

American Indian Victims of Campus Ethnoviolence

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In spite of - or perhaps because of - the insertion of the rhetoric of difference and equality into the university environment, campus ethnoviolence remains a persistent threat to minority students. This paper addresses the particular experiences of American Indian students, through a discussion of the findings of a Campus Ethnoviolence survey conducted at a university that serves a large American Indian student body. The findings indicate that while cases of violent assaults are rare, daily harassment and verbal assaults are relatively common. The paper concludes with ways in which universities and students might intervene to recreate an environment that is more safe and welcoming for American Indian students.

In the 1960s, universities were sites of civil rights organizing in the interests of racial and gender justice; by the year 2000 they appear to have become similarly strong sites of backlash. Ironically, while such institutions are intended to be institutions for the advancement of learning and broadening young minds, university campuses show dramatic trends toward intolerance, as evidenced by ongoing, even escalating rates of racial, ethnic and gender

harassment (Ehrlich, 1999). In short, university campuses today appear once again to be crucial sites in the politics of difference. An especially alarming manifestation of the attendant raced and gendered tensions is the apparent rise in campus incidents of racist, homophobic and other forms of bias related ethnoviolence.

The persistence of racist harassment and violence on college campuses flies in the face of the gospel of multiculturalism that insists that education is the antidote to prejudice and bigotry. However, from a sociological perspective, the response to the recent shifts in the demographics and cultural orientation of American universities comes as no surprise. As Roscigno points out, the practices of insurgency are inherently dynamic and unstable:

. . . the insurgent process is one whereby subordinate group members introduce a particular tactic, the dominant group, over time, adjusts, counteracts, and often neutralizes that particular subordinate group strategy The end result of the struggle is often a reshaping of the existing stratification structure Roscigno, 1994: p. 112).

While I would argue that there is no ultimate “end result” of this ongoing process, Roscigno's point is well taken: counter-hegemonic threats to the established racial and gendered order are consistently met with counter-mobilization on the part of the traditionally dominant group(s). In short, the contemporary re-emergence of campus ethnoviolence is grounded in a profound sense of dislocation motivated by the perceived “crisis of identity” spawned by the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Specifically, the increased presence, visibility and activism of non-White, non-male, non-heterosexual

students and faculty is perceived by some as a distinct threat to the long-standing patterns of privilege on campus. One extreme response to this has been elevated levels of violence and harassment of the Other. While I review the literature on these patterns, this is but a preface to my discussion of the findings of a survey on American Indian students' experiences of ethnoviolence. This is a dramatically under-examined population, in that few if any of the extant surveys of campus ethnoviolence make note of the particular experiences of American Indian students.

Ethnoviolence Defined

Ethnoviolence—often referred to as “hate crime”—is much more than the act of mean-spirited bigots. It is embedded in the structural and cultural context within which groups interact (Bowling, 1993; Kelly, Maghan and Tennant, 1993; Young, 1990). It does not occur in a social or cultural vacuum, nor is it over when the perpetrator moves on. Hate crimes must be conceived of as socially situated, dynamic processes, involving context and actors, structure and agency.

Consequently, I offer the following definition of ethnoviolence. It involves acts of violence and intimidation, usually directed toward already stigmatized and marginalized groups. As such, it is a mechanism of power, intended to reaffirm the precarious hierarchies that characterize a given social order. It simultaneously recreates the hegemony of the perpetrator's group, and the subordination of the victim's group. Ethnoviolence is directed not only at the individual victim, but also toward his or her community. It is a mechanism to

intimidate a group of people who “hold in common a single difference from the defined norm—religion, race, gender, sexual identity” (Pharr, cited in Wolfe and Copeland, 1994, p. 203). In short, ethnoviolence is but one component of the broader practices of oppression, which is likewise more than the outcome of the conscious acts of bigoted individuals.

Oppression, too, is systematic. It represents a network of norms, assumptions, behaviors and policies which are structurally connected in such a way as to reproduce the racialized and gendered hierarchies which characterize the society in question. Young (1990) operationalizes oppression in a way that provides a very useful framework for contextualizing ethnoviolence, so that we can recognize and examine the way in which ethnoviolence is enmeshed in other related cultural forms. She articulates five inter-related “faces of oppression” by which we might characterize the experiences of minority groups: exploitation; marginalization; powerlessness; cultural imperialism; and violence. The first three of these mechanisms reflect the structural and institutional relationships which restrict opportunities for minority groups to express their capacities and to participate in the social world around them. It is the processes and imagery associated with cultural imperialism which support these practices ideologically. Together, structural exclusions and cultural imaging leave minority members vulnerable to systemic violence, especially ethnoviolence. As we will see in the remainder of the paper, the ethnoviolence that occurs on college campuses—especially that perpetrated against American Indian students—is intimately connected to the practices of and resistance to oppression.

Campus Ethnoviolence in the National Context

Media reports, crime data audits, and dedicated studies all point to the persistence of campus ethnoviolence in the closing years of the twentieth century. Anti-Defamation League (ADL) audits of anti-Semitic violence indicate substantial growth of such activities across college campuses throughout the 1980s and 1990s. A 1990 Civil Rights Commission report documents widespread campus ethnoviolence, such as the following incidents:

[R]acial epithets reportedly were carved in desks at Providence [R.I.] College; a black woman cyclist was harassed at the University of California at Berkeley; the American Indian president of the student body at Macalaster College in St. Paul, Minnesota, received threatening letters with racial slurs after she wrote a campus newspaper article on racism; and University of Michigan students staged a sit-in to protest racial incidents, including the telling of racist jokes on a campus radio station (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1990: p. 8).

