

American Indian Students' Perceptions of Racial Climate, Multicultural Support Services, and Ethnic Fraud at a Predominantly White University

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This study was designed to examine the relationships among perceptions of racial climate, multicultural support services, and ethnic fraud among American Indian college students attending a predominantly White state university. Thirty American Indian undergraduate students responded to a 33-item survey that included questions about their demographic characteristics. Issues of ethnic fraud seemed to be the most interesting aspect of this study, an area of research that is often neglected in higher education. The analyses help to gauge the progress that higher education institutions have made toward providing access and equal opportunity for all Americans. Results reveal areas in the interaction between American Indian and non-Indian students in which institutional leadership can be exercised effectively to ensure a campus that values diversity.

Introduction

America's racial and ethnic minorities have been and continue to be grossly underrepresented in higher education and in almost all occupational fields that require a college education (Astin, 1982), and do not, as a consequence, enjoy equitable participation in the larger society's social, economic, and political life (Attinasi, 1989). This article focuses on the beliefs, attitudes, and experiences of American Indian¹ students in mainstream institutions of higher education. The study examines how American Indian students and non-Indian students attending a predominantly White state university responded to questions regarding racial climate, student support services, perceptions of attitudes about cultural diversity, and ethnic fraud (misrepresenting one's ethnic identity in order to gain financial aid or other benefits) on their campus. The article discusses the

implications of these findings and offers recommendations to educators, administrators, program planners, and policymakers interested in positively influencing racial dynamics in their higher education institutions.

The objectives of this research were to (a) assess similarities and differences in the racial attitudes between American Indian students and non-Indian students and (b) to determine whether American Indian students' satisfaction regarding student support services differed from that of non-Indian students. Such documentation can aid student affairs professionals in their efforts to assess campus racial climates and employ appropriate interventions. In addition, we encourage further research on the role racism plays in influencing students' success with their collegiate experience.

Campus environment is a central feature in the academic experience of all students. According to the American Council on Education (ACE, 2000), since the late 1980s, Students of Color have made varied but steady progress in college attendance. From 1988 to 1997, the overall enrollment of Students of Color in higher education increased 57.2%; an increase of 16.1% during the last five years. From 1996 to 1997, the enrollment for Students of Color increased 3.7%. Specifically, American Indians experienced a 54% increase in college enrollment during the past decade, including an increase of 3.6% from 1996 to 1997, which brought the total enrollment of American Indians in higher education to 142,000. Alarming, this is barely 1% of all college students (ACE, 2000). American Indians are one of the smallest ethnic minorities of the United States population (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2002), and American Indian students are among the most underrepresented groups in academe (Tierney, 1992; Turner & Myers, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 1998).

While all students may experience forms of marginality over the course of their time in college, Students of Color can feel marginalized more often than they feel included because of their greater presence on college campuses over the past 20 years (Chronicle of Higher Education, 1997). Students of Color experience marginalization within the classroom as well, confronting professors who are insensitive to Students of Color and unaware of their differential treatment of students (Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996), and consistent in their exclusion of the contributions of non-European Americans within the content of their disciplines (Diver-Stamnes & LoMascolo, 2001). Marginalization in the form of overt racial incidents can negatively affect students' academic and social experiences (Jackson, 1998). Despite the failure of many college campuses to report overt racial incidents, it should come as no surprise that issues of racism, prejudice, and stereotyping have become aspects of university life, which constitutes a microcosm of our larger society (Pewewardy & Frey, 2002).

University professors' ability to adapt teaching and learning to students' prior knowledge is rarely acknowledged and institutional acquiescence to testing, including the exorbitant fees, is ignored (Sheets, 2001). An understanding of the dynamics of racial attitudes is a necessary prerequisite as we develop methods to respond to the growing number of racial incidents on college campuses.

Although university administrators across the country have offered educational programs on diversity, very little literature exists documenting the success of these programs in terms of racial attitudinal change. Because many colleges and universities are now seeking approaches for improving racial and ethnic tolerance, the need for additional research in this area is critical (Gifford & Rhodes, 1999).

Included in a steadily growing racial minority college student population are an increasing proportion of American Indian college students. At the same time, American Indian college students are often cited as the most underrepresented of minority students attending post-secondary educational institutions (McDonald, 1992); are the most underserved and least noticed ethnic group in higher education (Suina, 1987); are the least successful (Astin, 1982; Falk & Aitken, 1984; Tijerina & Biemer, 1988); and are sorely underrepresented in the literature (Taylor, 2001). It is likely that their college and university peers, having been exposed to negative and stereotypical imagery of American Indians throughout the educational process, hold prejudicial attitudes toward them. Because prejudicial attitudes are implicated in the degree to which academic environments foster the emotional, academic, and vocational achievement of American Indians, it is necessary to assess the exact nature of student attitudes (Ancis, Choney, & Sedlacek, 1996).

