a good job or being accepted into a postsecondary institution (Buckley et al., 2020; Clemens et al., 2016; Lawrence et al., 2016; Lovelace et al., 2017). In the majority of cases, the more education that an individual attains, the higher the salary that person is able to earn (Jha & Stearns, 2018; Kearney & Graczyk, 2013; Sutin et al., 2017). Consistent attendance is crucial to educational success (Ansari & Gottfried, 2018; Bijsmans & Schakel, 2018; Mancini, 2017). Chronic school truancy can have many root causes (Ansari & Gottfried, 2018; Epstein et al., 2020; Stripling, 2019; van den Toren et al., 2020). Some of these include family issues, psychological problems, and adverse incidences while attending school (Ansari & Gottfried, 2018; Stripling, 2019). Many schools have introduced interventions to help increase the attendance rates for students (Bijsman & Schakel, 2018; Stripling, 2019).

Native American students have a history of struggling academically (Demmert, 2005; Fish et al., 2017; Lundberg, 2014; McFarland et al., 2017). The current high school graduation rate for Native Americans in the United States is under 85% (Gion et al., 2018; Locklear et al., 2020; McFarland et al., 2017; Ni et al., 2017), which is the lowest percentage of any ethnicity (McFarland et al., 2017). In some states, the high school completion rate for Native American students is under 40% (Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017). Native American students also have the highest high school dropout rate of any ethnicity in the United States (Aschenbrener & Johnson, 2017; Flynn et al., 2012).

For many Native American student, attending school every day or nearly each day is a common problem (Breaz, 2020; Kirksey & Gottfried, 2018; van den Toren et al., 2020). Research has shown that an individual's academic achievement directly relates to their attendance rate (Ansari & Purtell, 2018; Breaz, 2020; Cosgrove et al., 2018; Pijl et al., 2021). Consistent school attendance is a strong indicator of whether a student will be at risk of not graduating or if they will advance with their peers (Gubbels et al., 2019; Lovelace et al., 2017; Pflug & Schneider, 2016). When looking at the racial and ethnic groups in the United States, minority students have more issues with school attendance (Cvencek et al., 2018; Gubbels et al., 2019). Breaking down the average daily attendance rates even further, Native American students have the most trouble with truancy (de Brey et al., 2019).

The purpose of the qualitative study was to determine the perceptions of Native American students who graduated from a public school that is located on a federal reservation. This study will give insight to students who are Native American high school graduates that overcame challenges and persisted in high school until graduating.

Research Questions

The research questions that this research study aimed to answer included the following:

1. What do Native American students identify as their strengths in their ability to graduate high school within four years of starting?
- 1b. How do Native American high school students overcome academic challenges?
2. What do Native American students identify as their challenges in their ability to graduate high school within four years of starting?
3. To what extent did attending a public reservation school impact one's ability to graduate on-time without dropping out?

Research Design

The research design shows all specific procedures involved in the research process (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). There are numerous ways to set up the research design of a study (Creswell & Gutterman, 2019; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). The type of study that is chosen by the researcher is dependent on the research questions (Creswell & Gutterman, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). A major difference when looking at completing a qualitative study compared to a quantitative study is that qualitative studies try to comprehend a specific topic while quantitative studies try to either confirm or examine something (Creswell & Gutterman, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

The purpose of this study was to investigate Native American high school graduates and how they have been able to succeed academically despite the challenges that they have faced. A qualitative approach was chosen for this research study for a number of reasons. Qualitative research helps gather information by exploring problems and finding deeper insights in irregularities, acquiring information on respondents' perceptions and personal realities, and using the data that is learned to be joined with prevalent ideas (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017; Lanka et al., 2021). In essence, it allows participants to give a voice to challenges that are encountered (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008; Pieridou & Kambouri-Danos, 2020). Qualitative research design can be used to determine the common experiences of a group of people and allows for participants to describe their lives (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Qualitative research uses questioning in order to better comprehend people while using a comfortable location (Brayda & Boyce, 2014; Lanka et al., 2021). It relates with studies that seek to find out about people and cultures that are different from them, and it is able to identify, examine, and understand a group over time

(Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The way information in a qualitative study is gathered can lead to smaller sample sizes in comparison to other types of studies; however, the knowledge obtained is very beneficial (Lanka et al., 2021).

Participant Selection

Purposeful sampling was used to find potential research participants. Purposeful sampling is when researchers purposefully choose participants to understand a specific issue (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). It also includes using the researcher's familiarities or insight of the group to help determine the participants (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). A part of purposeful sampling includes setting a defined criterion for the study (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). For this research study, the following criterion was established:

- Self-identified Native American
- Graduated from a public high school within four years of starting
- Graduated high school between 2016 and 2021
- High school is located on a federal reservation
- Reservation situated in the Midwest United States
- Aged 18 or older

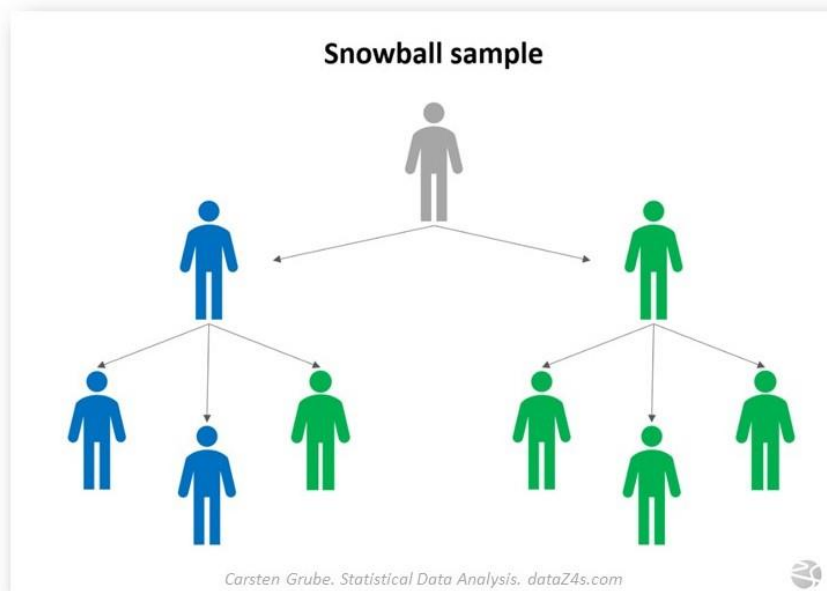
All participants were also required to sign an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix A) before they could participate in the study.

The participants were recruited by posting a notice on a tribal Facebook page which included the criteria and notice of remuneration (see Appendix B). The Facebook groups utilized were the "Native American Tribes One Nation", "Midwest Native Americans", and "Native Americans, Indigenous & Allies".

The first group of participants was found through online social media, and snowball sampling was used to obtain the rest of the participants for the study. Snowball sampling is when a researcher is able to find one or a few qualified participants for a study and then uses these subjects to connect with additional subjects. This process continues until an appropriate subject pool is created (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008; Marcus et al., 2017; Waters, 2015). This allows for the collection of information from multiple sources (Marcus et al., 2017; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Snowball sampling is perceived as an appropriate means to access groups of people that would otherwise be difficult to find (Waters, 2015). It is a great way to gather data pertaining to possibly delicate or embarrassing issues (Waters, 2015). In total, the researcher identified eight participants who fit the criteria and were willing to share their experiences. Figure 11 visualizes how snowball sampling works.

Figure 11

Snowball Sampling



Note. From <https://dataz4s.com/statistics/non-probability-sampling/>

Data Collection

In any study, researchers need to make sure that no harm is done to participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). While crafting this study, the researcher took lengths to ensure that all participants were safe and felt respected. The researcher completed training and earned certification (see Appendix C) through the Association of Clinical Research Professionals (ACRP). Approval was given for the study by the Northwest Nazarene University Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix D). All hard copy information will be stored in a locked file cabinet and any digital information will be kept on a computer that is password protected and only accessible by the researcher. The researcher will properly dispose of all data after a three-year period.

Five steps are needed in order to collect data for qualitative research (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The first step is to determine the participants and location while choosing a sampling approach that is best suited for the research. Next, the researcher must find a way to contact the participants while gaining their consent. Third, the researcher must decide on what data will be needed to answer the research questions. The next step is to design a tool that will be used to collect and record information from participants. The last step is to collect all data while reflecting on the integrity needed to complete the study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Multiple modes can be used to collect data that is to be used in qualitative research (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The focus of this type of research is to get the personal side of a topic (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The interviews used appropriate interview protocol (see Appendix E). Interview protocol includes the list of questions that a researcher asks participants, the exact script of what the interviewer will say during and after the interview and the process used (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Questions that are asked must be based around previous literature and

research questions (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The best way to set up an interview is to ask basic questions first, moving toward the more challenging questions at the end (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

Interviews

Native Americans are seen as a vulnerable population as they are marginalized by society (Clark, 2017). When working with a vulnerable population, researchers must treat participants with sensitivity (Clark, 2017). Common challenges when dealing with sensitive questions include people choosing not to participate, participants not answering all questions, or participants not being honest with their responses (Tourangeau & Yan, 2007). Questions might also need to be modified to help interviewees feel more comfortable during the process (Clark, 2017). Participants are also more honest when they believe that the interviewer is understanding toward them (Bird et al., 2013; Tourangeau & Yan, 2007).

Before the interviews were conducted, the researcher became acquainted with the participants by showing a short presentation that included information about the researcher and the study (see Appendix F). Then the researcher read the verbatim open (see Appendix G). The participants then filled out either an online or hardcopy form that included the demographic information and study criteria (see Appendix H). All interviews were recorded to allow the researcher the ability to check the participants' body language and other visual cues.

The interviews lasted around an hour for each of the participants. After interviews were complete, the researcher assigned pseudonyms to all participants in order to protect their identity. In total, eight participants that fit the criteria were utilized to complete the study. Participants were informed that the researcher may contact them at a later date if more information was needed. Participants were also made aware they could opt out of the interview at any time for

any reason and that they could also choose to have their data stricken from the study after the interview if the researcher was notified within one month of the interview date. Participants were mindful that, by taking part in the study, they would be helping educators who teach Native American students (see Appendix A). Interviewees were notified that participation in the study would be low risk and they would be protected with a pseudonym (see Appendix G).

All participants were advised the interviews would be video- and audio-recorded (see Appendix G), but that identities would still be protected. It was important that all interviewees understood they would be video recorded to see their body language and other visual cues to analyze for the study (Brayda & Boyce, 2014). The recordings were kept on a password protected computer only accessible to the researcher, and none of the videos were circulated. If a participant refused to be recorded, their interview was not included in the study. The interviews were ended by the researcher reading the verbatim closing (see Appendix I). All interviews with participants were then transcribed after completion.

All responses were sent a list of the codes, categories, and themes to utilize member checking (see Appendix J). Member checking is when participants are given a transcribed copy of their interview and give approval or make corrections on the researcher's summary (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Interviewees were allowed to object to any misunderstandings, reactions, and to see if they wanted to give any more data for the study. All follow up interviews were video recorded and transcribed.

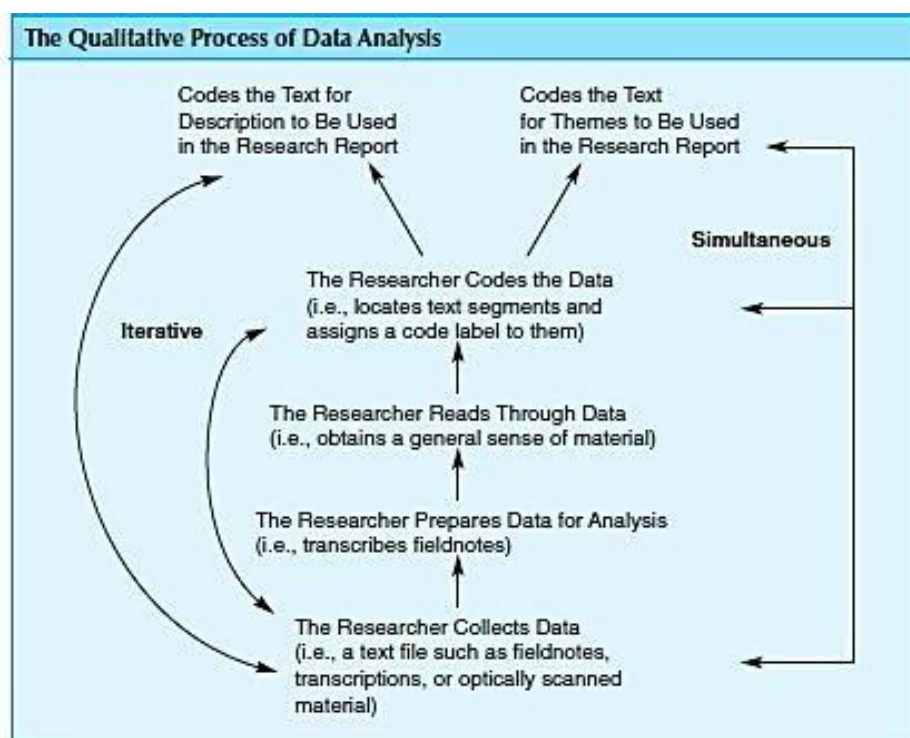
Data Analysis Plan

In order to properly analyze qualitative data, six steps must be followed (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). They are, in order arrange and coordinate information to analyze, code responses, find common themes, find ways to tell their story, decipher the results, and

authenticate the findings (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). Analyzing data involves first dividing the data and then reorganizing it to create a summary (Creswell & Guttermann, 2019; Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). Figure 12 details the qualitative process of data analysis.

Figure 12

The Qualitative Process of Data Analysis



Note. From "Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research," by Creswell & Guetterman, 2019.

After all interviews were complete, the researcher immediately explored all of the transcribed data and videos paying careful attention to the body language of all of the participants to determine if any questions made them uncomfortable or if any were suspected of withholding information. Body language consist of facial expressions, gestures, and the location of hands and legs (de Beer et al., 2017; Jain, 2016). Some body language that can

convey that people are uncomfortable include avoiding eye contact, touching of the nose while speaking, rubbing of the eyes, leaning back with legs propped up, wavering from side to side, finger pointing, or having arms crossed across the chest (Jain, 2016). Classical content analysis was utilized by the researcher. This process is used to discover patterns using codes and then identify them with a handcoding process (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). This method granted the researcher the ability to home in on any themes that came across from multiple participants. Content analysis helped the research discover, describe, code, and examine the data that was received from the participants (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017).

Data was coded to come up with common themes from communal experiences and reduce the amount of raw data that was gathered (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). Common words and phrases occurring in multiple interviews were especially valuable to the study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). These commonalities were used to group the data into specific themes (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). As the data was looked at further, more common themes appeared and were looked at across all participants (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008).