By far the most systematic and comprehensive data on campus ethnoviolence are the many studies undertaken by the Prejudice Institute. Ehrlich (1999) reports that, between 1986 and 1995, the Institute conducted 16 such studies. In a 1999 paper, Ehrlich summarizes the findings of these and similar local and national studies (see also, Ehrlich, 1998). As might be expected, considerable differences in the frequency and patterns associated with hate crime emerge from campus to campus, attributable perhaps to “campus size, the diversity of the campus population, and whether or not it is a residential or commuter campus. Certainly each has its own history of intergroup relations and well as some unique subcultural dimensions” (Ehrlich, 1998: p. 2).

On the basis of the collated results of over twenty campus ethnoviolence surveys, Ehrlich (1999) draws a number of relevant observations:

1. Ethnoviolence is relatively commonplace on campuses, with approximately one in four minority students experiencing some form of victimization during the school year. Some examples include a swastika scratched on the office door of an Asian American professor; an “outbreak” of racist graffiti in a dormitory elevators, washrooms and resident room doors; anonymous flyers celebrating “White pride month;” and skinhead attacks on minority students.
2. Patterns of campus ethnoviolence are similar to those in the broader community, with bias motivated victimization ranging from 25% to 30% of minority students.
3. While the majority of incidents involved some form of verbal or other sorts of harassment or intimidation, acts ranged in seriousness all the way up to personal threats, property damage and violent physical assaults.
4. Typically, half of the minority student population identified as co-victims, that is, they were aware of others sharing their ethnic identity who had been victimized.

5. Where victims could identify perpetrators, it is apparent that White male students—and especially White male fraternity members—account for the majority of perpetrators. However, faculty may account for 10% to 15% of ethnoviolent acts. There is also evidence that people without campus affiliations are responsible for some proportion of the harassment and violence. Frequently, these are affiliated with White supremacist or other extremist groups (see also ADL, 1989).

6. College students are even less likely than the general population to report their victimization. Most frequently, this is attributable to the perception that campus authorities would not or could not do anything.

The collective findings of these studies confirm the perception that campus ethnoviolence is an identifiable problem nationwide. It is not an uncommon experience for minority students. On the contrary, both direct and indirect experiences of victimization make campuses an unwelcoming site for non-White students in spite of the rhetoric of inclusion and diversity. Moreover, this may be a particular problem for American Indians, given their educational histories.

Oppression, Colonialism and American Indian Education

I noted earlier that ethnoviolence is embedded in the broader practices of oppression. This is no less the case for American Indians than for other minority groups. Moreover, while oppression occurs outside the boundaries of the universities, the field of education has not been left untouched by the historical

and contemporary legacies of White privilege. In fact, schools—at all levels—have represented contradictory sites for American Indians. On the one hand, they have enhanced the opportunities for American Indians within the context of White society. On the other hand, they have also been a locus that has reproduced the dynamics of oppression.

Exploitation, from Young's (1990) perspective, refers to processes which transfer "energies" from one group to another in such a way as to produce inequitable distributions of wealth, privilege and benefits. While typically understood in class terms, the notion of exploitation can also be extended to racial and ethnic relations. Historically, people of color, including American Indians, have been relegated to the categories of "menial laborers," or even servants. Racialized job segregation persists to this day. When employed, American Indians continue to be over-represented in menial and low paying jobs, and dramatically under-represented in the professions. In the university, American Indians are more likely to be the custodians than the professors or administrators (Beck, 1995).

Related to the exploitation of American Indians is the *marginalization* of American Indians—the process of pushing them to the political and social edges of society. More so than other minority groups, American Indians have even been geographically marginalized, first through expulsion into the "frontier," and subsequently, by "relocation" onto reservations (Stiffarm and Lane, 1992). Concomitant with this physical separation have been a myriad of practices intended to expel them from "useful participation" in the economic and political

life of society (Jaimes, 1992; Nielsen, 1996). Economically, American Indians are among the most impoverished, with 23 % of all Natives living below the poverty line. They also experience elevated rates of unemployment. Nationally, the rate of unemployment for American Indians hovers between 15% and 20%, with higher rates in areas like the remote reservations on which so many American Indians live (Nielsen, 1996; see Hirschfelder and de Montaña, 1998; and U.S. Government, Bureau of the Census, 1992).

Again, this spills over into the education system. Even in reservation primary and secondary schools, the majority of teachers and administrators are White rather than American Indian. At the college and university level, American Indians are dramatically under-represented both as students—and therefore future policy makers—and as professionals (Beck, 1995). Moreover, the voice of American Indians is typically unheard within the curriculum at all levels. American Indian history, culture and language courses are few and far between, as if their experiences were irrelevant to “American” education (Deyhle, 1998; Duchene, 1988).