Review of the Literature

Federal Policy and Social-Historical Context

One cannot look at higher education for American Indian students without examining the history of federal policy toward American Indians from the late 18th century onward. "The deliberate and premeditated genocide of the early years of invasion and theft, however, has moved on from religious fervor and ethnic and racial hatred to economic genocide and ethnocide" (Cook-Lynn, 2001, p. 193). That American Indians were subjected to cultural genocide² is self-evident, although it has been rarely articulated as policy (Tinker, 1993).

Since its invasion of America, white society has sought to justify, through law and legal discourse, its privilege of aggression against Indian people by stressing tribalism's incompatibility with the superior values and norms of white civilization. (Williams, 2000, p. 103)

Moreover, prior to the invasion of the American Indian settlements in the Americas (Zinn, 1999) and the imposition of Euro-American educational systems, many tribal nations had their own very diverse educational systems that were culturally responsive to their children. These traditional educational systems were culturally and linguistically designed to provide education informally through parents, extended families, elder members of the tribe, and religious and social groups (Dejong, 1993; Szasz, 1988).

Historically, the challenges to educating American Indian students were and are vast and are based on 500 years of mistreatment of American Indian people (Adams, 1995a; Haynes Writer, 2002; Huff, 1997; Spring, 2001; Stannard,

1992; Thorton, 1987; Tinker, 1993; Zinn, 1999). American Indians have had negative relationships with federal government agencies, and many American Indian people are likely to be cautious with White institutions due to the destruction of culture, language, and human lives inflicted on all American Indian populations throughout U.S. history (Hawes & Hiner, 1985). The early (1875-1928) educational history of American Indians is about the use of the schoolhouse, specifically the boarding school, as an instrument for acculturating Indian youth to “American” ways of thinking and living (Adams, 1995a). Termination policies and those aimed at limiting tribal self-determination were also based on attempts to “Americanize” Indians (Deloria, 1969, 1970, 1972, 1974, 1995).

The Bureau of Indian Affairs³ became involved in Indian education in the late 19th century when the United States government first negotiated its responsibility for educating American Indian and Alaska Native students (Szasz, 1999). These early efforts at “civilizing” American Indian and Alaska Native people involved attempts at deculturalization (Spring, 2001)—the destruction of Indigenous cultures and languages—and the replacement of Indigenous cultures and languages with Anglo-American Protestant culture and the English language (Adams, 1995b; Alfred, 1999; Huff, 1997; Spack, 2002; Stein, 1992, 1999; Thompson, 1978; Trask, 2003).

According to Tinker (1993), psychologically, both at the level of individual and communally, “American Indians have so internalized the missionary critique of Indian culture and religious traditions and so internalized our own concession to the superiority of Euroamerican social structures that we have become complicit in our own oppression” (p. 118). As a result of this overall European experience of American Indian and Alaska Native people, intergenerational trauma and multigenerational deficits, benefits, grief, and distrust of non-Indians may be combined with rage, anger, and confusion today (Garrett & Pichette, 2000; Hooks, 1992). Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome has been the result of this long, European colonial process of education (Duran & Duran, 1995; Kawennano-Johnson, 1999). Even though, war and genocide are usually associated with Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome. According to Saathoff (1998) and Weinfeld and Weinfeld (1989), children feel the effects of Acute Stress Disorder experienced by their parents. American Indian people realize the atrocities that have been committed against them far better than the larger society. Freire (1998) maintains that this type of education in which students are required to view cultural knowledge as unrelated units reinforces the perception of marginalized populations as naïve, lazy, and of lower capabilities than dominating populations. The knowledge possessed by dominated people is discredited because students are evaluated on their abilities to memorize facts rather than to think critically about their world and what is happening to them. This style of formal education for American Indian students stretches all the way from reservation preschools in rural American Indian communities to prestigious urban universities far away from Indian cultural centers (Deloria, 2001).

American Indian/Alaska Native Education Today

American Indians have the lowest academic attainment of all ethnic groups (National Center for Education Statistics, 1993), and have fared worse in their educational careers than any other minority group (Pavel, 1991; Swisher & Hoisch, 1992; Willeto, 1999). According to Gilbert (2000), those who graduate from high school and enroll in colleges and universities experience great difficulty in completing higher education degrees, and are retained and graduate at rates that continue to lag far behind the national norms. Garcia (2000) reports that American Indians are severely underrepresented at all levels of the educational system in this country today. Meyers (1996-1997) reported that American Indian student performance is below the national average: 52% finish high school; 17% attend college; 4% graduate from college; and 2% attend graduate school.