Validity and Reliability

Before interviews were conducted, face validity was utilized and the interview questions were looked over by an expert panel. Face validity is used to determine if interview questions are understandable, appropriate, and relevant by employing experts in the field of study (Connell et al., 2018; Engel et al., 2020). Face validity involves vigorously testing questions for purpose and analysis (Engel et al., 2020). The expert panel consisted of a school administrator with a doctoral degree, seven school administrators with advanced degrees, and three teachers with an

advanced degree. All of those involved in the expert panel had experience working with Native American communities. Feedback was given to ensure all questions were related to the study and that no harm will be done to the participants. A central aspect of conducting a valid interview is to confirm that appropriate questions were asked (Brayda & Boyce, 2014). Each individual that made up the expert panel was contacted first via email and then the researcher sent all a copy of the interview questions. The researcher then contacted the expert panel by telephone to get their suggestions and constructive criticism. All questions were deemed to be valid by the panel.

Pilot interviews were also conducted to ensure participants clearly understood what the question was asking (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This method is used to make any needed changes to interview questions (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall & Guetterman, 2016) and reduce barriers (Marshall & Guetterman, 2016). Written comments were gathered from the pilot interviews, and the researcher took those into consideration in modifying the research instrument (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Pilot interviews also allowed the researcher to gain better self-realization (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

To ensure the validity of the participants' interviews, member checking was utilized (see Appendix M). The process of member checking is one in which the researcher has study participants look over their responses to confirm that all data is accurate (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). After each individual's interviews were completed, the researcher typed up all responses and themes and had the participants check for the accuracy of their responses. Member checking is also used to disprove any biases that the researcher may have with the study before it is submitted (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Role of the Researcher

Since qualitative research is more focused on people's perceptions, it can lead the researcher to incorporate their own biases and observations about either the participants or perspective of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Pieridou & Kambouri-Danos, 2020). The researcher that is utilizing a qualitative study must reflect on their part concerning how everything is conducted (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Pieridou & Kambouri-Danos, 2020). Self-awareness is a key component needed for qualitative studies to ensure the reliability and validity (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Pieridou & Kambouri-Danos, 2020).

At the time of this study, the researcher was a tenured teacher at a public school located on a Native American reservation. The school had put a focus on improving the graduation rates of the students that attend, but chronic absenteeism and tardiness was still a challenge. Becoming ingrained with Native American culture helped lead the researcher to try and find solutions to the issues that Native American people face. The passion that has come from working with the Native American population has increased the researcher's knowledge and awareness that they need more people to advocate for their needs, and that more people need greater understandings of the hardships they face.

Limitations

All research studies have limitations (Creswell & Gutterman, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Limitations explain the parameters and how the results add information to other studies (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). By grounding the study with specific criteria, limits are placed on the final data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Some of the information obtained in studies can be transferred to other studies (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Limitations are stated to provide others help in setting up future studies (Creswell & Gutterman, 2019).

Many Native Americans are distrustful of those who are different from them (Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017; Neutuch, 2018; Payne et al., 2017). Trust is difficult to establish without prior relationships for many marginalized groups (Brayda & Boyce, 2014). Not gaining trust can also lead to students not answering questions honestly (Brayda & Boyce, 2014). Another limitation would be the small sample size that was used for the study (Creswell & Gutterman, 2019; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). Using snowball sampling also provides participants that are nonrandom (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). It is very common for Native American students to transfer between multiple schools within a single school year (Demmert, 2005; Locklear et al., 2020; Tuitt et al., 2019), and some of the outliers may be students who are new not only to the district, but also to the state/public school/reservation. Native American students still regularly attend boarding schools and behavior-based schools. This could impact the participants' responses as they may have multiple institutions that they are using to guide their answers.

Chapter IV

Results

Introduction

Individuals who want to improve the quality of their life should look at earning a high school diploma (Buckley et al., 2020; Jha & Stearns, 2018; Locklear et al., 2020; Lovelace et al., 2017). A high school diploma allows a person access to a postsecondary education and better job opportunities (Buckley et al., 2020; Lovelace et al., 2017; Lawrence et al., 2016; Zaff et al., 2017). Levels of poverty and imprisonment are much higher for those that do not attain a high school diploma (Jimerson et al., 2016; Zaff et al., 2017; Zajacova, 2012). Other types of adversity that high school dropouts face include inferior health (Buckley et al., 2020; Kaplan et al., 2017; Locklear et al., 2020) and a shorter life expectancy (Everett et al., 2013; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Sutin et al., 2017).

The high school graduation rate in the United States can differ based on an individual's ethnicity (de Brey et al, 2019, Musu-Gillette, 2017). The majority of non-White students struggle more than White students in acquiring a high school diploma (de Brey et al., 2019; Musu-Gillette, 2017). Of all the ethnicities that reside in the United States, Native American students have the lowest high school graduation rate (de Brey et al., 2019; Musu-Gillette, 2017). Presently, fewer than 85% of Native American students receive a high school diploma (Gion et al., 2018; Locklear et al., 2020; McFarland et al., 2017). In some parts of the United States, the graduation rate for Native Americans is less than 40% (Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017).

Native Americans have many challenges that affect their ability to graduate high school (Ansari & Gottfried, 2018; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017). The

beliefs of Native Americans can lead them to spend more of their time on cultural activities than on educational undertakings (Demmert et al., 2006; Safran & Safran, 1994; Soldier, 1997).

Teenage pregnancy occurs more frequently for Native American students, and it can lead to dropping out of school (Garcia, 2020; Griesse et al., 2016; Hanson et al., 2014; McCarron et al., 2018). The percentage of Native American students who receive special education services is higher than every other ethnicity in the United States (Gion et al., 2018; Hussain et al., 2018; Locklear et al., 2020; McFarland et al., 2017). They also frequently feel as though they do not belong in a school environment (Fryberg & Stephens, 2010; Rees et al., 2014; Serafini et al., 2017). This is predominately due to having to learn from educators who come from a much different culture (Aschenbrener & Johnson, 2017; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Masta, 2018; Pierce, 2018).

Emergent Themes

The purpose of this study was to investigate the lived experiences of Native American students who graduated from a public school located on a federal reservation in the Midwest United States. This study looked to determine the factors that influenced their academic achievements and their ability to transcend academic obstacles. Chapter IV will show the results of the collected data, including significant codes, categories, and themes from the supported evidence obtained from the eight participants selected for this study.

The intent of this study was to answer research questions that contribute to the lack of research regarding Native American students and their schooling experiences (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The successful graduation of Native American students is critical for the United States to undo inequities and promote social justice (Page et al., 2019). Eight Native American people from multiple schools that are located on different federal reservations

contributed to the research by giving their experiences and perceptions to this study. The eight participants help represent others that are high school graduates from public high schools located on federal reservations located in the Midwest United States. The results of those interviews are detailed in this chapter and are in accordance with the following four questions:

1. What do Native American students identify as their strengths in their ability to graduate high school within four years of starting?
- 1b. How do Native American high school students overcome academic challenges?
2. What do Native American students identify as their challenges in their ability to graduate high school within four years of starting?
3. To what extent did attending a public reservation school impact one's ability to graduate on-time without dropping out?

In Chapter IV, the themes that occurred were acquired through a semi-structured interview with each of the participants. Twenty-two opened-ended interview questions were aligned to the four research questions. Research question alignment is driven by the questions that the researcher asks and determines the codes based upon the answers given by participants (Saldana, 2016). Research question alignment is broken down into two main parts with those being ontological and epistemological (Saldana, 2016). An ontological approach was used for this study as the questions sought to determine the participants' realities (Saldana, 2016).

Interview questions were created that permitted the participants to discuss perceptions on home life, schooling, common challenges that were faced, and ways that they overcame issues to successfully graduate high school. The questions allowed multiple themes to arise including support of family and friends, extra supports that public reservation schools offer, participating

in athletics and clubs, being around those with a shared culture and positive relationships that have been formed with school personnel.

Another topic the participants were exposed to within the semi-structured interviews was perceived challenges Native American students face while attending high school. Participants shared that the ease of obtaining drugs and alcohol, mental health issues, high rates of tardiness and missing school to attend cultural activities all contributed to the difficulties they faced. They also spoke of ways that they were able to overcome academic challenges by setting goals, wanting to leave their reservation in search of a better life, listening to positive role models, and wanting to make their family and ancestors proud. Research question alignment is driven by the questions that the researcher asks and determines the codes based upon the answers given by participants (Saldana, 2016). Research question alignment is broken down into two main parts: ontological and epistemological (Saldana, 2016). An ontological approach was used for this study as the questions sought to determine the participants' realities (Saldana, 2016). Table 2 displays the themes and categories that were found based upon each research question.

Table 2

List of Categories, Codes, and Themes

Research Questions	Categories	Codes	Themes
Question 1	Support systems, Participating	Family, Friends, School Staff Relationships, Participating in Extra-Curriculars	Belonging
Question 1b	Culture	Family/Ancestors, Serve as Role Model, Get off the Reservation, Positive Talk from Role Models, Native Americans Working at School	Legacies
Question 2	Outside and inside influences on academic success	Legal Issues, Mental Health Issues, Chronic Absenteeism/Tardiness, High Poverty Rate, Exclusion	Impediments
Question 3	Reservation school attributes	Extra School Support, Public Reservation Schools are Easier, Racism off the Reservation	Location

Individual interviews allowed each participant to give important perspectives regarding their experiences while living on a reservation and attending a public school located there.

Belonging. All of the participants expressed that a feeling of belonging was key in their ability to graduate high school. When asked about the various ways that they were able to be motivated to graduate high school, every participant talked about their friends, family, and the

positive relationships that they had with school employees, and the majority also said participating in extra-curriculars helped push them to get their diploma. This aligns with previous research that shows students that have a strong sense of belonging have more success academically (Jimerson et al., 2016; Majeno et al., 2018; Masta, 2018; Walton & Cohen, 2007).

Legacies. The eight participants spoke about either the legacy they wanted to leave younger tribe members or how they wanted to make their family and ancestors proud of their accomplishments. The majority also talked about wanting to get off of the reservation to start their lives in a more positive environment, but most still live there due to either family or financial reasons. Role models have been shown to have a big impact on the successes of Native American students, especially role models who are also Native American (Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Mosholder et al, 2016; Ward et al., 2014).

Impediments. The theme of impediments showed up in all the participants when the researcher was determining the challenges that Native Americans face on their journey to graduate high school. Substance abuse, mental health issues, absenteeism and tardiness, poverty, and feeling excluded were the codes that came up with the participants. These aligned with previous research. A high percentage of Native American students regularly use drugs and/or alcohol (Albuja et al., 2021; Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020; Schick et al., 2020; Stanley et al., 2021; Swaim & Stanley, 2020). Native Americans have more issues with mental health than non-Native Americans (Garcia, 2020; McKinley et al., 2020; O’Keefe et al., 2021). Of all ethnicities, Native Americans miss the most amount of school (de Brey et al., 2019). In some interviews, poverty was shown to impact attendance, as some participants had to miss school to take care of younger family members. The poverty rate for Native Americans is the highest of all cultures in the United States (Garrett et al., 2013; Glick & Han, 2015; Mathers, 2012). Lastly, Native

American students do not feel like they fit in as well as non-Native Americans (Fryberg & Stephens, 2010; Rees et al., 2014; Serafini et al., 2017).

Location. All of the participants agreed that the reservation schools they graduated from provided a lot of support for all students. Some of the more common things that the schools provided include daycare services, tutoring, summer school, online classes, alternative education, transportation, and take-home meals. Nearly every student said that school was easy for them. This was especially seen in cases where the participant had also attended a school located off of the reservation. The majority also believed that the racism and bigotry that they experience off of the reservation would hinder them if they attended school at a different setting. Many were able to give examples of discrimination or microaggressions they felt when they were in the company of non-Native Americans. This data aligned with previous research regarding the ease of graduating from reservation schools (Andrade, 2014; Flynn et al., 2012; Lopez, 2018; Wilcox, 2015), and feeling out of place off of the reservation (Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017; Konold et al., 2017). New data obtained from interviews included information about extra supports that public reservation schools provide that help students graduate.

Interview Participants

Participants who are Native American, graduated high school within four years from starting at a school situated on a federal reservation located in the Midwest United States from 2016-2021, and are at least 18 years old were used in the study. The participants came from a variety of backgrounds including five participants who attended multiple high schools both on reservations and public schools located off of reservations. This allowed them to compare different educational institutions and gave them more perspective on their schooling. Although the researcher hoped to get participants from more diverse locations throughout the Midwest

United States, the eight who were chosen graduated from two different reservation schools.

Table 3 shows participant profile information.

Table 3

Participant Profile Information

Participant Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Reservation School Graduated from	High Schools Attended
Jason	Male	18	Reservation1	2
Kal	Male	20	Reservation1	2
Susannah	Female	18	Reservation1	2
Anthony	Male	18	Reservation1	4
Layla	Female	19	Reservation2	1
Dominic	Male	24	Reservation2	1
Sophia	Female	24	Reservation2	1
Ramona	Female	21	Reservation1	1

Purposeful sampling was used to find potential research participants. Purposeful sampling is when researchers purposefully choose participants to understand a specific issue (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). It also includes using the researcher's familiarities or insight of the group to help determine the participants (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). A part of purposeful sampling includes setting a defined criterion for the study (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). After each interview was complete, the researcher utilized the process of snowball sampling and asked each participant for suggestions for other participants.

Eight participants were chosen to be a part of the study. Jason, Kal, Susannah, Anthony, and Ramona all came from Reservation1 and make up 62.5% of the total participants; while Layla, Dominic, and Sophia graduated from a different reservation school than the first set and

compromise 37% of the group. Although the reservations are located in separate areas, the experiences that all eight participants had in their schooling and daily life are similar. All participants were able to share their stories, which provided the data used in this study. The themes and categories were associated with the four research questions. They will be described in more detail throughout the rest of this chapter.

Semi-Structured Interview Validity and Reliability

The researcher used multiple steps to determine the validity and reliability of the interview protocol. The first step was to use face validity with an expert panel. Face validity is used to determine if interview questions are understandable, appropriate, and relevant by employing experts in the field of study (Connell et al., 2018; Engel et al., 2020). Face validity involves vigorously testing questions for purpose and analysis (Engel et al., 2020). The researcher was able to find a group of experts that all had multiple years of experience working on reservation schools with Native American students. The panel consisted of eleven experts, including a school administrator with a doctoral degree, seven school administrators with advanced degrees, and three teachers with an advanced degree. Face validity revealed that all of the questions were deemed to be valid as there were eleven experts in the panel and the content validity index percentages were all above 78% (Rutherford-Hemming, 2015; Yusoff, 2019). The results are listed below in Table 4.