The marginality of American Indians renders them relatively powerless within the context of structural and institutional relationships. Most pressing is the ongoing loss of autonomy of American Indians (Robbins, 1992; Snyder-Joy, 1996). By virtue of being a colonized people, American Indians were very early stripped of their right to control their own destinies. The attempt to eliminate Native sovereignty was greatly aided by the Major Crimes Act of 1885, which extended federal jurisdiction over felonies to Indian territories. This was followed

by over 5000 additional statutes which extended federal control to Native jurisdictions (Robbins, 1992). This political disempowerment, coupled with their economic Marginalization, leaves American Indians with little strength to exercise the right to freely determine their own political, economic and social directions.

Historically, non-Indians have wielded extensive control over American Indian educational policies and practices (Beck, 1995). Noriega (1992) goes so far as to argue that both structurally and culturally, the emerging tribal colleges represent little more than “a sophisticated continuation of business as usual,” reproducing Eurocentric forms of learning and knowledge. Moreover, as noted earlier, American Indians are relatively invisible and silenced in the context of Eurocentric education. Duchene (1988; see also Beck, 1995) observes that

In education, racism exists today in the “Back to Basics” movement, in ethnocentric textbooks omitting American Indian contributions and histories, in the lack of adequate teaching staffs in on- or off-reservation schools, and in the exclusive use of standard English for official purposes. p. 356

The local and federal states’ rejection of American Indians’ traditions of governance is but one symptom of *cultural imperialism*. Specifically, this dimension of oppression refers to the ways in which “the dominant meanings of society render the particular perspective of one’s own group invisible at the same time as they stereotype one’s group and mark it as the Other” (Young, 1990: pp. 58-59). Since first contact, Europeans, and then EuroAmericans, have engaged in this process of deculturating American Indians, and simultaneously representing them as inferior beings (Jaimes, 1992; Mihesuah, 1996; Stannard, 1992). It is the long-lasting images of American Indians as “savages,” as

“backward,” as “uncivilized,” or as “unintelligent” that have facilitated the injustice and oppression experienced by American Indians. With missionary zeal, EuroAmericans have persisted in “saving” American Indians “from themselves” by repressing traditional folkways, and attempting to assimilate them into the dominant culture.

Nowhere has this Christianizing crusade been more evident than in the context of the education of American Indians, which epitomizes the long held assimilationist philosophy that American Indians must be educated to be “civilized” or “Americanized.” For example, in 1617, King James urged American clergy to raise funds for schools for the “education of ye children of the Barbarians;” in 1618, Virginia land was reserved for a “college for the Children of the Infidels;” in 1769, Dartmouth College was founded with the intent of “civilizing and Christianizing children of pagans” (Wright and Tierney, 1991, p. 12-13; see also Beck, 1995); and in 1819, the federal Civilizing and Education Act mandated education “for the purpose of introducing among the Indians the habits and arts of civilization.” First through the distant boarding schools and later through integration into “White” schools, educators sought to remake American Indians in the image of “the White man:”

The use of native languages by children was forbidden under threats of corporal punishment; semi-skilled vocational training was encouraged for Indians; students were placed as laborers and domestic in White families’ homes during vacation time; native religions were suppressed. In a very real sense, the schooling package that provided literacy for Indians also required becoming “White.” (Deyhle and Swisher, 1997, p. 115)

The disempowerment of American Indians, together with their construction as the deviant Other provide the context for anti-Indian *violence*. The former makes them vulnerable targets, the latter makes them legitimate targets. The collective victimization of American Indians is well documented. Stannard's (1992) work, for example, is an encyclopedic survey of the atrocities perpetrated against the indigenous peoples of the Americas. Similarly, the extensive works of Churchill frequently return to the theme of American Indian genocide (see Churchill, 1992; 1994). In addition, the many accounts of state persecution of AIM members (e.g., Leonard Peltier, Russell Means) attest to the use of state power to suppress Native dissidents and activists (see Churchill and Vander Wall, 1990; Mary Crow Dog, 1990; Messerschmidt, 1983). Moreover, at the local level, are the "mundane" everyday experiences of "random, unprovoked attacks on their person or property, which have no motive but to damage, humiliate or destroy the person" (Young, 1990, p. 61)—what I refer to here as hate crime, or ethnoviolence.

There is no American Indian equivalent to the annual audits of anti-Semitic violence or anti-gay violence published by the Anti-Defamation League, and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force respectively. Federal hate crime statistics provide little insight. The latest available report indicates that in 1996, there were 71 incidents in which American Indians were victims of hate crime, representing less than 1% of all offenses, and just over 1% of all those motivated by race (FBI, 1997). With respect to campus ethnoviolence specifically, even less is known.

Typically, the local and national surveys include too few American Indian respondents to derive any statistically significant findings or comparisons.

Nonetheless, it is probably fair to say that, historically, schools have not been safe places for American Indians. Rather they have been coercive, often violent sites for the forced assimilation of American Indian youth. Violence against American Indians in the context of educational institutions is by no means a new phenomenon. The history of the “lost generation” of American Indian youths, shuffled off to BIA boarding schools is itself a history of violence, intimidation and repression. Addressing a Congressional Subcommittee hearing on civil and constitutional rights, Susan Harjo (then Director of the National Congress of American Indians) recalled that

It hasn't been that long since my dad used to get beat up in Federal Indian boarding schools for saying “humbuctxche,” let's go eat, in the lunch lines as a little kid of 9 years old whose language was the Muskogee language and who hadn't yet learned English. He got English beaten into him and it certainly made him a linguist (Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights, 1988, p. 122).