Between 300,000 and 400,000 American Indian and Alaska Native children are of school age. The majority of American Indian and Alaska Native students attend public schools (Charleston & King, 1991; Pavel & Curtin, 1997). Of these children, between 85 and 90% are educated in public schools (Indian Nations At Risk Task Force, 1991). Swisher and Tippeconnic (1999) assert that about 90% of the 600,000 American Indian students in the United States attend public schools. According to Butterfield (1994), the growth in numbers of American Indian and Alaska Native people in urban areas is nearly double the rate of population growth in rural areas. Yet public education systems are structured in ways that are counterproductive to the education needs of American Indian students (Charleston & King, 1991). In urban settings, desegregation requirements have hurt Indian students by scattering them across large districts into many school buildings, increasing their isolation from their peers, and making it costly and difficult to provide effective cultural programs and support services. Because Indian students learn best when there is a "critical mass" in one site, they should be brought together in schools of choice (Charleston & King, 1991), such as American Indian magnet schools (Pewewardy, 1994).

Minority students are at great risk of dropping out of high school (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1994; Moore, 1994), led by American Indians, Hispanics, and African Americans in rank order (Fisher, 1992). Currently, the national high school dropout rate for American Indians and Alaska Native students remains the highest of all racial/ethnic groups in the United States (Cleary & Peacock, 1998; Futures for Children, 2001; National Center for Education Statistics, 1994), regardless of region or tribal affiliation (Sanders, 1987). Swisher and Hoisch (1992) estimate the national dropout rate for American Indians and Alaska Native students at 30%; Chavers (1991) projects a national dropout rate at 50%; and St. Germaine, (1995) 40-60% in some parts of the country. Thus, dropping out of school truncates educational and vocational development in ways that dramatically increase the probability of a downward spiral into greater emotional, physical, and economic problems, problems that create additional losses and costs to society and to which some minority groups appear even more vulnerable (Beauvais, Chavez, Oetting, Deffenbacher, & Cornell, 1996).

Evolution of Tribally Controlled Colleges

The history of higher education for American Indians and Alaska Native students in the 20th century shows a slow progression from total assimilation to tribally controlled colleges (Stein, 1992, 1999; Tippeconnic, 1999, 2000). According to Gipp (2003), the catalyst for the tribal college movement was in large part due to mainstream higher education's lack of attention and failure to address the unique needs of American Indian and Alaskan Native students nationwide. Since the early 1970s, tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) have proliferated through their tenacity and unwillingness to fail, despite confronting many barriers. During the past three decades, 34 TCUs in the U.S. have become members of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), with the promise of more to follow (Gipp & Faircloth, 2003). Today, TCUs seek to celebrate their tribal cultures by offering a culturally-based and/or tribally-specific curriculum in higher education, not to mimic mainstream institutions but to reflect and sustain a unique tribal identity (Boyer, 2002). TCUs represent less than 1% of the colleges and universities across the United States, but serve more than 18% of American Indian students in higher education (Williams, 2003). Pavel, Inglebret, and Banks (2001) assert that TCUs are promoting a new mindset that is leading to renewed economic, social, political, cultural, and spiritual vitality through education.

TCUs do not, however, fill for all American Indian students the social, educational, and economic chasms created by an oppressive educational history (Vizenor, 1994). Even though TCUs focus on providing American Indian students with a tribal-based college education, American Indian students continue to face limited educational opportunities as a result of historical and contemporary discrimination and oppression. The externally imposed historical policies for educating American Indian students have resulted in limited educational opportunities today. In contrast to the White population, the American Indian and Alaska Native population is younger, has the highest birth rate, and has three times as many children under 18 living in poverty who are at risk for poor school performance, early dropout, development of psychological problems, and homelessness (Aponte & Couch, 2000). American Indians experience higher levels of poverty, unemployment, suicide, substance abuse, alcohol-related mortality, and mental health problems than the general United States population (American Psychological Association, 2002; Bichsel & Mallinckrodt, 2001; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; LaFromboise & Howard-Pitney, 1995). As a result of all these factors, for the majority of American Indian people the American dream has truly been a continuous nightmare in which extraordinarily high unemployment rates, inadequate health care, and crippling levels of poverty have characterized their lives (D'Andrea, 1994).

The College Experience: Barriers to Success

American Indian students often do not have adequate high school preparation and may need tutorial and remedial educational services in order to be successful in

higher education. Wright (1989) and Boyer (1997) also assert similar observations noting that American Indian students are usually unprepared academically, have many family responsibilities, and cite home responsibilities and insufficient funds as reasons for degree non-completion (Pavel, Skinner, Cahalan, Tippeconnic, & Stein, 1998). Similarly, most require some form of financial aid. American Indian students tend to enroll at an older age than the traditional age students, and usually have the added responsibility of family and financial pressures with which to contend, along with adjustment problems engendered by the university and the majority cultures.