Table 4

Content Validity Index

Question Number	Question	Percent Agreeing with Validity
2	If you currently live on a reservation, why do you choose to live here?	82%
3	Do you currently attend a postsecondary school? If so, how did your high school education help prepare you for future schooling?	100%
4	Are you currently employed? If so, how did your high school education help prepare you for the workforce?	100%
5	Do you have children? Do they attend a public school on a reservation? What support do you provide them to ensure their academic success?	100%
6	How many schools did you attend while in grades 9-12?	100%
7	What high school did you graduate from?	91%
8	What motivated you to graduate high school?	91%
9	In what ways did living on a reservation help you as a student?	100%
10	Was absenteeism an issue for you? While you were in high school, how many days per year do you estimate that you were absent? What issues caused you to consistently miss school?	100%
11	What activities did you participate in while in high school?	100%
12	Describe the person that helped you the most while you attended high school.	100%
13	At any time during your education, did you think that anything was unfair? Did you feel like a person or rule/policy seemed unfair? Please describe.	91%
14	What types of things did you like to do outside of school during your free time?	100%
15	How did you feel your in-school and out-of-school activities affected your ability to graduate?	100%
16	When you were in high school, who resided in your main home with you?	100%

17	Tell me about your close friends while you were in high school; did they graduate as well? Did they participate in any activities?	100%
18	Describe the support that you had at home for your schooling—who helped encourage you to finish and what did they do?	100%
19	In what ways did living on a reservation create challenges for you as a student?	100%
20	If you could change anything about your schooling, what would it be?	100%
21	What advice would you give Native American students who are struggling academically?	100%
22	What are your future goals concerning education, career, and your personal life?	100%

Pilot interviews were also conducted to ensure participants clearly understood what each question was asking (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The participants utilized for the pilot interviews fit the criterion of the study. Piloting is a method used to ensure the reliability of a qualitative study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall & Guetterman, 2016). The researcher gathered written comments from the pilot interviews and took those into consideration in modifying the research instrument (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Pilot interviews also allowed the researcher to gain better self-realization (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

To certify the validity of the participants' interviews, member checking was utilized (see Appendix M). The process of member checking is one in which the researcher has study participants look over a summary of the responses to approve that all data is accurate (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). After all interviews were completed, the researcher typed up responses and themes and had the participants check for the precision of their responses. Member

checking is also used to disprove any biases that the researcher may have with the study before it is submitted (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Results for Research Question 1: Strengths in the Ability to Graduate High School

Earning a high school diploma has been proven to have a beneficial effect on a person's life (Buckley et al., 2020; Jha & Stearns, 2018; Locklear et al., 2020; Lovelace et al., 2017).

Around 88% of Americans have their high school diploma (NCES, 2021). However, there are still students who are unable to graduate from high school (de Brey et al., 2019; Musu-Gillette, 2017). Looking at the demographics of non-degree earning Americans, students who are in the minority have lower high school graduation rates (de Brey et al., 2019; Musu-Gillette, 2017).

Native Americans are the least likely to earn a diploma (NCES, 2021; Ni et al., 2017; McFarland et al., 2017) with some areas showing a graduation rate of under 40% (Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017). The United States education system is not working for Native Americans (Bo, 2016; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017).

The first research question this study focused on was: What do Native American students identify as their strengths in their ability to graduate high school within four years of starting?

In order to answer this question, the participants were asked questions pertaining to their motivations for graduating high school. The researcher sought to determine the who, what, and why for each participant who was able to graduate. Table 4 shows the categories and codes for research question one. Eight out of the eight participants expressed that having a supportive family, being around people of the same culture that were dealing with the same challenges in life, enjoying a small group of close friends, and attending a school that prioritized positive relationships between students and staff played a role in their success. Moreover, seven of the

eight stated that participation requirements for extra-curricular activities were all reasons they were able to graduate high school with their 4 year cohort. All of the responses were combined into the categories of *Support Systems* and *Participating*. Breaking down the data further, the common theme of this question was *Belonging*.

Table 5

Categories and Codes for Research Question One

Categories and Codes	Frequency of Description
<u>Support Systems</u>	
Family	8 of 8
Friends	8 of 8
School Staff Relationships	8 of 8
<u>Participating</u>	
Extra-Curricular Activities	6 of 8

Support Systems

Having a supportive family. All eight participants believed that they would not have successfully graduated high school without a strong and encouraging family. Without having a strong familial bond, many of the participants believed that they would have failed in their chance at a high school diploma. Layla expressed:

My parents were motivating me all of the time. They came to like every school event that I had. I love them. My mom would support me in everything. She drives me to school and makes sure we get there on time and that we finish all our work and our grades are up. She cares.

Susannah agreed about family being a reason for her graduating saying, “They kinda, like, really motivated me. They always talked to me about staying on track and all that.”

Dominic believed that his parents were the main reason that he graduated high school saying:

My parents put me on that path, told me that I wouldn’t be the man that I am. [My parents] told me that I wouldn’t be a man. They told me it would be hard to get caught up, but they were there to help and I was able to get the work done and completed.

When asked about his family supporting him as a learner and student, Dominic articulated:

When it came to parent/teacher conferences, my teachers told my parents of how my behavior was, how my attitude was, and then yea, I kinda got in trouble that day when I went home. I kinda got yelled at by my parents and I think that was a motivating factor to graduate.

Sophia spoke of how her older brother supported and pushed her to succeed. “He helped me a lot when I needed help with schoolwork or just motivating me to get to school. He would help me with anything I needed.” Sophia shared how her brother was a high school dropout due to having a child before he graduated and that he pushed her to make a better life for herself. She also stated, “My mom, she motivated me a lot.”

Similarly, Jason gave a lot of credit to his mother and siblings for his successful high school graduation. He stated, “They would remind me to stay in school, even when it was hard. Whenever I’d wanted to quit, they’d get on my ass and tell me not to quit.”

Kal said that his grandma was his guiding force towards graduating high school:

My grandma pushed me a lot. She went to college and worked at the school while I was in school so, she made us come to school every day. If we did something wrong, they

would just call her up and she'd walk right over. Going to school was a big thing at our house.

Ramona agreed that her family was a big reason that she graduated. "My mom always encouraged me to go to school and finish. She would give me rides and sometimes even stayed home with my child...I was the first of my mom's kids to graduate high school." that helped push her. Ramona later expressed, "I always wanted to have my own car and my mother would always tell me 'as long as you finish school, you can find a job and work to get your own car.'"

Small group of close friends. All eight of the interviewees expressed that they had a few very strong friendships that helped push them to graduate. Many told stories of the friend groups pushing each other academically and studying together in order to pass their classes. Friend groups wanted to all graduate and walk together, as many had gone to school together the majority of their kindergarten through senior year. Some expressed that their friends had helped them to make good choices with their out-of-school time and pushed them to not drink alcohol or use drugs. When reflecting on her friends, Layla shared:

We would all work on homework together and help each other with work, teach each other things that one of us didn't know and one of us would stand up and educate us, get our work done so we could all graduate together.

Dominic conveyed that he enjoyed his high school experience due to the friendships that he made with his classmates. He stated:

My friends always talked about it. How we were all going to graduate in, you know, 3-4 months. 'Are you excited?' Of course. So, it was always my friends that I grew up with, went to school with, classmates that became I really close with. We were going to graduate with and I always kept that with me. We always had that mindset of we were

going to graduate together. It was always something we talked about from the beginning of high school until the end of high school. We are going to graduate together. No matter how tough things are going to get, we are going to graduate together.

Susanna believed she only had two close friends, but she spoke very highly of both of these individuals. Susannah shared:

I really loved spending time with friends that, like, the people that I've been close with ever since elementary school...sticking by my side and giving me help when I needed it.

They were there for, like studies and all that. We studied.

Kal's comments mirrored those of Susannah. "Just growing up we all wanted to graduate together, like all my friends. That kind of, like, motivated me to graduate."

Ramona only attended one school district throughout her K-12 education and stated that she enjoyed going as "all of [her] friends went to school there." She also opined that her group of friends motivated each other to graduate. While Jason admitted, "One of the biggest reasons that I came to school was to hang out with my friends." He also stated that he and his friends motivated each other by saying, "If I can do it, you can do it."

Positive school staff relationships. All eight of the participants believed that having positive relationships with school staff helped motivate them to graduate. Some named specific teachers or classes that really got them excited to attend school. Jason shared that he was able to get along with most of the teachers on his reservation school as opposed to the non-reservation school that he attended. He admitted these positive relationships helped him get to school every day, and he's looking at becoming an educator eventually due to the great teachers that he had at the school in which he graduated. Kal agreed with Jason that he also had a lot of great teachers on his reservation school, and he got along with all of them. Kal stated:

The staff, like the teachers and stuff that like, they just cared about the students a little bit more just cuz it's a smaller tight-knit community here [at the reservation school]. I felt like the teachers here [at reservation school] are, like, more involved in like everyday life, cuz their like, it's just a small town.

Susannah had similar experiences with her reservation school teachers. "I got really close with the teachers here [at the reservation school]. The teachers really helped me get through the year." When she compared the reservation school to the non-reservation school she attended, Susannah said, "up there [non-reservation school] is a lot more stricter, kinda like, all the teachers are like on you about your work and your phone and any device." Dominic expressed that his high school experience was enjoyable in part due to, "the friendships that I made with the teachers here."

Anthony gave a lot of credit to the staff at the high school on his reservation for his ability to graduate. He pointed out, "I knew a lot more teachers and they helped me." He also believed that he got along better with the staff at the school that he graduated from because they were able to understand him and his culture better than the non-reservation schools that he attended. Ramona concurred with Anthony, "I had a great teacher that pushed me to get all of my schoolwork done so that I could graduate. Whenever I would be stuck on questions, he would come and help me." Layla gave her teachers a lot of credit for her educational success stating, "The staff and the teachers were all really nice. The teachers cared about your success and that helps a lot. The staff was really good. Everyone was really friendly." When asked about things that helped her graduate, Sophia added, "I'd say the support from my teachers and the counselor. They really pushed us to get done."

Participating

Participation requirements for extra-curricular activities. Seven out of the eight interviewees participated in some activities during high school. All played at least one sport while others also were in student council, cheerleading, dance team, band, or hand game. Many spoke of how participating, especially in sports--in which they had to regularly attend school and have good grades to stay eligible--kept them on track to graduate. Many also expressed that playing a sport helped their self-confidence and they liked working as a team. Sophia said, "I liked the activities that I did so it kinda motivated me to keep my grades up so I was eligible. [Participating in activities] made me feel more social. It made me feel better being around people." She also admitted her attendance was better when she was in season; "if you were late or you were gone, you couldn't participate in games or had to sit out of games for so long." Jason echoed those statements saying that playing sports made his grades and attendance better because "I wanted to be eligible." He like competing and it helped his self-confidence. He "loved playing football [as] it made me feel good to use my body," Jason proclaimed.

Layla believed that participating in athletics were a big motivator towards graduating as, "They motivated me to keep my grades up so that I could play sports." She also believed that participating made her feel "good and helped her be in shape." It also helped her attendance as, "on game days we can't be late to school at all and sometimes for practices if we were late, our coach would have us do laps." Anthony said the biggest reason that he enjoyed the school that he graduated from was "sports and trips during driver's ed" and that his grades were better while he was in season because "I had to stay eligible." Susannah also credited extra-curricular activities for motivating her saying, "I got to play the sport that I loved. Staying busy kinda kept

me on track.” And that her attendance was better while she was in season, “We had to come on time to practice and play.”

Kal was very active in athletics in high school. He stated:

The main reason that I came every day was to play basketball or if I had practice, you had to show up to school to go practice. In sports, I would not like to miss a day for anything, even if I was sick I’d still try to come to school.

He also added that playing sports allowed him to meet other people and improve his self-confidence:

I like to play sports, be active. Go like, hand game and meet a lot of new people over there, a lot of native people; bowling, meet new people there. I just like to meet new people. When I was younger, I used to be real shy, but now I broke out of my shell. [Sports] helped push me to stay eligible, wanna play all four years of basketball and football.

Results for Research Question 1b: Overcoming Academic Challenges

Research question 1b of this study asked: How do Native American high school students overcome academic challenges?

In order to answer this question, the participants were asked questions pertaining to their ability to surpass any academic challenges. More specifically, the researcher wanted to define the motivations behind the graduates’ ability to hurdle obstacles faced while in high school. Table 5 shows the results with eight of the eight participants agreeing that family, ancestors, and serving as a role model for younger Native Americans helped motivate them as they encountered issues while in high school. The other codes that emerged from the interviews pertaining to overcoming academic issues revealed that seven of the eight participants were

driven by moving off of the reservation, five of the eight by listening to positive encouragement from role models, and six of the eight by having Native Americans working at the school in which they graduated. All of the responses were able to be combined into the category *Culture*. The common theme that arose from the data pertaining to this questions was *Legacies*, as all were related to ideas being passed on to others.

Table 6

Category and Codes for Research Question OneB

Categories and Codes	Frequency of Description
<u>Culture</u>	
Family/Ancestors	8 of 8
Serve as a Role Model	8 of 8
Get off of the Reservation	7 of 8
Positive Talk from Role Models	5 of 8
Native Americans Working at School	6 of 8

Culture

Wanting to make their family and ancestors proud. Family is a strong motivator for Native Americans (Guardia & Evans, 2008; House et al., 2006; Wynia, 2001). This even goes back to ancestors that they have never met. Dominic said that he gained resilience when he was able to think of his ancestors and that gave him a better understanding of the things his family went through. Layla stated, “They were walking the same grounds that we are. It’s cool to know that.” While Jason admitted to being close to dropping out of school during his sophomore year, but decided to keep working towards graduation as “I wanted to make my mom proud.”

Anthony gave a lot of credit to his ability to earn his high school diploma to the passing of his grandmother and mother. Both of those deaths occurred while he was in high school, and he wanted to make them proud of him. He also wanted his other ancestors to be proud of his accomplishments.

On the topic of motivation from ancestors, Dominic stated:

It opened my eyes to a new view of the world and it gave me a better understanding of what my grandparents, and my great grandparents and my ancestors went through. I know that there are some native teachers here at [Redacted] that help the kids understand the [Redacted] language and help them understand that they shouldn't forget who they are and where they come from.

Kal felt a strong connection with his ancestors due to living on the same land as they once did. He stated:

They always talk about what they used to do back in the day, how things were back in the day and, like, we tried to emulate as much as we can what they did, but, like with more modern stuff. I like to do stuff like how they used to do it, more traditional.

Anthony wanted to make his family proud saying, "My mom, she passed away about two years ago, and then my grandma 6 months after that, and I didn't wanna be a nobody...even though they aren't here, I want them to be proud."