Bordewich (1996) writes of the similar experiences of a American Indian student flogged for engaging in a few steps of a traditional dance.

The boarding schools were the epitome of colonial education, the goals of which were to deculturate, assimilate and police the colonized students and, by extension, their communities (Carlson, 1997, p. 137). In fact, argues Carlson, “we cannot understand the particular character of education for racial “Others” in the United States without appreciating the extent to which it has been influenced by colonial beliefs and power relations” (Carlson, 1997: p. 137). Noriega (1992) and Wright and Tierney (1991) contend that institutions of higher learning are

also implicated in this politics of difference and recognition. As noted in the introduction, college campuses have historically been a key locus for the advancement of and resistance to the empowerment of disadvantaged communities. This has been no less the case for American Indians who have rushed onto campuses as a means of enhancing their opportunities and those of their communities.

American Indian involvement in higher education over the last four decades has been both encouraging and disheartening. Speaking to the National Indian Education Association in 1969, Senator James Abourezk of South Dakota painted a grim picture of American Indian educational attainment at that time:

More than one out of five American Indian men had less than five years of schooling. The average educational level for all American Indians under Federal supervision was five school years. Dropout rates for Indians were approximately 48 percent - twice the national average. Only 18 percent of the students in Federal Indian schools went to college - whereas the national average was 50 percent. Of those American Indians who enrolled in college, only three percent graduated - against a national average of 32 percent. Of those few Indians who graduated from college, only one out of 100 obtained a masters degree or the equivalent. (cited in Fixico, 2000, p. 155)

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, admission rates improved, but only marginally. Much of the increase has been attributed to federal educational initiatives, one of which was to significantly enhance funding for tribal students. The second important movement was that towards self-determination in American Indian education, resulting in the establishment of tribally controlled colleges, of which

there are now 24, serving more than 10,000 students (Miheuah, 1996; Wright, 1991).

By the mid-1990s, American Indians were nearing 40% post-secondary attendance, but still lagged behind the national average which was closer to 60% (Pavel, 1999). Even among high school graduates, fewer than 10% went on to a baccalaureate degree. In 1995, American Indian graduates accounted for approximately one percent of all Bachelor's degrees awarded, and less than one percent of all advanced or professional degrees (Pavel, 1999). This underrepresentation is accounted for in part by high rates of attrition among American Indians. A substantial number fail to return even after the first year of study (Wright and Tierney, 1991; Wright, 1991). These high dropout rates have been attributed to a constellation of factors, including lack of academic preparation, loneliness and family problems, lack of support and lack of role models (McIntosh, 1987). Together these factors create an alien, often hostile environment for American Indian students. At the extreme, "American Indian students face cultural insensitivity and sometimes prejudice by administrators, service workers, faculty and non-Indian students" (Juan, cited in Wright, 1991, p. 7).

Gilmore, Smith & Kairaiuak. (1997) write of an illustrative case in which American Indian students were confronted by a non-supportive if not racist administration. In 1991, a grading controversy arose at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. A year-long series of exchanges emerged in response to a professor's unrecorded statement to the Board of Regents that was interpreted to

imply a questioning of the integrity of grades assigned to Native Alaskan students. As Gilmore, Smith & Kairaiuak. (1997) comment, "Questioning minority credentials and standards is unfortunately not a new or unfamiliar response to minority achievement" (p. 94). Over the course of the year, challenges took on decidedly racist undertones, drawing on age old stereotypes of "dumb Natives" whose success depended upon the largesse of White faculty. Native Alaskan students felt angry, betrayed, even intimidated by the administration's failure to take a stand in defense of the student achievement. The intensity of the students' response was grounded in the recognition that

. . . the grading incident could not be seen as isolated and aberrant but was connected to other events serving as a whole to define the nature of their university experience. Their experiences of racism in the village schools, the stigma of being treated as potential failures, and their marginalization at the University form a connected web. Often Native people would recount several other seemingly (to many non-Natives) unrelated events of violence along with the grading controversy as a related cluster. (Gilmore, Smith & Kairaiuak., 1997, p. 96)

In other words, non-violent and violent forms of oppression coalesced to make the university an unwelcoming place for the American Indian students. In Alaska and elsewhere, marginalization, exclusion, and explicit racism play integral roles in creating this hostile environment. It is a disturbing paradox that, as a 1989 commission on racism concluded, "racism against Indians had intensified as tribes have gained legal victories and have pursued educational and commercial developments" (Wisconsin Advisory Committee, 1989, p. 2). And, on college campuses, this racism can take the tangible form of racial harassment and violence - i.e., ethnoviolence.

The Study

The site of this study—Northern Arizona University—is no different than many other universities across the country. It, too, has been a traditionally White male institution until recent years. Nonetheless, it is at least rhetorically committed to enhancing the demographic and curricular diversity of its classrooms. The Mission Statement asserts that among the goals of the university is to “provide an educational environment which values diversity of the human experience and a global perspective on issues.” Its recently revised Liberal Studies program requires course work that contributes to *Understanding the Diversity of the Human Experience*. The University has active minority recruitment and retention programs. It has an Ethnic Studies minor, a Southwest Studies minor, a Women’s Studies minor, and a degree in Applied Indigenous Studies.