Inspiring other Native Americans. All eight of the interviewees had younger siblings or family members that they wanted to be successful. They wanted to show that since they could graduate high school, others could as well. Layla stated that, "I don't use drugs or alcohol and like I said, I was an honor's student all four years. I participated in sports. I didn't ever really skip school. I would want younger kids to be like me." While Dominic expressed that he is

currently working at the same reservation school that he graduated from in order positively influence the next generation. He stated:

[I] always wanted to help shape young minds here because I feel as though they are the future of [Redacted] and whether they choose to stay here or not is up to them, but I've always wanted to be there to help them. Ummmm, I always see it as I'm not doing it for me, but I'm doing it for the kids. Ummmm, I was one of these kids, whether they are in elementary school, middle school or high school, I was one of them. I know, I kinda know what they are going through.

Jason wanted to be seen as a positive role model for younger Native Americans. He proclaimed:

I wanted to show that we could do it, especially my younger classmates that we could do it and the community that we could do it. I wanted to my siblings that I could do it and they could do it. It's not that hard.

Ramona expressed that she wanted to set a good example of graduating high school for her younger siblings, especially after her older sibling dropped out. Susannah said, "I kinda like, push myself for my siblings, so, kinda holding it together."

Moving off of the reservation. Multiple participants noted that reservation life is very depressing, while others stated that they wanted to see more of the world and become more comfortable in other places around different types of people. Sophia admitted:

Seeing all the bad things that go around on the reservation motivated me to get done and get out of here. I had my goals. I didn't want to be on the reservation anymore and I wanted to get a degree and have a good job.

Jason saw a lot of negative role models on the reservation, recognizing that many had given up and he had to overcome the mindset of "if they didn't graduate, why do I have to." Susannah

expressed that the only reason she is currently living back on the reservation is to help with her younger siblings, otherwise, she would be living elsewhere. She wanted more experiences in her life that she couldn't get on the reservation because "it was kind of a small town."

Kal identified that moving off of the reservation was a motivating factor for him. He wanted more life experiences that the reservation wasn't able to offer him. He stated:

There's not really, like, any good jobs that I would want to grow in to and be able to get a job right out of high school and build that career. I want to do something like that. I enjoy that.

He continued speaking about the negativity that he saw while he was young and living on the reservation:

Growing up, I'd see a lot of people not graduate, not go to college, just sitting around the Rez. I, like, kinda took that as motivation...I didn't wanna be like that so that gave me motivation. I didn't wanna be stuck on the reservation, doing nothing....seeing other people and I said 'I don't wanna be like that.'

Anthony witnessed a lot of destructive behaviors on the reservation which made him want to earn his diploma and move off to make a better life for himself. Anthony remarked, "I hate it. People doing stuff to look cool, I think that's what it is. I just wanted to get out of here." While Layla spoke of wanting to travel more and see what exists outside of her comfort zone. "I want to see more of the world and become comfortable in other places." Dominic concurred:

When I was 18, I thought I had time in the world to make up my mind and figure out where I could go. If I go to Western Iowa Tech, I could go there; UNK, I could go there or anywhere else.

Hearing words of advice from role models. Of the eight participants that were interviewed, five of them alleged that hearing people that they looked up to give them advice or encouraging words helped them graduate high school. Layla spoke very highly about the impact of her role models. She stated, “My mom would always tell me that school was the key to life and success so that was always something that I kept in my mind.” While Jason admitted that role models, “...told me to stay in school every day.” Anthony expressed that a staff member that he had a positive relationship with would constantly meet with him and encourage him to finish his schooling. When asked about her biggest motivators for graduating, Susannah gave credit to the positive talks she received, “people telling me to stick with the thing that I should be sticking with; telling me to stay on track.” She also said her relatives motivated her, “My uncle encouraged me to stay in school. He was always motivating me to do my homework or keep my grades up.”

Even though he struggled to participate in sports and keep his grades up, Dominic’s coaches had several encouraging talks with him. “They always told us that ‘we aren’t here to help you guys be football players, we’re here to help you be responsible young men and we’re helping you be ready for the world once you’re outside of high school.’” He also stated that, “My parents always told me that ‘You can do anything we set our minds to’ so that kinda became that motivating factor for us and kinda pushed us to be more.”

Native Americans working at school. Six of the eight interviewees believed that having other Native Americans that worked in the school helped them to graduate. Some said that the ability to have a Native American educator teach culture and language classes helped them feel connected to their family and ancestors. Dominic felt comfortable attending a reservation school that had Native Americans working there. He stated:

I feel as though if I would've went outside of the Rez and went to a different school then it would be people that I wouldn't know. It would probably take me a while to understand who they are and what they're doing.

He also remarked:

There were some native workers here that I may not have known, but I feel like if I would've talked to them or if I saw them, then it kinda gave me the understanding of who I was and made me not forget where I come from and what tribe I'm representing. I've always been told not to forget where I come from.

It also showed him positive educational role models and gave them the mindset that "if they can graduate high school, I can too." It gave him a better level of contentment from seeing older Native Americans working together with non-Native Americans in the same setting with the same goal. Layla agreed that having Native Americans work at the school helped her feel more comfortable. Susannah stated, "I felt close to all the people that I had been around most of my life." Sophia said, "They made me feel like I can do it. I can graduate and go get a degree and get my schooling."

Kal also had a higher level of comfort at school with other Native Americans in the building. He stated:

I got along with the [Native American] hall monitors. I know a lot of them. It would be nice to like, have in the high school, a Native American teacher. Maybe even to teach us about Native American history, maybe a class like that.

Anthony believed that having Native Americans that worked at his reservation school helped him feel more comfortable as the other schools he attended did not have any Native American

staff. He also remarked that those staff members were able to teach him more about their history that he would not have been able to learn elsewhere.

Results for Research Question 2: Challenges in the Ability to Graduate High School

Challenges exist for Native American students who live on a reservation (Davis et al., 2016; Richardson & Dinkins, 2014; Stowe, 2017). These include: drugs and alcohol (Albuja et al., 2021; Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020; Schick et al., 2020; Stanley et al., 2021), law enforcement issues (Friese et al., 2015), mental health issues (Garcia, 2020; McKinley et al., 2020; O’Keefe et al., 2021), belonging with their peers (Fryberg & Stephens, 2010; Rees et al., 2014; Serafini et al., 2017), chronic absenteeism (de Brey et al., 2019), and poverty (Garrett et al., 2013; Glick & Han, 2015 Mathers, 2012).

The second research question that this study focused on was: What do Native American students identify as their challenges in their ability to graduate high school within four years of starting?

In order to answer this question, the participants were asked questions that dealt with the various challenges that they faced, whether it be at home, in the community, or within themselves. The goal of this question was to identify the issues that Native American students have to navigate during their time attending high school. Table 6 shows the results that came from the participants. All were in agreement that substance abuse was a major concern and that law enforcement issues helped play into that. The codes in which seven of the eight participants agreed upon were mental health issues, chronic absenteeism and tardiness, and a high rate of poverty. Feeling excluded was also identified by five of the eight interviewees. *Outside and Inside Influences on Academic Success* were determined to be the category based on the coded

answers. *Impediments* was the theme that arose from the data gathered from participants, as all answers were related to common hardships.

Table 7

Category and Codes for Research Question Two

Categories and Codes	Frequency of Description
<u>Outside and Inside Influences on Academic Success</u>	
Legal Issues	8 of 8
Mental Health Issues	7 of 8
Chronic Absenteeism/Tardiness	7 of 8
High Poverty Rate	7 of 8
Exclusion	5 of 8

Outside and Inside Influences on Academic Success

Legal issues. This code pertained to how illegal activities impacted the respondents as they were in high school. The data obtained from the interviews showed that some respondents had a direct impact from law enforcement that created a hardship, while others spoke of how unlawful activity impacted them. Jason stated that he was “locked up a few times in like my junior year for beating someone up and the second time I got into a fight and broke out a window.” Both times he was in jail for multiple weeks and he said he fell behind while he was locked up. Even with those two instances of confinement, he stated that the reservation did not have many law enforcement officers and they had a lot of area to cover, so it was really easy to break the law and not get caught. Dominic agreed, “There’s always some vandalism-like kids with spray paint, broken windows, and like, there’s always that going around.” Kal concurred

with Dominic's point-of-view, "There are little gangs around the community that, like, try to break into houses or stuff like that, get into fights." While Susannah expressed that as the oldest of 9 children, she had to serve as a parental figure during her senior year of high school as a seventeen-year-old after both of her parents went to jail. This included mothering her youngest sibling who was under the age of 1 during that time. "I changed his butt, feed him, got him clothes, shoes, toys, baby food." Anthony admitted that he routinely broke the law, but he declined to go into details of what that entailed. Through her experiences, Sophia said of law enforcement that, "The police officers that we have aren't really that involved."

All participants believed that they could obtain drugs or alcohol at any time during while they were in high school. Some believed it was due to either a lack of law enforcement officers or that the officers that were employed didn't enforce many of the laws. Layla stated that she believed that drinking alcohol had a negative impact on her schooling. She said:

Alcohol is just, you know, weird. I don't like it and I don't drink any more, but when I did being hungover affected me a lot and just being sick. I missed school due to being hungover, maybe once, then I never let it happen again.

Jason reported that he had friends that would try to talk him into skipping school and instead going over to their house to drink alcohol and smoke marijuana. Initially he refused, but as he got older, he gave in and started drinking and doing drugs.

Anthony revealed that alcohol and drugs are found everywhere, and students use them to impact their social status as it is seen as being cool. He admitted that he frequently smoked marijuana, especially as he got older. "You do have pretty easy access to drugs and alcohol," Kal agreed. Ramona revealed that she struggled a lot with drugs, and especially alcohol while she was in high school. She believed that the main reason that she used was out of boredom and

wanting to make friends. Dominic reiterated the other participants, saying, “It’s kind of no lie that everyone here on the reservation has struggles with some sort of addiction, whether it be drugs or alcohol or whatever. Would it be easy to access some of that stuff? Absolutely.”

While Sophia recounted, “The alcohol and drugs and stuff that’s all around you.”

Mental health issues. All eight of the participants believed that they struggled with mental health while they were in high school. Many revealed they suffered from anxiety and depression. Layla is currently attending college and majoring in psychology. When asked why she chose this field, she said:

I want to become a therapist and then maybe come back to my community and help my people out because I feel that on a reservation a lot of people struggle mentally and I think that’s why a lot of people don’t finish school.

She also spoke of her own struggles while in high school. “Well, I had a situation that happened during my junior year that affected my senior year academically. It was depression, I think. I was raped.” Jason spoke of his struggle with mental health as he felt judged a lot during his time in high school and it caused him to feel depressed and want to withdrawal from others. While Dominic also opened up about his mental health struggles, saying:

I feel as though I do [have mental health issues]. I never talked to anyone about it. I feel as though that I may have anxiety. I feel as though I go through depression at times. There’s some times I think that things are happening a little too fast. I’m not really big on change. I don’t really like change that much. But I feel like as though I go through some mental health and I have to-at times-step away from either work, from my job, or if I was in high school, I had to step away from the books and paperwork and just worry

about my mental health and make sure that I was ok first before I went back to doing what I was doing.

Kal shared a lot of experiences that he had or that he saw others have while he was attending high school on the reservation. He said:

If you see a lot of students every day, you'll probably see a student come in, looking mad walking through the hallway or something, looking upset. I did lose a friend to suicide and I then, I know, like another younger lady lost her life to suicide, so I'd say depression is a big thing down here.

Susannah stated that she was constantly bullied while in school on the reservation and it caused her unneeded stress. She also stated that she felt like an outside sometimes at school and that she often perceived she was alone. Anthony changed schools frequently and said he felt a lot of anxiety due to "being socially awkward." He also expressed that he struggled with mental health related to historical trauma, "what happened at the schools and all that, it was kinda passed down to us". Jason agreed to having mental health struggles saying, "High school fucking took a lot out of me. Sometimes I would get really down on myself and I was afraid I wouldn't finish and people would think I'm a dumbass."

Chronic Absenteeism and Tardiness. Seven of the eight participants believed that they were unable to get enough quality sleep while they attended high school. Many agreed that they stayed up too late playing video games, being on social media, partaking in drugs and/or alcohol, or watching television or movies. This caused many of them to either skip school, come to school late, or to feel too tired to focus. Jason believed that, "I missed around a month of school each year" while he was in high school and that most were due to "just not waking up." "I kinda struggled with going to sleep at night cuz I just couldn't go to sleep. I would be up until like 2 or

3 am trying to go to sleep.” And other times he didn’t come to school as he didn’t want to “deal with the work and the teachers and stuff. Sometimes I just don’t feel like talking to anybody.” According to him, chronic absenteeism is a big issue for the reservation school in which he graduated as it is easy to skip school without any negative consequences.

On the issues of absenteeism and tardiness, Dominic revealed:

I was a little more tardy at times, probably my sophomore year. When I was sixteen, I didn’t really care of school that much. I was always in a cranky mood because I always thought ‘Why do I have to go to school? I’m tired of school.’

He also admitted that he was consistently late to classes that he didn’t like. “I tried to find ways to avoid going whether faking a sickness or pretending that I got checked out of school.” Sophia echoed Dominic’s thoughts as she regularly attended school, but she struggled with being tardy. “I was more of like late in the morning-sometimes I wouldn’t get up.”

Kal said that he had absences due to “funeral maybe or maybe I’ll go to a basketball tournament and I wouldn’t come on that Friday.” He also stated, “I would usually stay up late...playing video games on my phone or watching TV.” Ramona struggled a lot with absenteeism as she had a child when she was a freshman in high school. She consistently missed school due to being overly tired from taking care of her daughter and missing the school’s transportation. Layla agreed that she had some struggles with being tardy. They were mostly related to cultural activities and tiredness. She said:

I was sick and I had funerals otherwise I didn’t really miss school. I also would stay up late watching movies or being on my phone; social media probably. At the time, I wasn’t really trying to go to school the next morning. Just not wanting to wake up early.

While Anthony struggled with regular attendance, saying, “My sophomore year, I didn’t go to school my whole sophomore year.” And that he missed “a lot—60, 30” days per school year due to “not waking up and being lazy about it.” He stayed up too late “playing video games as a way out, cuz of what happens around here.”

Most of the participants recalled that they had missed extended periods of school due to cultural activities. The main cultural activity that caused absenteeism was for family funerals. According to the interviewees, Native American funerals and preparations last several days. Kal said, “I missed school for funerals, for sure. We do like a 4-day ceremony and all that so that, so that’s how I missed school for cultural events.” Susannah agreed saying she had missed multiple days of school due to Native American funerals. Ramona believes that she missed an average of 5 days of school per year due to cultural activities, with most of those being funerals.

High levels of poverty. Poverty also showed to have an impact on the participants as seven of the eight brought it up during interviews. The respondents gave different examples of how it impacted their lives while they were in high school. On the subject of poverty, Dominic stated, “I kinda grew up on some tough times with money.” He also admitted:

I had to watch my siblings at times. I did watch my younger brother who was a year old when I was 16. I had to go home and help cook meals for my siblings, which kinda goes back to poverty.

Susannah had some attendance issues due to poverty. She said, “I would have to stay home with my little brother while everyone else was gone.” Anthony also missed school to watch a younger sibling. Additionally, Jason explained that the amount of people that he lived with made it hard for him to do some of his schoolwork as he was not able to find time alone.

Kal echoed that statement that he lived in a smaller house with his mother, siblings, aunt, cousins, and grandma due to financial reasons and that the house was very full all the time. He also expressed that many people that live on the reservation are unemployed and that created a negative environment in the community. Anthony revealed that he attended four different schools during his high school career because “I was moving around a lot. My mom didn’t have a lot of money so we had to move around a lot.” Poverty hit Anthony hard after his mother died. “My senior year, I stayed with my girlfriend cuz it was when I lost my mom. I was kinda homeless for a little bit so I stayed with her.”

Feeling of being excluded. Although all participants expressed that they had close friends, five of the eight believed that other than that core group, they didn’t fit in with the majority of their classmates. Jason revealed that he was isolated a lot. “I had a small group of friends, but outside of that I felt alone. I wasn’t really popular, so I just kept to myself.” He stated that it was common at the reservation school that he attended for a lot of the kids to bully each other, though he did not have any major issues. Kal commented that at a non-reservation school that he attended that he felt like an outsider, mostly due to being a Native American and not being a part of the tribes that were located in those areas. Essentially, the Native Americans from other tribes down there did not fully accept him because he did not live on that reservation. He also lamented of the reservation school that he attended, “I’d say bullying is pretty bad here.” Susannah talked of the environment at the school that she attended and how there were a lot of issues. “The experiences that I had here (at the reservation school), a lot of bullying and all of that.” Anthony struggled with the feeling of not belonging due to moving and changing schools often. He admitted that it caused him to shut down socially and not open up to others. He also said kids at his reservation school were always “trying to fight me.”

When asked if he ever felt like an outsider at school, Dominic responded:

I did at times. I always felt like I was different. I always felt like I was more of a rebel type. I kinda had that attitude that I don't care. I didn't care what people thought about me. I didn't care what people had to say about me. I didn't let it affect me. I just stayed focused on what I was doing-my schoolwork.

Results for Research Question 3: Impact of Public Reservation Schools

Public reservation schools differ in many ways from public schools that are located off the reservation (Lees et al., 2016; Mette & Stanoch, 2016; Richardson & Dinkins, 2014). For instance, the educators employed at public schools located on reservations have a lower expectation level than non-reservation schools (Andrade, 2014; Flynn et al., 2012; Lopez, 2018; Wilcox, 2015). This could lead to Native American students attending reservation schools performing lower than non-Native American peers on standardized tests (Dupuis & Abrams, 2017; Lees et al., 2016). Racism and discrimination are other common challenges for Native Americans to overcome (Harman, 2017; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017; Tachine et al., 2017).

The third research question that this study focused on was: To what extent did attending a public reservation school impact one's ability to graduate on-time without dropping out?

Participants were asked questions pertaining to how attending a public school located on a reservation impacted their ability to graduate. The researcher wanted to determine what supports these schools put in place to help their students. Table 7 shows eight of the eight participants all thought that the extra things provided by schools helped them graduate. Other common codes that arose included seven of eight participants believed that the ease of graduating reservation schools, and five of the eight participants feeling discomfort when off of

the reservation were included in the impact of attending a public school located on a reservation. The researcher determined that the category for question three was *Reservation School Attributes* as the participants spoke of how the school impacted their ability to graduate. The theme of *Location* was concluded as all the responses pertained to the school being located on a federal reservation.

Table 8

Category and Codes for Research Question Three

Categories and Codes	Frequency Description
<u>Reservation School Attributes</u>	
Extra School Supports	8 of 8
Easier	7 of 8
Racism off of the Reservation	5 of 8

Reservation School Attributes

Extra support provided by public reservation schools. Public schools that are located on federal reservations and that serve Native American students provide more support for their pupils. All the eight of the participants agreed that they took advantage of the extra offerings. Some of the common ways in which these reservation schools helped support their students included providing two meals at school (breakfast and lunch) and sending food home at the end of the day, on-site daycare, summer school, online credit recovery courses, alternative education settings, tutoring, and transportation. Jason fell behind academically, but he was able to take online classes and enroll in alternative education in a different setting to get caught up with his peers. He described his alternative education experience and said:

It was boring, but I had to do it. I got a lot more work done [in alternative education], because there were more distractions over there [in regular education]. Here [in alternative education] we just had to sit down and work.

He admitted he wouldn't have graduated in time if he hadn't taken credit recovery classes as he was able to get a lot more of his school work in the same amount of time. Jason believed that alternative education did a great job in getting him and a lot of other students caught up and that it enabled them to graduate with their peers.

Susannah said she took advantage of the extra tutoring that her reservation school provided and that it helped her keep her grades up so she could complete her schooling. She also stated that she took online classes and some alternative education to recover credits. Anthony had to take online courses and summer school to get caught up with his peers in order to graduate with his cohort. "I was getting caught up [at the reservation school] in the summer. I took 80 credits." He also mentioned the school's JAG program as a motivator towards graduating. JAG [Jobs for America's Graduates] is a vocational program located in a handful of schools that has a focus on helping students excel in the classroom and workforce. Ramona used a lot of the extra resources that the reservation provided including online schooling, alternative education, daycare, transportation, meals, and summer school. Dominic took advantage of summer school, saying that he attended, "the summer before my senior year" to recover credits.

Public reservation schools are easy. This theme was pointed out right away from all 4 of the students that attended schools that were located off of the reservation. They believed that they did not have much schoolwork and very rarely had any homework to do while attending the reservation school. Jason said, "[Redacted] [non-reservation school], was more hard than [Redacted] [reservation school]. I did better down here [reservation school]. At there, they had

higher [expectations], but down here we had lower. We had homework ever day at [Redacted] [non-reservation school].”

Susannah attended a non-reservation school for a year and said that the reservation school that she attended did not require as much work as the non-reservation school. Anthony felt like he did not learn anything from his courses on the reservation school and that is a big reason why he is struggling in his college classes. Sophia stated that she wished she was able to take more difficult classes when she was in high school.

Kal agreed with the other participants in regards to the ease of the curriculum and standards of the reservation school that he attended. He expressed:

I wouldn't say [the reservation school that I graduated from] really helped me cuz, like, I feel like the jobs that I would be doing, like if I wanted to get in athletic training, [Redacted] [reservation school] has nothing like that, nothing do with physiology, anatomy, nothing to do with that.

He felt unprepared when he went off to college after graduating from a reservation school. It was a lot harder than he had expected and he had to work a lot harder. Kal also believed he was behind some of his classmates who had taken more upper-level classes while they were in high school. He attended a non-reservation school for a short time and was able to take honors classes that pushed him a lot more than the courses he took at the school from which he graduated.

When comparing both schools, he expressed:

I took honor's classes at [Redacted] [at non-reservation school]. The classes seemed to be easier [Redacted] [at reservation school], so it's just, here [at reservation school] it feels like you show up and do your work and you'll have good grades. You'll pass. You'll graduate. We really didn't have homework in high school [at reservation school].

The school [reservation school] isn't that big, doesn't offer too many classes other than what you're generally supposed to learn.

Layla said that she wished that she was pushed more academically in high school saying "I like to learn." Susannah agreed, saying that she didn't feel challenged as a student while she attended her reservation school and that classes were too easy. When comparing the reservation school to the non-reservation school that she attended, she admitted that the reservation school was easier.

Feeling racism or discrimination when off of the reservation. Five of the eight participants were able to describe experiences in which they had dealt with racism or discrimination while off of the reservation. This made them feel uncomfortable around people that are not Native American. This impacted their schooling as the majority of certified staff were non-Native American. Kal gave an example of when he was made to feel like an outsider. He stated:

One time when I went to snowboard in South Dakota, we stopped at a gas station and my roommates noticed that there was a group of older White men sitting at a table and when I walked by, they all turned and look at me, stared at me.

He also shared that when he attended a non-reservation school that he felt like he did not belong and that he struggled to make friends.

Layla shared a similar story that occurred when she was out in public with friends of hers that were also Native American. She said:

My friends, one time we were at the mall and a little girl with blond hair came up and she asked us if we lived in a tipi. And we were like 'Oh no. That was awhile back. We live

in houses.’ I kinda just laughed and was like people really think we still live in tipis and stuff. That’s weird.

While Susannah struggles going to places in which there will be a lot of non-Native Americans.

She stated:

I kinda, like, how my race is and how other people are, how I see on the Internet, kinda scares me, like scares my family; cuz of our color, how we talk, and all that. I felt like, a lot of eye, like glares over whenever were eating and all that [off the reservation].

She feels uncomfortable in some large cities due to how people look at her. She also briefly attended school off of the reservation and shared that did not like going to school there as she stated, “I was the only native in my class.” Anthony also struggles in public off of the reservation and shared that when he’s off the reservation he can “feel them looking at me.”

Selected Significant Statements

Table 9 shows some of the statements that were made by the participants during the one-on-one interviews. These testimonials help give a better understanding of the perceptions and lived experiences of the participants. Native Americans who live on federal reservations and attend public schools located there can have very different stories from the majority of Americans. The statements below are not listed in any specific order nor do some of them align with the research questions. Instead, the accounts given by the eight participants permit the reader a better understanding of the shared experiences of Native Americans that attend public schools on a reservation encounter.

Table 9

Participant Statements

Topic	Participant Responses
<u>Living on Reservation</u>	<p>It's cool to know that my ancestors walked the same ground that I did.</p> <p>Seeing all the bad things that go around on the reservation motivated me to get done and get out of here.</p> <p>My dad was an alcoholic, so he was never really around.</p> <p>Alcohol and drugs are all around you on the reservation.</p> <p>I had some nights where I stayed up 'til like 5 or 4 playing video games.</p> <p>There are a lot of bad role models on the reservation.</p> <p>Getting off of the Rez was a big goal for me.</p> <p>Coming from a small community, there wasn't very much diversity.</p> <p>There is easy access to drugs on alcohol.</p> <p>There's always some vandalism, kids with spray paint or whatever, broken windows, there's always that going around.</p>
<u>Attending a Public School Located on a Reservation</u>	<p>Teachers here cared about our success, so that helped a lot.</p> <p>I felt more comfortable at school with other Natives working there.</p> <p>In history, the history books didn't teach like the Native American ways--the things that really happened. It seemed like it was different.</p> <p>I guess I felt more comfortable knowing there are a lot of Natives working here.</p> <p>Participating in sports helped motivate me to keep my grades up so I could be eligible.</p> <p>There is a lot of distractions. (at school).</p> <p>I probably missed at least a month of school every year.</p> <p>A lot of my friends motivated me to graduate high school, because they dropped out and I didn't wanna do that. I wanted to further myself.</p>

We never really had any homework while I was in high school.

The school doesn't offer too many classes other than what you're generally supposed to learn.

I missed school due to attending funerals.

I wouldn't send my children to a reservation school so he can be around more people like I want to be.

If there were people in the building that I know, whether they be family members or friends of the family, and I would go talk to them and kinda get out of class.

My sophomore year, I had a lot of stress and I was with my mom and didn't want to go to school, so I took a sick-ass break, like a month.

I know of some people that think they might be too far behind to get help or they might be scared to ask, but the teacher won't say no to helping you.

Issues as a Native
American

I never really looked up to anyone because not a lot of people had their degree let alone a high school diploma.

I always wanted to be around more people and more cultures.

We didn't have a shower and a toilet sometimes.

Chapter V

Discussion

Introduction

Graduating from a high school has been shown to upgrade a person's life (Buckley et al., 2020; Locklear et al., 2020; Lovelace et al., 2017). Improved vocational opportunities and acquiring further education are some of the main benefits of graduating from high school (Buckley et al., 2020; Lovelace et al., 2017; Lawrence et al., 2016). Acquiring a high school diploma has positive outcomes for individuals including lower levels of poverty, less likelihood of imprisonment (Jimerson et al., 2016; Zaff et al., 2017; Zajacova, 2012), better overall health (Buckley et al., 2020; Kaplan et al., 2017; Locklear et al., 2020), and having a longer lifespan (Everett et al., 2013; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Sutin et al., 2017).

A student's ethnicity has been shown to have an impact on the ability to graduate high school in the United States (de Brey et al., 2019; Musu-Gillette, 2017). Overall, minority students graduate at a lower level than non-minority students (de Brey et al., 2019; Musu-Gillette, 2017). The ethnicity that struggles to graduate high school the most in the United States is Native Americans (de Brey et al., 2019; Musu-Gillette, 2017), with a current high school graduation rate of around 85% (Gion et al., 2018; Locklear et al., 2020; McFarland et al., 2017). However, in some areas of America, less than 40% of Native Americans earn a high school diploma (Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017).

Students who are Native American have to endure many trials that can influence their ability to earn a high school diploma (Ansari & Gottfried, 2018; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017). Native American culture dictates that they spend time doing traditional activities rather than educational ones (Demmert et al., 2006; Safran & Safran,

1994; Soldier, 1997). Other common issues that Native American students must navigate include high rates of teenage pregnancy (Garcia, 2020; Griesse et al., 2016; Hanson et al., 2014; McCarron et al., 2018), the highest percentage of all ethnicities receiving special education services (Gion et al., 2018; Hussain et al., 2018; Locklear et al., 2020; McFarland et al., 2017), and feeling as though they do not belong with their peers in school (Fryberg & Stephens, 2010; Rees et al., 2014; Serafini et al., 2017). The latter concern is related to having teachers who come from a different culture with unlike experiences (Aschenbrener & Johnson, 2017; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Masta, 2018; Pierce, 2018).

An inadequate quantity of scholarly literature is available that concentrates on the ability of Native American students to graduate from public reservation schools located in the Midwest United States. There is a sufficient amount of literature that focuses on the ability of Native Americans to graduate college and on the various challenges that many living in the United States must face in order to graduate high school. A focus on this specific region of America and looking at public schools on reservations has not been extensively studied. By using interviews to gather data, the themes of belonging, legacies, impediments and location came to fruition. These themes helped the researcher determine how some of the more pressing challenges Native American students face, as well as how they are able to overcome them in order to graduate high school.

Eight participants fit the criteria to be able to take part in this study. The researcher utilized purposeful sampling with a set criteria for participants that included: graduated a high school located on a federal reservation, reservation is located in the Midwest United States, graduated between the years of 2016-2021, and at least 18 years old. Snowball sampling was then used after the first participants interviewed in order to fulfill the required number of

participants. The researcher obtained data from the participants' experiences through semi-structured interviews. Both male and females participated, with two different schools located on different reservations being identified as the place that participants graduated. They provided stories from their lives that contributed to shared experiences regarding each individual's personal account of their upbringing and the impact on graduating high school.