As the latter implies, more than anything else, NAU is committed to serving the large local American Indian communities including the Navajo, Hopi and Apache nations. The Mission Statement explicitly cites as a key objective the University’s goal of being “a national leader in providing educational opportunities for American Indian students, in providing service to American Indian tribes, and in research in contemporary American Indian policy issues.” Consequently, among its statewide initiatives, NAU has prioritized sites on or near American Indian reservations, particularly the Navajo reservation. A 1993 report listed NAU as among the ten universities awarding the most degrees to American Indian students (Minority Student Enrollments in Higher Education,

1993). By 2000, the university consistently had an annual enrollment of over 1200 American Indian students.

Nonetheless, it is unclear whether NAU's commitment to American Indian students can overcome the history of marginalization and colonialism that have characterized their educational pursuits. In fact, the motivation for this study came from the experiences of my students that suggest otherwise. As a faculty member in the Criminal Justice department, I have a great deal of interaction with American Indian students. Our program has been especially active in recruiting and retaining this population. In fact, we co-sponsor, with the Navajo Nation, a Navajo Student Scholarship fund which also includes extensive academic support to those scholarship students (typically 10-12 per year). Moreover, I teach courses where questions of discrimination and ethnviolence often arise: Human and Cultural Relations in Criminal Justice, and Hate Crimes. Consequently, in my role as professor and advisor, I have heard a number of anecdotal stories from my students of their own experiences of ethnviolence, as well as other incidents of which they were aware. From this, it has appeared that racial harassment and victimization of American Indian students is quite common. This alone was enough to motivate me to test the emerging hypothesis a little more closely.

In Spring of 2000, Campus Ethnviolence surveys were sent out to American Indian part-time, full-time, on-campus and statewide¹ students then

¹ NAU serves a large number of students throughout the state of Arizona through its distance education initiatives. In addition to offering Web-based courses, NAU also serves over 40 sites via Interactive Instructional TV. Some distance sites have established full-time faculty, as well as whole cohorts of students sharing a program.

registered at NAU. Two weeks later, a reminder notice was sent to each original recipient. Approximately 76 of these were returned as “undeliverable.” Another 42 were returned with a note indicating that, since the recipient was not an “on-campus” student, they did not feel it was appropriate for them to complete the survey. Finally, 92 completed surveys were returned.

The survey instrument was adapted from the Campus Ethnoviolence survey developed and deployed so successfully by the Prejudice Institute. The questions were altered to reflect not just “racial” or “ethnic” status, but American Indian identity specifically. Consequently, the 40 open- and closed-ended questions on the survey tapped the experiences of ethnoviolence, ranging from verbal harassment to physical assaults motivated by bias, as well as covictimization, i.e., awareness of victimization experienced by other American Indians. Where students indicated they had been victimized, they were then asked to describe the event in their own words. Additionally, closed-ended questions asked for information on the impact of the offense, the perpetrators (where they were known), and whether the incident was reported to anyone on campus or otherwise. Similar questions were asked in reference to respondents’ covictimization.

An additional set of questions tapped respondents’ awareness of racist or derogatory jokes, graffiti, articles, leaflets, etc. that might be circulating on campus, and how they felt about such items. Related to this, a series of general questions asked students to address more broadly their perceptions of the

Many of these sites are located on or very near American Indian reservations and therefore draw numbers of American Indian students.

campus climate for American Indians, tapping their interpretations of how American Indians were treated by or interacted with other students, staff and faculty. Again, these were followed with questions probing the impact that the climate had on respondents.

Study Findings

Summary of Victimization Patterns

In all, 36 (40%) of those students responding reported that they had been victimized by virtue of their race, for a total of approximately 130 incidents. This is somewhat higher than the national trends suggested by Ehrlich (1998; 1999). Moreover, I stress that this is only an estimate, and in fact probably an underestimate of the total number of incidents experienced by the respondents. Many students indicated that they had been victimized “a couple of times” (I estimated twice), “several times” (I estimated 3 times) or even “throughout the semester” (I estimated 5 times).

Table 1

Ethnoviolence Victimization

(“Since the school year started, have any of the following happened to you because you are American Indian?”)

N=92	#	%
Called names or insulted	22	23.9
Harassed or intimidated	14	15.2
Sexually harassed	2	2.2
Received insulting	3	3.3

phone calls/letters		
Physically threatened	2	2.2
Physically attacked	0	0.0
Property damaged	3	3.3
Other (describe):	8	8.7

Twenty-eight of those victimized indicated that they had been victimized multiple times. Table 1 indicates that, for the most part, these victimizations involved some form of verbal insult or harassment (23.9% and 15.2% respectively). Only 2 respondents had themselves experienced physical threats, and none reported that they had been physically attacked. Eight students reported some “other” form of ethnoviolence, such as being ignored or mistreated by campus staff. Among the incidents described by students:

White people have tried to stare me down for reasons unknown to me. Two times they waited to catch my eye. Two times because of mistakes in traffic, and one time they actually threw fingers and yelled racial obscenities to my family and me.