Summary of Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate the lived experiences of Native American students who graduated from a public school located on a federal reservation in the Midwest United States, specifically looking at the factors that impacted their academic success and their ability to transcend academic barriers. The information gathered from this study can help inform educational institutions that work with Native American students on how to better determine their challenges and how to support students to become successful in their schooling. This study was motivated by the following research questions:

1. What do Native American students identify as their strengths in their ability to graduate high school within four years of starting?
- 1b. How do Native American high school students overcome academic challenges?
2. What do Native American students identify as their challenges in their ability to graduate high school within four years of starting?
3. To what extent did attending a public reservation school impact one's ability to graduate on-time without dropping out?

A discussion and the interpretation of the results of this study will be found in Chapter V. Also included in this chapter will be recommendations for further research and the implications for professional practice.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the lived experiences of Native American students who attend public schools located on federal reservations to determine the factors that impact their academic success and ability to transcend academic barriers. Cultural misunderstandings between Native Americans and non-Native Americans are a common occurrence. This is especially harmful to Native American students as they need to be in a welcoming setting in which they feel comfortable to be successful.

The data collection for this qualitative study was obtained through semi-structured, one-on-one interviews. The researcher engaged the participants with questions to obtain information regarding their lived experiences while they were in high school. Purposeful sampling, seen through both snowball and criterion, was utilized by the researcher to find participants (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). Eight participants were chosen that fit the criterion of being Native American, aged 18 and older, and graduating from a public high school within 4 years of starting that is located on a federal reservation in the Midwest United States between the years of 2016-2021. All of the participants provided stories of their experiences that gave the researcher rich data in order to answer the research questions. The credibility and validity of the data that was obtained was addressed through documentation, face validity, member checking, and consulting with research experts through this entire process (Connell et al., 2018; Engel et al., 2020).

The researcher made note of verbal and physical cues from participants to determine if they were comfortable and open with their answers. One participant showed mild discomfort when discussing their parents' legal issues, while another one refused to converse about an act of violence in which the participant was the victim. No other feelings of discomfort were seen or heard by any other participant or during any other line of questioning with the two participants

listed above. The participants were motivated to talk about their life experiences and hoped that they would be able to help give a voice to other Native Americans. The researcher was able to identify four themes from the interviews and analysis. The themes were 1) belonging 2) legacies 3) impediments and 4) location.

Belonging. All eight of the participants spoke of various ways they were able to have a feeling of belonging while they were in high school. This included talking about their friends, family, and the relationships they had built with school employees. Susannah had two close friends who motivated her to graduate. “They kind of like, they were there for studies and stuff like that. We studied and they said words [of encouragement].”

Layla believed that her mom had a big part in her graduating high school. She said, “My mom is the one who woke me up every day. She helped me with homework and supported me.” Dominic also brought up the support he received from his family. “My parents made sure I got to school on time whether they dropped me off or the bus picked me up.” Kal responded that he enjoyed attending a reservation school because “the school was smaller, so it was easier to connect with the teachers. It was easier to learn stuff.” Anthony agreed with Kal when he compared the high schools that he attended. “I got along better with the teachers at [Redacted] [reservation school]. They know how to work with Native American students better.” On the topic of student and teacher relationships, Layla expressed, “Teachers won’t say no to helping you.”

The majority of participants also spoke about participating in clubs and sports teams and how working with others towards a common goal helped motivate them to graduate high school. Jason expressed one of the reasons that he changed schools from a larger one back to a reservation school was due to participating in athletics. “I wanted to play sports and it was kind

of a big school and I was a little short.” He also stated that sports helped him graduate as “I had better attendance and grades while I was playing sports, because I had to stay eligible.” Kal responded pertaining to playing sports by saying, “I joined the basketball team and made more friends.” Previous literature aligns with this data as students that have a strong sense of belonging are more academically successful (Jimerson et al., 2016; Majeno et al., 2018; Masta, 2018; Walton & Cohen, 2007).

Legacies. The next theme that became apparent pertaining to overcoming obstacles was either leaving a legacy for those who are younger than them or wanting to make their family and ancestors proud. Sophia currently works at the reservation school that she graduated from because “I wanted to work with the kids here.” Anthony said that a big motivator for him to graduate high school was “my mom. She passed away three years ago and then my grandma six months after that. I didn’t want to be a nobody.” Jason remarked about his interest in becoming a teacher. He said:

I didn’t like school in general, but I want to have an effect on peoples’ lives, try to inspire them, try to have an impact on peoples’ lives. I seen how big of an affect that teachers have on kids.

The participants spoke about wanting to make a good life for themselves to set an example or making others proud of their accomplishments. A big motivation for Jason to graduate was “being better than what people think about us.” Later on when the topic got to what motivated him the most to graduate, Jason said, “I wanted to make my parents proud.” Some had close relatives who had passed away, and they wanted to do something positive to honor their family. Most of the participants also used wanting to move off of the reservation as motivation to

graduate, which fits in with wanting to improve their lives as a tribute to relatives or an model to others. Kal expressed:

[Growing up] I didn't want to be like other people on the reservation. Just not wanting to be stuck on the reservation. Like, not really doing nothing. That just gave me motivation to want to further my education, get a better job, move off the Rez, stuff like that. I did not want to be on the Rez. I see other people and I don't wanna be like them.

While Susannah wanted to move off of the reservation because, "I was just tired of this small town." Ramona saw a lot of negativity on the reservation and described is as being "dirty" and "sad."

Another code that fell under legacies was hearing positive talk from role models. Of this, Sophia said she had role models that "encourage her to go to school and to finish." The final code identified was having Native Americans work at the reservation school that the students attended. Of this, Kal responded, "it helped me be more comfortable and fit in more." Dominic agreed and said, "There are some native teachers here that help the kids understand the [Redacted] language. Help them understand that they shouldn't forget who they are and where they came from." Existing literature supports the data that was learned from this study as Native American students achieve better academically when they have role models that are Native Americans (Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Mosholder et al, 2016; Ward et al., 2014).

Impediments. The participants told many stories about the struggles of living on a reservation and the daily obstacles they faced while at school. The participants shared stories of the common illegal activities that they saw and even the laws that they broke. One was caught and had to serve time in confinement. Another had parents who had to serve time in jail while

she was in school, thus elevating her to act as a parent to her younger siblings. However, all had tales about the ease of obtaining alcohol while they were underage or getting and using illegal drugs. Kal said some of his close friends dropped out of high school because, “They gave up and started doing other things. I know a couple were on drugs and alcohol. Some of my classmates that did drop out started drinking and doing drugs.”

Struggles with mental health, the high poverty rate, and feeling excluded by the majority of fellow students were also common answers. Susannah shared that sometimes when she’s out in public off of the reservation that “I get really bad anxiety with all the people all around me.” Kal had this to say about mental health issues on the reservation: “You see statistics on reservations, depression, mental health issues is like, a higher percentage than, like, any other community.” Layla’s reservation school experiences impacted her future schooling and career as she hopes to be a therapist. “Seeing a lot of my fellow students struggling mentally, I seen that they needed somebody to talk to and I wanted to be that person.” Jason expressed that he transferred schools because “I didn’t want to be down here [on the reservation]. At that moment, I was just feeling down and depressed. I didn’t like it down here. I was lonely. I didn’t like interacting with people.” Later he stated, “Mainly the reason that I didn’t like school was because I was doing it all by myself. They [teachers] would just say ‘do this, get it done.’” Chronic absenteeism and tardiness was another common code. Anthony responded that he missed several days of school per year due to “funerals and sweats.”

With all of these issues, the researcher was not surprised to hear that most of the participants struggled to consistently get to school on time. This study aligned with previous literature on all of the challenges that the participants brought up. Substance abuse is a major issue for Native American students. (Albuja et al., 2021; Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020; Stanley et al., 2021). The

percentage of Native Americans who have mental health issues is the highest of all ethnicities (Garcia, 2020; McKinley et al., 2020; O’Keefe et al., 2021), as is the rate of poverty (Garrett et al., 2013; Glick & Han, 2015; Mathers, 2012). Native American students also feel as though they do not fit in at school (Fryberg & Stephens, 2010; Rees et al., 2014; Serafini et al., 2017). Finally, the rate of attendance for Native American students is the lowest of all groups of people (de Brey et al., 2019).

Location. The participants opened up about everything that the school district did for them as a student and the community at-large. Overall, schools the participants attended provided a lot of support for the students and their families. This was seen through extra meals that were provided, more schooling opportunities to make up credits, after-school time with teachers, and rides to-and from-school. On the topic of alternative education, Jason said:

Alternative education helped me graduate, a lot. They did a good job out here with me in the trailer, cuz it helped a lot of kids. It helped me. I wasn’t perfect and didn’t have perfect grades and if it wasn’t for this, I would still be in high school.

Kal was able to list the various things that his reservation school provided for students, saying “college visits, helping with college applications, field trips, daycare-my little brother was in daycare.” Susannah added other supports that the school provided, “tutoring, online classes, and alternative education-that helped me graduate.” Anthony touted the online dual credit classes that he took as a motivator that he could not only graduate high school, but also make it as a college student.

The sad reality from this study was that nearly every participant believed that their high school experience was too easy. This was especially true for the participants who attended other

schools that were located off of the reservation. They gave examples of the differences that they saw from lack of homework at reservation schools, the dearth of advanced courses, or the ability to graduate while rarely attending school. Kal didn't like the limited class options he had at the reservation school he graduated from. He lamented, "At [Redacted] [non-reservation school] they had way more classes, multiple teachers for different classes." While Anthony talked about how unprepared he was for college. "I didn't learn nothing in high school. I already knew most of it." Sophia concurred that her high school was not very demanding. "I wish my [high school] classes weren't as easy."

The last code that the researcher found was that Native American students felt more comfortable at a reservation school than at a non-reservation school due to having felt discrimination and microaggressions while being off of the reservation. Two of these codes aligned with the literature that reservation schools are easier than non-reservation schools (Andrade, 2014; Flynn et al., 2012; Lopez, 2018; Wilcox, 2015), and the racism felt off of the reservation (Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017; Konold et al., 2017). This study has added new information to literature from the interviews of the extra supports that reservation schools provide students and the community.

Research Question #1: Summary of Results and Discussion

The researcher wanted to gain information to help more Native American students successfully finish high school. The stories participants shared gave great insight into the strengths of recent high school graduates in earning a diploma. Each participant gave specific examples of what they leaned upon during the tough times that they experienced while they were in high school. All of the participants talked about how their family and friends pushed them to work hard on their schooling. Susannah said, "My grandma told me to stay on track.

She made sure I was there at school. She made sure that my grades were ok.” Dominic’s family was also very supportive of his education. He expressed:

My parents instilled that confidence in us. My parents always told me that we can do anything we set our minds too, so that became a motivating factor for us and pushed us to do more. Whether it be my parents or my siblings telling me that I can do that school work. I can get it done. I can do it. I can graduate. It was kind of having that backing and support coming from them.

All eight participants said that having positive relationships with staff members motivated them to complete their high school education. Susannah said, “My teachers really helped me get through my high school years.” Dominic also talked about his relationship with his teachers. “I had a really good art teacher. He taught me everything that I needed to know. He was always there to help me out.” The only area that had some dissent was on the effect of extra-curricular activities on graduating high school, however the majority disclosed that it was a strong motivator on school attendance and grades. Two categories were identified with this question as participants’ answers could be grouped into either support systems or participating.

The feeling of belonging is a basic human need (Shaw et al., 2019; Walton & Cohen, 2007) and the theme for this question. Schools provide students with education pertaining to subject matter, but also include a hidden curriculum. One of the main parts of most hidden curriculums is learning to get along with others. This is a reason that students learn about appropriate social skills and why many teachers incorporate group work. One of the most common ways for someone to lose their job is the inability to work together well with colleagues. All eight of the participants were able to give examples of how they used the feeling of belonging to receive motivation to graduate.

Many spoke of how their friend group did homework together or provided words of encouragement, especially during times in which they struggled. Family also provided all of the participants with strength to graduate. The researcher heard the participants discuss instances in which their family provided them with motivation as they worked towards graduating. Some told stories about how family members who were not able to graduate pushed them harder than others because the non-graduates were feeling a lot of life stresses due to not having a diploma. Jason said, “My parents would always tell me to stay in school.” While Ramona said her children pushed her to graduate as “there aren’t many jobs out there if you don’t have a diploma and I wanted my kids to have a good life”.

Schoolteachers have a tremendous impact on a student’s ability to graduate high school. A key component that most outside of education are unaware of is how important a positive relationship is to the learning process. Many students cannot get to the stage of learning until they know that the educator cares about them as a person. On the topic of the school staff at the reservation school that she attended, Layla said, “Everyone was really friendly and nice.”

Athletics and clubs are another important part of school (Buckley et al., 2020; Hensen et al., 2017; Zaff et al., 2017). By participating in extra-curriculars activities, students form new or stronger bonds with classmates and coaches (Buckley et al., 2020; Jimerson et al., 2016; Moilanen et al., 2014; Zaff et al., 2017). Eligibility requirements for athletics and clubs were also brought up by numerous participants as motivators. Many had better grades and attendance while they were in their sports season. Referring to participating in sports, Kal said, “That’s why I would come every day just to come play basketball or if I had practice, you had to show up to school to go to practice.” Layla credits athletics for helping her get through high school. “Sports gave me motivation to keep my grades up so I could play.” Clubs also provide more

opportunities for students to develop relationships while working towards common goals.

When talking about his time in high school, Jason replied, “I loved playing football, just being able to do something out there.”

All of this data aligns with previous research pertaining to strengths of Native Americans in graduating-family support (Lopez, 2020; Tachine et al., 2017; Turner et al., 2019), friends (Garrett et al., 2013; Whitesell et al., 2014), and relationships with school staff (Buckley et al., 2020; Hussain et al., 2018; Stripling, 2019). The exception was participating in extra-curricular activities; however, research says that students who participate in extra-curricular activities have higher graduation rates (Buckley et al., 2020; Hensen et al., 2017; Zaff et al., 2017). The two participants that did not list participating in extra-curricular activities as a strength were due to Dominic feeling too spread thin and Ramona having a child at a young age. Dominic struggled completing his schoolwork while he was participating in athletics due to time management, and Ramona would have participated in extra-curricular activities, but being a mother took up too much of her free time.

Research Question #1b: Summary of Results and Discussion

The next research question sought to find out how Native American students are able to graduate high school despite the numerous trials that they face. This was listed as research question 1b due to it being closely related to research question 1. The stories told by the participants revealed the category of culture. Being able to carry on the traditions that have been passed down for generations is important for Native Americans (Collings Eves, 2014; Huyser et al., 2018; Paul et al., 2017). Native American culture can be difficult for non-Native Americans to understand. They have different beliefs and values that have influence their daily lives. These beliefs take precedence over their schooling and can negatively affect their ability

to graduate high school. In this case, the category of culture was able to help Native American students be successful academically.