An Anglo student referring to Navajo Time or Hopi Time. I find this insulting. The same student was in one other previous class and had the same sarcastic remarks in front of the class.

I overheard a conversation between two students about giving reports in class. One student said to another “The reports are very boring because the Indians are taking forever.” As I passed they looked and lowered their voices. This statement says Indians are dumb and slow. This was an insult. Another one, an Anglo person, [was] screaming and dancing around on the grass like an Indian. I took it as an insult. What he was portraying was Indians on TV.

Been called “Indians” in unpleasant way sitting in a group. At food line, a student said to me there is no Indian food here directly at me. An instructor came right up in my face (about an inch away) trying to make a point about eye contact that made me feel intimidated. An instructor mostly spoke in favor of Mexican culture and devalued Native culture.

I was walking to class and two White males were talking by the door. I walked toward the door since I didn’t think nothing of it and since I used the same door everyday to get to class. They told me that “Indians” aren’t allowed to attend school because we’re dumb and nothing but drunks. I was offended and told them to move aside because they had no right to tell me I can’t enter thru this door. Other kids or students seen them and didn’t say anything but I couldn’t just let them say those things to me.

The incident that happened was in response to a article in a newspaper. The student was saying that “American Indians have it made because they don’t pay taxes, get money for school, get away with criminal acts in the court of law.” I thought this was untrue and told the student the way American Indians live on reservations. He didn’t say anything afterward.

The individuals that were either in the bookstore, student business office, and when I was getting my ID taken, actually ignored me, even when I was clearly visible or next in line, they skipped over me and tended to the others—until I actually had to force them to notice me or if the person behind me notices would say “she’s next.” And at the photo area to get my ID made, the lady mumbled and when done she threw my ID at me. I asked her supervisor’s name and I reported her.

As me and my friends were coming walking back from the clubs to the vehicle, a group of guys walked up behind us and told us to go back to the Rez., and told us chiefs don’t need to belong here. Me and my friend were walking to Target, midday, and a vehicle of boys drove by and told us the same thing, and that we shouldn’t be here.

I would hear or overhear comments about American Indians, in general, during classes or at social events when the topic of American Indians is presented. At more than one time was I told that I’m “dumb” to believe in the ways of a dying

race of people. I've overheard that "Natives" are "lazy, drunks, who are supported by citizens. I've also indirectly been commented to that Native peoples are far less superior in the line of humanity (Darwin type of theory).

The first time was simply a friend of a roommate who didn't realize I was Indian. She proceeded to call Indians "troggs" and a variety of other names. The other incident was an acquaintance who thinks it is of no harm to call names and make comments towards me. When I get hurt and tell him he asks if I am going to scalp him. He means it in humor, but it is poor humor.

American Indians at crosswalks are being intimidated and at parking lots some of the motorists make a run at you and over to see what reaction would be. Where is the campus police or hire more campus police and make NAU a safer place.

As these examples reveal, students perceive themselves to be frequent victims of racial bias and harassment. Moreover, personal experiences are reinforced by the known experiences of "like others" across campus.



Table 2
Ethnoviolence Covictimization
("Since the school year started, have you heard about or seen any incidents on campus where people have been insulted, harassed or attacked because they were American Indian?")

N=92	#	%
Called names or insulted	22	23.9
Harassed or intimidated	18	19.6
Sexually harassed	3	3.3
Received insulting phone calls/letters	3	3.3

Physically threatened	4	4.3
Physically attacked	2	2.2
Property damaged	3	3.3
Other (describe):	6	6.5

Patterns of Covictimization

Twenty-nine (35.1%) students indicated that they were aware of various forms of ethnoviolence against other American Indians across campus. In all, students reported a total of approximately 130 such incidents (the same caveats apply with respect to this estimate). Again, the majority of these offenses constituted some form of verbal insults or harassment (see Table 2). However, 9 students described incidents involving physical threats (4), physical attacks (2), or property damage (3). Below are examples of students' experiences of covictimization:

Not much to tell. Just the way people treat you. The rude service and angry voice. Their facial expression of unwanted, then see them treat other White or non-American Indian much better.

I worked for NAU dining services and they generally employ minorities. The management were not sensitive to people that have different cultures or backgrounds. One manager would refer to us (Natives) as "they." They threatened peoples' jobs/hours because they didn't understand that we needed to go home for a ceremony.

Regarding the incident of the sexual harassment, a girl was being teased and propositioned by two White males. She was insulted and stopped their advances. They then started to call her names and more than once called her a "fucking Indian whore."

An American Indian staff member was denied time off work for ceremony. She was told to take time off without pay so she did. She was reprimanded upon return.

I have heard of a number of times from a certain person about a class she took that she felt she was treated unfairly by her professor (a graduate course) because she was American Indian. Her and two other Native students felt the same way. The papers received often low grades and their presentations. One of the ladies is a good, super student who received her lowest grade from him.

The person told me he went to the restroom and some White guy started punching him because the guy said he doesn't like Indians. So it ended up in a fight.

I was informed by a friend that she sat in on a complaint made by one of her classmates. This individual was insulted and belittled by a professor who remarked "you weren't taught proper English."

Friends have told me teachers have verbally made fun of Natives.

A professor made a comment about peyote and the Navajo. I can't remember the specifics but it was derogatory, uncalled for, and extremely unprofessional.

My older sister used to live at Campus Heights with a younger brother. One evening my brother and his girlfriend were walking back to the apartment and my brother was attacked by three White students, most likely NAU students. They beat him up pretty good.

One particular student reported an extensive awareness of the racism surrounding him/her. The following is his/her lengthy account of the experiences of both him/herself and other students:

The first was a young man who was told by his English professor that Native literature was not included in the class because it wasn't important. The second was a girl who was called a "dirty Indian" in her dorm. The third was my professor who felt intimidated by a professor who would not let her express herself. The five harassment/intimidation incidences were told to me as well.

The first was by a girl classmate who felt the workers at the LAC (Learning Assistance Center) were ignoring her whenever she asked for help. She said they treated her like she was stupid and the other “White” kids were smart. The second was by another girl who said that the students in her class wouldn’t talk to her at times if she spoke up against mean comments about minorities. The third was again by my EPS teacher who said that her graduate class told her she didn’t have the right to give her opinion about prejudice issues. It was as if they were telling her that she didn’t matter and they were the only people that were right. . . . The last incident was personal. When I was in my Computer Science and Engineering class I sat next to a young woman who told me she did not feel American Indians were discriminated against. She said that we had all the privileges because there were more scholarships for American Indians. I told her that most American Indian students don’t have scholarships. She said that they shouldn’t complain about their treatment because it has gotten better. I told her that the day I can walk into a store and find the same amount of history books, clothing items, language books, and bandage colors that White people have, we will have reached a better state of treatment. She snorted at me and looked with disdain into my eyes, not realizing that I was telling her the *truth* about her culture.

Table 3

Racist Literature/Imagery Across Campus

(“During the school year, have you personally seen or heard about any of the following on campus that you felt were insulting to American Indians?”)

N=92	#	%
Jokes	24	26.1
Leaflets or Posters	1	1.1
Spray painted signs, slogans or other graffiti	2	2.2
Comments on campus radio, TV, bulletin boards, or computer bulletin boards	2	2.2
Articles or cartoons in	5	5.4

campus newspapers or magazines		
General comments or stories which you overheard or were told about	22	23.9

Consideration of Table 3 would suggest that the presence of racist literature and other images across campus heightens the perception of a “chilly” climate. Thirty-eight (41.3%) of the students reported having seen or heard one or more racially offensive jokes, posters, articles, etc.. The majority of these (24 or 26.1%) referred to racist jokes or “humor” expressed by others. For the most part, the comments and images observed by respondents drew on racist stereotypes of American Indians as lazy, drunk, or ignorant. Students’ shared many of these offensive expressions, including:

I’ve heard jokes like “I was Navajo-drunk this weekend” from college students. I’ve also heard students speak badly about American Indians based on stereotypes of alcohol abuse and bums on the street that ask for money.

American Indians are genetically deficient; they are born drunks; that its in their genes to become alcoholics; welfare breeders; “Squaws.”

I’ve heard people say that American Indians can’t fight for themselves and that we would always be losers because we had too many issues (domestic violence and alcoholism) that we couldn’t deal with as a society. We (Natives) isolate ourselves from the western society and even if we could, we couldn’t really be sovereign. Custer was a great guy for what he did to us.

I was on a school field trip when my professor commented on American Indians being lazy.

Daily jokes from other non-Indian students while sitting in class or in the dining room or eatery.

Sharing racial jokes in group. It was probably done to be funny and not done to offend anyone—but I thought it was inappropriate.

The Code-talker statue was sprayed just after it was put up.

Jokes and stories mainly have been overheard or referenced to Natives regarding alcohol, “they’re just drunkards.” Overheard female talking about how all American Indian men are just so unattractive.

Jokes told by students and teachers alike.

I hear a lot of jokes pertaining to Indians being drunks and getting tossed or just here to drink.

What is especially disturbing about the many incidents of covictimization reported by these students is the extent to which staff and faculty members were involved. At least 13 of the 29 students reporting covictimization implicated university personnel as actively or passively involved in the victimization. Perhaps this helps to explain the respondents’ tendencies not to report their victimization to campus authorities..

Reporting Patterns

Consistent with other findings on ethnviolence and campus ethnviolence specifically, the responses in this survey indicated that a minute proportion of the incidents were reported. Only 5 of the victimizations were reported to anyone at all, each to a different authority: a dormitory supervisor; a

counselor; campus police; a department chair; and an offender's supervisor. Virtually all of those victims who said that they had not reported the offense indicated that this was because they felt that the authorities could not, or more frequently and significantly, would not do anything. In addition to this perception, some also reported that the event was "not serious enough" to report. Two people indicated that they were too humiliated or ashamed to report the experience. In two cases, respondents indicated that they "dealt with it themselves" by confronting the offender. One student described his/her experience as follows:

The first incident was in a class with a professor who did not know I was American Indian and made some condescending remarks about American Indians. I immediately raised my hand and told him that I had a 4.0 GPA, was in the Honors program, never drank, smoked, or had sex and I did not appreciate his stereotype. That was the only comment he ever made.

This student's experience suggests that ignorance and stereotyped thinking contribute to ethnoviolence, and that correcting it thus requires confronting and breaking down those images.