The researcher identified five codes from the respondent's answers. All eight participants agreed that their family, ancestors, and, serving as a role model to other Native Americans were major motivators for the daily issues they faced with attending public schools located on reservations. While the majority of participants believed that getting off of the reservation, hearing positive talk from role models, and having Native Americans working at school pushed them to work hard when they struggled. Jason summed it up the best when speaking of being a role model. He said:

I wanted to show that we could do it, especially my younger classmates that we could do it and the community that we could do it. I wanted to show my siblings that I could do it and they could do it. It's not that hard.

All of these codes fit under the theme of legacies. The things that are passed down from previous generations are vital for the Native American community. This includes what is communicated to them and what they can impart on to the next generation. Kal agreed with Jason about the importance of setting an example for younger Native Americans. "I want to be a role model. I try to stay out of trouble, stay positive, stay doing, like, good things, like going to school, National Guard and other stuff." Ramona looked differently at wanting to leave the reservation that she grew up on. She has two young children and wanted "something new and better for them."

Schools that work with Native American students need to understand that their culture will come before their schooling, and they need to find ways to use their culture to help their

schooling. Having Native Americans working at the school can be very beneficial. As Sophia said:

A lot of the natives that go here go through the same things that you do, they deal with the same stuff around on the reservation. Seeing them at school made me feel like I can do it. I can graduate and go get a degree and get my schooling.

Family members and Native American elders should be welcomed into the school to serve as positive role models and to show students that there are people that will support them throughout their schooling. Native American students also need to have varied experiences that allow them to go off of the reservation.

The answers given by the participants matched up with previous research of family and ancestors impacting the ability of Native Americans in graduating high school (Garcia, 2020; Hoffman et al., 2021; Munnely & Hishinuma, 2020). Some of the new data was regarding Native American students overcoming challenges included serving as a role model, getting off of the reservation, hearing words of advice from role models, and having Native Americans working at school. Serving as a role model to others was a universal answer for the participants. Layla spoke about how she lived her life and ended by saying, “I would want younger kids to be like me.” On the topic of moving off of the reservation, Layla said she wanted to “see more of the world, I guess, to get more comfortable in other places.”

Research Question #2: Summary of Results and Discussion

The focus of the third question changed gears as the researcher wanted to determine the obstacles that they had to traverse in order to graduate high school. Participants were able to tell stories and give several instances in which they faced hardships while in high school. In some cases, the participants had no control over the adversity that affected them and were

instead at the mercy of other peoples' actions. Some of the common issues came from their home lives, while others came from the community or school environment.

The researcher was able to determine five codes for this question. They were legal issues, mental health issues, chronic absenteeism and tardiness, high poverty rate, and exclusion. Looking at the codes the researcher found, the majority of the challenges came from outside of the school, but then seeped their way in to hurting each students' ability to graduate. The category for question two was outside and inside influences on academic success. While the theme was impediments as the participants spoke at length concerning challenges that they consistently faced while in high school.

All respondents spoke of various legal issues that plagued their schooling. All eight talked about the rampant use of drugs and alcohol on the reservation, especially with classmates; many shared that they used illegal substances while attending high school, too. Jason was incarcerated multiple times and it hurt his ability to keep up with his peers. He also spoke about using illegal substances "My senior year I started drinking [alcohol]. I also smoked weed here and there." Kal had a similar story about the reservation community. He stated:

Drug and alcohol abuse are bad [on the reservation]. A lot of kids' parents are drug addicts, do alcoholism. You go home and see your mom and dad drunk or on drugs and you're not gonna feel too good about that.

Anthony also believes that illegal substances are easy to get on the reservation. "Drugs and all that, alcohol, are all over. Kids do that stuff to look cool." As the oldest of nine, Susannah had to step in as a guardian after both of her parents were sentenced to jail while she was a senior in high school. She said, "I would have to stay home with my little brother while everyone else was gone."

Seven of the eight also talked about their mental health struggles, mainly depression and anxiety. One even talked of being the victim of a violent act that had a negative impact on her mental health and schooling. Jason responded that he almost dropped out his sophomore year of school because, “I had a lot of stress. I didn’t want to be here [at school].” Susannah also saw a lot of classmates that needed help with their mental health. “I wish we had more counselors when I was in high school. A lot of students had mental health issues.” Sophia saw the same mental health challenges and wished that when she was in high school that more counselors and therapists were available for her classmates.

Chronic absenteeism and high poverty rates were also consistent reasons given. High poverty rates hurt the participants as some had to stay miss school to take care of younger family members, while others said they had trouble doing schoolwork at home due to living in a crowded environment. The other response that the majority agreed with was the feeling of being excluded. Although this may seem contradictory with responses to research question one of friends being a motivator to graduate, many participants agreed that they were bullied or felt out of place from the majority of their classmates. On the topic of school environment, Jason responded, “I’m pretty sure that everyone gets bullied at some point here.” Susannah shared a similar response, saying, “A lot of people saying a lot of things to my face” and that sometimes she felt like she was alone. Anthony said he felt like an outsider at the reservation school he attended because “everyone here likes to party and drink. I did too for a while, but I got out of it my junior year.”

When comparing the information that was given, all of the answers aligned with previous research. Legal issues (Albuja et al., 2021; Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020; Schick et al., 2020; Stanley et al., 2021; Swaim & Stanley, 2020), mental health issues (Campbell & Troyer,

2007; Smokowski et al., 2014; Yetter & Foutch, 2013), chronic school absenteeism and tardiness (de Brey et al., 2019; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Yetter & Foutch, 2014), high poverty rate (Brown et al., 2018; Dupuis & Abrams, 2017; Kitcheyan et al., 2017), and feeling excluded (Fryberg & Stephens, 2010; Rees et al., 2014; Serafini et al., 2017) are all common challenges that Native Americans must deal with while attending high school. On the feeling of not belonging, Jason expressed, "I had a small group of friends, but outside of that I felt alone. I wasn't really popular, so I just kept to myself."

Research Question #3: Summary of Results and Discussion

The final research question put an emphasis on what schools located on reservations are that doing to help students graduate high school. Native American students have a lot more needs than non-Native American students, especially those who live on a reservation. Participants talked about things their school did that went above teaching the curriculum. This included providing extra meals and giving food to students to take home, having in-school daycare for students and school workers, setting up alternative education at separate sites to better accommodate learners, using online learning for those students that struggled to regularly attend school so they could do schoolwork from home, offering summer school to help students make up credits, more after-school activities to reduce latch key kids, and free tutoring provided by teachers. Ramona utilized online learning and alternative education opportunities and credited those supports for helping her complete her schooling. She especially like alternative education as "I could work at my own pace and get a lot done every day."

Other codes identified by the researcher were that schools located on reservations are easy to graduate from, and the racism that Native Americans feel while they are off of the reservation. Regarding the rigor of the reservation school that he attended, Kal said:

[The reservation school needs to start] preparing us more, making classes tougher, making us have to take notes, like how college professors do it, more college-like in high school. It [reservation school] wasn't that much of a challenge for me. Classes here need to be at a higher level.

Susannah agreed with Kal's thoughts on the difficulty of the reservation school she attended.

"We needed more challenging classes. I wasn't challenged in high school. It was too easy, especially compared to [Redacted] [non-reservation school]."

The last code is in reference to a Native American student attending school off of the reservation and feeling uncomfortable. This was brought up from students who attended schools off of the reservation and through stories of discomfort felt by the participants through racism and microaggressions when they were off the reservation. Anthony responded that when he's off the reservation, he feels uncomfortable because "I feel them all looking at me." Layla agreed with Anthony and said:

Going to a different city would give me a little bit of anxiety being around White people. It would make me feel uncomfortable. My dad grew up in Minnesota, in the twin cities, so it was during the 80's and people were being racist to him and that made me a little nervous about myself.

Reservation school attributes was the category for this question as all answers pertained specifically to the school that the participant attended. The theme was location as schools that are in other locations are much different with their support they provide, level of rigor and curriculum expectations, and the different cultures that attend. The eight participants had many positive things to say about the public reservation school from which they graduated. These schools provided many extra supports for their students, going above what the majority of public

schools provided. Respondents also talked about the lack rigor of the reservation schools. Those who attended multiple schools contrasted expectations and the amount of work that each school assigned. Lastly, participants spoke of the racism that they felt off of the reservation and how attending school on the reservation made them feel more comfortable.

When looking at previous research, the lack of difficulty in public reservation schools (Andrade, 2014; Flynn et al., 2012; Lopez, 2018; Wilcox, 2015), and feeling discriminated against (Blair et al., 2021; Buckley et al., 2020; Majeno et al., 2020) aligned with previous studies. The extra supports that these schools provide was new information that can be added to public literature. Participants spoke of the things that their schools provided including: two meals at school (breakfast and lunch) and send food home at the end of the day, on-site daycare, summer school, online credit recovery courses, alternative education settings, tutoring and transportation. Anthony said, “I was getting caught up (at reservation school) in the summer. I took 80 credits.” Those 80 credits would be the equivalent of an entire year’s worth of classes at the school in which he graduated.

Conclusion

High school graduation rates can vary greatly by ethnicity (de Brey et al., 2019; Musu-Gillette, 2017). Figure 1 illustrates the difference in graduation rates for the different ethnicities in the United States. Minorities have a greater struggle in earning a high school diploma (de Brey et al., 2019; Musu-Gillette, 2017), with Native American students having the lowest high school graduation rate overall (de Brey et al., 2019; Musu-Gillette, 2017). Nationwide, around 85% of Native Americans are currently graduating every year (Gion et al., 2018; Locklear et al., 2020; McFarland et al., 2017). However, there are some regions of the United States in which the high school graduation rate for Native Americans is only around 40% (Flugaur-Leavitt,

2017; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017). Native Americans must navigate through a host of issues that others would not understand while they are in high school (Ansari & Gottfried, 2018; Flugaur-Leavitt, 2017; Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017).

This research study examined the lived experiences of eight recent Native American graduates from a public school located on a federal reservation in the Midwest United States. The researcher utilized semi-structured, face-to-face interviews in order to gain information from the respondents. The themes that emerged from the one-on-one, semi-structured interviews were belonging, legacies, impediments, and location. These themes answered the following research questions:

1. What do Native American students identify as their strengths in their ability to graduate high school within four years of starting?
- 1b. How do Native American high school students overcome academic challenges?
2. What do Native American students identify as their challenges in their ability to graduate high school within four years of starting?
3. To what extent did attending a public reservation school impact one's ability to graduate on-time without dropping out?

All of these participants were able to transcend their personal hardships (incarceration, parenthood, incarcerated parents, substance abuse, and violent victimization) in order to graduate high school.

The lived experiences of the research participants showed motivations for graduating high school and more optimism for their future because of obtaining their diploma. While being a student in high school, the participants recognized how valuable graduating high school would be for their imminent prospects. Although some participants saw the learning process as a

difficult endeavor, many welcomed the challenge; with some continuing their education at college. According to the literature, many Native Americans are motivated to graduate because of family (Lopez, 2020; Tachine, et. al, 2017; Turner et al., 2019), friendships (Garrett et al, 2013; Whitesell et al., 2014), and positive relationships with school personnel (Buckley et al., 2020; Hussain et al., 2018; Stripling, 2019). School employees working with Native Americans need to be aware of the motivations of these student in order to provide scholastic support.

As the participants traversed through their own educational journeys in high school, their teachers, coaches, and systems greatly influenced them to overcome deterrents. Narratives provided by the participants pointed out the things that had great impacts on them as they attended high school, both positively and negatively. Their stories gave insight into ways that schools can help Native American students successfully complete high school and give them more optimism for their future.

Educators who work at schools located on federal reservations have great influence on the direction of their students. The research and participants stories show how teachers and coaches helped push students towards graduating. Previous literature and this study support the notion that positive relationships are an integral piece to helping Native Americans succeed academically (Buckley et al., 2020; Hussain et al., 2018; Stripling, 2019). Educators and coaches who work with Native American students need to have an understanding of the challenges that these students face in order to find the best ways to reach them. Although some issues are common, many solely affect a specific student.

School systems that educate Native American students need to be able to meet all of the needs of those students. Again, these needs can vary greatly depending on the student's

circumstances. It is essential that supports offered by schools located on federal reservations are encompassing and help out the families and communities, as well as the student. This study shows how extra supports that public reservation schools provide have a positive impact on the Native American students that attended those schools.

The participants of this study were all proud of their accomplishments, most notably, graduating high school. It was easy to see the pride they exhibited when they spoke of the adversity they had to endure and surmount. All participants were aware of their challenges, yet they worked hard to achieve a dream and open up new doors for a better future. They have set the stage to serve as role models for the next generation of Native American students and hope that non-Native Americans can better understand the everyday life that they go through.

Recommendations for Further Research

This qualitative study, which gave a voice to the lived experiences of eight Native Americans who recently graduated from a public school located on a federal reservation in the Midwest United States, sought to determine the various successes and challenges that Native American students have in regards to their education and home life. The researcher desired to emphasize the participants' narratives in order to guide public schools located on federal reservations and create equity between those students and students of other ethnicities who attend public schools. For the most part, the Native American population has been largely forgotten by the general population. The research surrounding Native American students and their educational attainment can be disheartening, but there are also many success stories that need to be looked at in order to help other Native Americans achieve academic success.

Some opportunities for future research into Native Americans ability to overcome challenges and graduate high school include:

- Obtaining data from Native Americans who live in different parts of the United States
- Interviewing the parents and/or guardians of the recent graduates to find their perceptions
- Replicate the study, but choose public reservation schools that consistently have graduation rates that are higher than the national average
- Replicate the study, but choose public reservation schools that have the lowest graduation rates in the nation
- Include observations and experiences of long-time educators who work at public reservation schools
- Include only Native American students who have attended public reservation schools and public schools off of the reservation to compare and contrast their experiences
- Interview Native Americans who recently graduated college to find out how they overcame challenges
- Comparing the curriculum, supports, and school personnel demographics between public reservation schools and nearby public schools not located on reservations
- Replicate the study, but focus on Native Americans who attend public schools that are not located on a federal reservation
- Include Native Americans who have graduated from private high schools to determine how their strengths, challenges, and school supports compared to this study

It was the goal of this study to determine the challenges and successes of recent Native American high school graduates who earned a diploma from a public reservation school. However, many Native Americans believe they lead successful lives without the need of a diploma. There is an opportunity for future research to find specific tribes or Native Americans

that live in precise regions of the United States to find out why they have little value for education or how they define living a productive life.

Implications for Professional Practice

Around 1.5% of the total population in the United States is Native American (Blair et al., 2021; Garcia, 2020; Herrick & Mendez, 2019; Whitford, 2017), which ends up being approximately 1% of school students (de Brey et al, 2019, Musu-Gillette, 2017). When looking at the numbers, there are roughly 530,000 of Native American students (de Brey et al, 2019, Musu-Gillette, 2017). With the current Native American high school graduation rate at 84%, it means that 85,000 Native American students drop out of school every year (de Brey et al., 2019; Musu-Gillette, 2017).

Although the value of graduating high school is well known and various initiatives have been attempted to specifically help them graduate high school, Native American students continue to be left behind by their peers of other ethnicities (Boyer, 2000; Gunn et al., 2011). Presently, the high school graduation rate for Native Americans in the United States is under 85% (Gion et al., 2018; Locklear et al., 2020; McFarland et al., 2017; Ni et al., 2017), which is the lowest percentage of any ethnicity (de Brey et al., 2019; Musu-Gillette, 2017).

Many findings of this study aligned with previous research. The eight research participants gave experiences pertaining to living on a reservation and graduating from a public school located on a federal reservation in the Midwest United States. There were some additional findings that this study will add to current literature. The education system in America needs to find better ways to not only support Native American students, but also the reservation communities. Native American tribes have many challenges such as substance abuse (Albuja et al., 2021; Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020; Schick et al., 2020; Stanley et al., 2021),

unemployment (Davis et al., 2016; Richardson & Dinkins, 2014; Stowe, 2017), personal health (Garcia, 2020; McKinley et al., 2020; O’Keefe et al., 2021), and violence (Garcia, 2020; McKinley et al., 2020; Munnelly & Hishinuma, 2020; Rogers & Sisquoc, 2020). The government needs to find better ways to help Native American people, allowing them to continue their traditions, but helping them to better integrate with mainstream ideas and mores. By focusing first on better meeting the needs of the Native American communities, they then have a better chance at improving the teaching and learning that takes place on public reservation schools.

The goal of this study was to look at the lives of Native American students who attend public schools on federal reservations in order to figure out what factors influence their academic achievement and ability to overcome obstacles. This study proves that schools serving Native American students need to be able to provide much more support to the students and their families than schools that do not have Native American students. It is also evident that alternative education can be a big boost to improving the graduation rates of Native American students. The students in this study who had the opportunity to either take online classes or participate in alternative education said that those were major reasons they were able to graduate. Public reservation schools might be the ideal location to go to either shift to completely online schooling or alternative education.

The findings of this study provide information to develop a better understanding of Native American students and how to help them succeed educationally. The themes that have been established from this study have shown that Native American students have the most educational success when they have:

- Supportive families

- A strong friend group
- Positive relationships with school employees
- The ability to participate in extra-curricular activities
- Opportunities to serve others that are younger
- The ability to see the opportunities that are beyond the reservation
- Role models that give positive advice
- Native Americans that have had success with their education
- Various extra support from the school

Teachers, administrators, and policymakers that work with the Native American population need to have a good grasp on the various assistance that Native Americans require in order to prosper with their schooling and open doors to a better future.

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Appendix A

Qualitative Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Dirk Coon, Ed. S., and M.Ed., a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at Northwest Nazarene University is conducting a research study related to the successes and challenges of Native American students who recently graduated a public school located on reservation in the Midwest United States. I hope to discover “common” themes that with the success and challenges that Native American students encounter while attending and ultimately graduating high school. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a healthy volunteer, over the age of 18 who meets the qualifications of the study.

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in the study, the following will occur:

1. You will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form, volunteering to participate in the study.
2. You will answer a set of interview questions and engage in a discussion with me. This discussion will be audio- and video-taped for accuracy purposes, and is expected to last approximately 60 minutes. Your response(s) will help to provide and give advice to those who work with Native American students and who might be facing the same academic problems that you did during your schooling.

3. There are several questions prepared for this study. Additional questions may be asked for clarification such as, “can you expand on that issue?” or “how did it make you feel?” If you are uncomfortable with any questions that are asked, please let us know immediately and I will move to the next question. You may choose to end the interview at any time.
4. You will be asked to reply to an email at the conclusion of the study asking you to confirm the data that was gathered during the research process.

These procedures will be completed face-to-face and will take a total of about 60 minutes.

C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

1. Some of the discussion questions may make you uncomfortable or upset, but you are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time.
2. For this research project, the researchers are requesting information on student experiences regarding to schooling, and home life. The researcher will make every effort to protect your confidentiality. However, if you are uncomfortable answering any of these questions, you may ask to skip them.
3. Confidentiality: Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy; however, your records will be handled as confidentially as possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study. All data from notes, audio-tapes, video-tapes and disks will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the office of the researcher and the key to the cabinet

will be kept in a separate location. In compliance with the Federal wide Assurance Code, data from this study will be kept for three years, after which all data from the study will be destroyed (45 CFR 46.117).

4. Only the primary researcher and the research supervisor will be privy to data from this study. As researchers, both parties are bound to keep data as secure and confidential as possible.

D. BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information you provide may help educators who work with Native Americans to better understand what it takes for these students to become academically successful.

E. PAYMENTS

At the conclusion of the interview, multiple drawings will be held to receive a \$25 VISA gift card.

F. QUESTIONS

If you have questions or concerns about participating in this study, you should first talk with the researcher. Dirk Coon can be contacted via email at dcoon@nnu.edu, via telephone at 402-837-5622, extension 3418. If for some reason you do not wish to do this, you may contact Dr.

Bethani Studebaker, Doctoral Committee Chair at Northwest Nazarene University, via email at bstudebaker@nnu.edu, via telephone at 208-467-8802, or by writing: 623 University Drive, Nampa, Idaho, 83686.

G. CONSENT

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. Your decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on your present or future status as a student at your College.

I give my consent to participate in this study:

Signature of Study Participant Date

I give my consent for the interview and discussion to be audio taped in this study:

Signature of Study Participant Date

I give my consent for direct quotes to be used in this study:

Signature of Study Participant Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date

**THE NORTHWEST NAZARENE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH REVIEW
COMMITTEE HAS REVIEWED THIS PROJECT FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN
PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH.**

Appendix B

Facebook Recruitment

This post has been approved by site administrators.

My name is Dirk Coon and I am a doctoral student from Northwest Nazarene University and a teacher at Umonhon Nation Public School (located in Macy, Nebraska). I am conducting a research study for my dissertation titled “The Native American Education Issue: A Qualitative Study Examining the Success and Challenges of Public Reservation Schools”. The purpose of this post is to solicit your support and participation. The study will allow me to share fundamental knowledge about your accomplishments and challenges detailing the shared experiences that you have regarding your education. This study will capture the voices of Native Americans that have graduated a public high school on a reservation located in the Midwest in the previous 5 years (2016-2021). As defined in this study, the Midwest includes the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. This interview will focus on your experiences while in high school. Participation in the interviews will last approximately 60 minutes and participants that complete the study will be put in multiple drawings for a \$25 VISA gift card. Findings of the study will be shared with you upon completion of the study. Your participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and participation at any time without penalty. The information from the interviews will be audio-and video-recorded, but will remain completely anonymous and your answers will not connect to you in any way. The data will be analyzed by me (Dirk Coon). Your input is extremely valuable and your participation would be greatly appreciated. By participating in this study, there are no known risks. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher has taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown risks. To participate in the research, please either send me a private message, comment after this post, or email me directly at dcoon@nnu.edu. Thank you for your consideration.

Appendix C

ACRP Training Certificate



Association of Clinical Research Professionals

CERTIFIES THAT

Dirk Coon

Has Successfully Completed

Ethics and Human Subject Protection (No CEU)


Certification Date:
January 20, 2019



The Association of Clinical Research Professionals (ACRP) provides continuing medical education for the completion of this educational activity. These credits can be used to meet the certification's maintenance requirement.

Appendix D

Northwest Nazarene University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

Submittable 

Dear Dirk,

The IRB has reviewed your protocol: 0289 THE NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION ISSUE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXAMINING THE SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES OF PUBLIC RESERVATION SCHOOLS FOCUSING ON ABSENTEEISM AND GRADUATION. You received "Full Approval". Congratulations, you may begin your research. If you have any questions, let me know.

Heidi Curtis
Northwest Nazarene University
IRB Member
623 S University Blvd
Nampa, ID 83686

Appendix E
Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about yourself
2. If you currently live on a reservation, why do you choose to live here?
3. Do you currently attend a postsecondary school? If so, how did your high school education help prepare you for future schooling?
4. Are you currently employed? If so, how did your high school education help prepare you for the workforce?
5. Do you have children? Do they attend a public school on a reservation? What support do you provide them to ensure their academic success?
6. How many schools did you attend while in grades 9-12?
7. What high school did you graduate from?
8. What motivated you to graduate high school?
9. In what ways did living on a reservation help you as a student?
10. Was absenteeism an issue for you? While you were in high school, how many days per year do you estimate that you were absent? What issues caused you to consistently miss school?
11. What activities did you participate in while in high school?
12. Describe the person that helped you the most while you attended high school.
13. At any time during your education, did you think that anything was unfair? Did you feel like a person or rule/policy that seemed unfair? Please describe.
14. What types of things did you like to do outside of school during your free time?

15. How did you feel your in-school and out-of-school activities affected your ability to graduate?
16. When you were in high school, who resided in your main home with you?
17. Tell me about your close friends while you were in high school; did they graduate as well? Did they participate in any activities?
18. Describe the support you had at home for your schooling—who helped encourage you to finish and what did they do?
19. In what ways did living on a reservation create challenges for you as a student?
20. If you could change anything about your schooling, what would it be?
21. What advice would you give Native American students who are struggling academically?
22. What are your future goals concerning education, career, and your personal life?

Appendix F

Introduction Presentation

THE NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION ISSUE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXAMINING THE SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES OF PUBLIC RESERVATION SCHOOLS

Researcher: Dirk Coon



Dirk Coon

Experiences

- Umonhon Nation Public School, Macy, NE (Teacher-4 years)
- York St. Joseph School, York, NE (Teacher and Data Coordinator-2 years)
- Ainsworth Community Schools, Ainsworth, NE (7-12 Principal-1 year)
- Howells-Dodge Consolidated Schools, Howells, NE (PK-12 Principal-1 year)
- Dorchester Public School, Dorchester, NE (Teacher-6 years)
- Hastings St. Cecilia Catholic School, Hastings, NE (Teacher-3 years)

Education

- Bachelor's Degree Business Administration from Midland University
- History and Business Education Endorsements from York College
- Vocational Education Endorsement from the University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK)
- Master's Degree in 7-12 Principalship from UNK
- Educational Specialist Degree in Superintendency from UNK
- Current Doctoral Student at Northwest Nazarene University



The Study

- Self-identified Native American
- Graduated from a public high school within four years of starting
- Graduated high school within 2016-2021
- High school was located on a federal reservation
- Reservation is located in the Midwest United States
- Aged 18 and older



Purpose

1. What do Native American students identify as their strengths in their ability to graduate high school within four years of starting?
- 1b. What do Native American students identify as their challenges in their ability to graduate high school within four years of starting?
2. How do Native American high school students overcome academic challenges?
3. To what extent did attending a public reservation school impact one's ability to graduate on-time without dropping out?



Appendix G

Verbatim Opening Interview Instructions

Hi _____

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study.

Semi-structured, audio and video recorded interview

This study is considered low risk. Your identity will be protected with a pseudonym so no one will be able to identify you.

Please be open and honest with your responses and give as much detail as you can. Your input will be used to help educators that work with Native American students.

A semi-structured, video- and audio-recorded interview will be conducted with each participant. The video recording will be used to see body language while the audio recording will be used to verify the accuracy of the answers that were given. All of the video- and audio-recording will be kept on a password protected computer that is only accessible to the researcher, and will be destroyed after three years.

These interview will be completed face-to-face at a mutually decided upon time and location by the participant and the researcher. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes.

This process is completely voluntary and you can select to suspend your involvement at any time. You are not obligated to answer all the questions if you feel uncomfortable with any of them.

Do you have any questions or anything I can clarify?

(pause)

Thank you for your participation.

Dirk Coon

Doctoral Student

Northwest Nazarene University

dcoon@nnu.edu

402-837-5622 Extension 3418

Appendix H
Criteria Form

THE NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION ISSUE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY
EXAMINING THE SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES OF PUBLIC RESERVATION
SCHOOLS

I, _____ (name of participant) agree that I am of Native American heritage and that I graduated from a public school within four years of starting that was located on a federal reservation that is located in the Midwest United States (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, or Wisconsin) within the last 5 years (2016-2021).

Participant Name (printed): _____

Participant Name (Signature): _____ Date: _____

Appendix I

Verbatim Interview Closing

The researcher will be contacting you within the next few weeks via email to have you look over a transcribed copy of the questions asked and the answers that you gave. Please look them over for the accuracy of your answers. If you disagree with any of the written transcription, you need to contact the researcher within one week of receiving the email. If you wish to not participate in the study and have your responses taken out, please contact the researcher within a month of receiving your transcribed answers.

The researcher may be contacting you after the interview for follow up questions related to your answers from the first interview. If so, the same protocols will be in place and it will be both video- and audio-recorded again.

If you know of anyone else that fits the criteria for this study, which again is someone that graduated from a public school within four years of starting that was located on a federal reservation that is located in the Midwest United States (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, or Wisconsin) within the last 5 years (2016-2021), please let me know and I can contact him or her about participating in this study as well.

Thank you for participating in this study. If any questions arise pertaining to this interview, please contact the researcher via email.

Dirk Coon

Doctoral Student

Northwest Nazarene University

dcoon@nnu.edu

402-837-5622 Extension 3418

Appendix J Member Checking Email

Date

Dear _____,

Thank you for participating in the study this past semester. I wanted to let you know some of the themes that resulted from the interview of all participants (see below). Please let me know if these accurately depicted our conversation. If you have any suggestions or modifications, please let me know as well.

Themes: Belonging, Legacies, Impediments, Location

Categories: Support Systems and Participating, Culture, Outside and inside influences on academic success, and Reservation school attributes

Codes:

Question 1: Family, Friends, School Staff Relationships, Participating in Extra-Curriculars

Question 2: Family/Ancestors, Serve as a Role Model, Get off the Reservation, Positive Talk from Role Models, Native Americans Working at School

Question 3: Legal Issues, Mental Health Issues, Chronic Absenteeism/Tardiness, High Poverty Rate, Exclusion

Question 4: Extra School Support, Public Reservation Schools are Easier, Racism off of the Reservation

Thank you again for your help and I look forward to hearing from you.

Dirk Coon

Doctoral Student

Northwest Nazarene University

dcoon@nnu.edu

Telephone: 402-837-5622 Extension 341