Conclusion

The experiences of the students responding to this survey seem to indicate that ethnoviolence is, in fact, embedded in broader practices and perceptions associated with oppression. Comments from other students, staff, even from faculty, send the message to students that they do not belong on campus, thereby further alienating and marginalizing American Indian students. Occasionally, this is quite explicit, as with the student who was told—on two separate occasions—to "go back to the reservation;" or the one who was told

“Indians aren’t allowed to attend school. More frequently, it is implicit in the assertions and subtler expressions that American Indians are somehow intellectually inferior and therefore do not belong at the university for that reason. Yet other manifestations of these efforts to marginalize American Indian students occur when classmates, instructors or other employees of the university treat American Indian students as if they were invisible or unworthy of attention.

What is even more apparent, however, is the role that “cultural imperialism” plays in conditioning ethnoviolence. Whether on their own, or in conjunction with other forms of victimization, racial slurs grounded in damaging and long lasting stereotypes were widespread. This is disturbing, especially in the context of NAU which has such a strong commitment to American Indian students. The fact that faculty also appear to be implicated exacerbates this concern. How can we hope to enlighten our students when faculty carry this ethnocentric baggage into the classroom?

Nonetheless, there is reason for hope. The current study suggests that at least violent acts of intimidation are relatively rare. Additionally, as the observation of the 4.0 GPA student indicates, the patterns of stereotypical thinking and subsequent harassment are not irreversible, but subject to challenge and change. We can do more to highlight the reality and diversity of the American Indian experience.

The findings also suggest the need for even greater attention to the unique experiences of American Indian students on campus. Clearly, the campus community must be educated and informed about American Indian

history, culture and contributions. In addition, the administration must be explicit in addressing the harassment of its students. The fact that so many victims felt that the administration would not or could not do anything about their victimization implies that it has some work to do in order to earn students' trust and confidence.

Campuses nationwide are struggling with the twin problems of cultural intolerance and ethnoviolence. In the interests of ensuring that its American Indian students feel welcome and included, NAU can learn from initiatives oriented around the suppression of cultural hostilities. The recommendations of a 1989 ADL publication entitled *Combating Bigotry on Campus* remain relevant today. In particular, we would do well to heed the advice that

The campus environment needs to be carefully and continually scrutinized. The campus environment can contribute to a positive multicultural learning experience or it can produce tension and polarization. Campus officials must begin an ongoing process of institutional self-examination and rectification that involves all segments of the campus community along with skilled off-campus human relations professionals. Administrators and faculty have an ongoing responsibility to speak out on matters that could create or affect tensions on campus so as to ameliorate conflict and put the institution on public record (ADL, 1989: p. 13).

More concretely, the ADL suggests four strategies which might be adapted to fit the needs of NAU's (or any other institution's) American Indian students. The first of these is curriculum requirements. NAU might, for example, integrate American Indian issues into Liberal Studies requirements, or require that all students take one course in American Indian studies. The recent creation of an Applied Indigenous Studies program is an encouraging step toward bringing

American Indian issues to the center rather than the periphery. An additional component to this initiative might be a concentrated effort to hire more American Indian faculty to lend expertise and to act as role models for students.

The second practice suggested by the ADL consists of orientation programs. NAU already provides extensive orientation for incoming students. This existing program could be enhanced by the addition of a segment on American Indian cultural education. This is especially appropriate since a large number of the students' classmates will be American Indian. The training module might include a brief overview of local American Indian cultures, with an emphasis on the particular obstacles often faced by American Indian students.

The third recommendation—a student conduct code—is the most controversial. Anti-bias rules integrated into campus codes have consistently been held by the courts to be unconstitutional. Nonetheless, NAU is encouraged to find a way to integrate into its existing code guidelines for ensuring a non-discriminatory, non-exclusive learning environment for its American Indian students.

Finally, and perhaps most effective, are student-organized responses. American Indian students themselves are encouraged to stand up to the bigotry of others, as in the case of the 4.0 GPA student cited in the body of this paper. Additionally, students can exploit existing structures to make their voices heard. NAU features at least 4 American Indian students' associations and clubs which could act as effective sites of collective action against ethnoviolence. Beyond this, however, it would be encouraging to see non-Native students also take a

stand against racial violence in a conscious effort to demonstrate their solidarity with American Indian students. Again, keep in mind that it is a very small minority of students (and faculty) who are directly and actively involved as perpetrators. However, the silence of the majority facilitates the continued harassment and marginalization of American Indian students. The key to disrupting this enabling climate is for that majority to break their silence.

Of course, any conclusions drawn from this study must be tempered by the recognition that it featured a relatively small sample from a unique institution. This paper represents only the starting point for a dialog on racist violence against American Indian students. It merely hints at a largely unexplored obstacle to American Indian recruitment and retention on college and university campuses. However, as the first such survey of American Indian students, it does suggest some future considerations—the first of which is replication of this study at other institutions that serve American Indian students. If we are, in fact, to disrupt the hostile environment faced by these students nation-wide, we must first document the problem more concretely and more broadly. This survey represents a preliminary step in a more extensive research agenda, which must incorporate qualitative methodologies emphasizing the narrative form. If we are to fully understand the experience and impact of campus ethnviolence on American Indian students, we must give them the space in which to use their voices more loudly.

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