Furthermore, whether or not American Indian high school students have lived on or off a reservation may have a bearing on success in college. McDonald (1992) reported that students from reservation (as opposed to non-reservation) communities were more likely to graduate from high school and continue on to higher education. In his study of 150 American Indian undergraduates, 69% graduated from reservation schools and 31% from non-reservation schools. In addition, the factors contributing to attrition among this sample were perceived racism and low enthusiasm towards college.

Participation rates for American Indian students are increasing, but they continue to lag behind those of White students and enrollment ratios at every academic degree level (Ward & Hergenhan, 2001). According to Harvey (2001), American Indians experienced a 56.3% increase in college enrollment from 1988 to 1998. However, the 1.5% gain in enrollment from 1997 to 1998 was the smallest among the four major ethnic minority groups.

According to Tate and Schwartz (1993), the literature cites several reasons for the small numbers of American Indian students in college: the low number of high school graduates; the lack of administrative support from college institutions where students attend college; faculty misconceptions and stereotyping; poor student relations with the college institution; and the choice of careers based on the potential for monetary gains.

College retention rates for American Indians have been extremely poor, with various authors citing rates of retention to degree completion between 4 and 9% (Davis, 1992; Dingman, Mroczka, & Brady, 1995; Lin, LaCounte, & Eder, 1988; Rindone, 1988). Most college student attrition/persistence studies suggest that American Indian and Alaska Native students continue to be underrepresented in terms of access to and degree attainment at four-year universities (Astin, 1982; Carter & Wilson, 1995; Green, 1991; NCES, 1989, 1991; O'Brien, 1992; Pavel, Swisher, & Ward, 1995). In 1997, American Indians had the lowest graduation rate among all ethnic groups at Division I colleges and universities. Their 1997 graduation rate, 36%, is identical to that reported by the American Council on Education (2000) in 1993.

Pavel, (1999) referring to a study by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), reports that approximately 35% of the American Indians who entered as first-time, full-time freshmen graduated within six years. The same study reported that the lowest percentage of American Indians graduating within

six years occurs at small public institutions (25% in 1995 and 28% in 1996); the highest graduation rate occurs in large private institutions (56%). Overall, American Indian students are far less likely to graduate in six years as compared to the general student population (Henning, 1999). According to Pavel et al. (1998), in 1980, 8% of American Indians and Alaska Native students and 16% of the overall population had earned bachelor's degrees. By 1990, slightly more than 20% of the general population had attained a bachelor's degree or higher compared with 9% of the American Indian and Alaska Native population.

When American Indian students have been inadequately prepared for the academic rigor of college and are in need of remediation, their motivation to pursue a degree erodes (Henning, 1999). One can readily see why it is important for educators to understand how a strong K-12 education can increase the potential of American Indian and Alaska Native students to succeed in college.

Lin et al. (1988) found that improvement in the college campus environment correlates directly to improvement in the academic performance of American Indian students. The four factors they examined were attitude toward college education, attitude toward professors, the perception of campus hostility, and the feeling of isolation. Research to date has largely ignored higher education institutions' assessment of their ability to serve American Indian students (Blue & Day, 1999). Cleary and Peacock (1998) contend that much of this is due partly to a lack of students' financial resources. Sanchez, Stuckey, and Morris (1998) assert that the plethora of problems American Indian students face as a result of individual financial stress is exacerbated by family commitments. American Indian students often must first meet these obligations, and then worry about their own situations. These tensions impose further burdens on American Indian students who may lack adequate academic preparation for higher education (Hulburt, Kroeker, & Gade, 1991). Accordingly, there is a need to develop culturally responsive pedagogy (Pewewardy, 1999) and teaching methodology in higher education (Pewewardy, 2002).

Throughout history, American Indian people have been characterized as "problems" (Adams, 1995a; Deyhle & Swisher, 1997; Spring, 1996) and as having "cultural deficits" that have shaped the theoretical rationale for educational and curriculum policy-making (Lomawaima, 2000). Such a description falls within the "deficit theory" model—the dominant position of research on minorities up until the 1960s. While the numbers of American Indians obtaining college degrees has improved, more research needs to be conducted by American Indians themselves about educational obstacles and how to surmount them (Cook-Lynn, 2000; Mihesuah, 1998; Noley, 1993; Swisher, 1996).

We believe the identification of the historical barriers to academic success (i.e., student support services, racial climate, and ethnic fraud) is a first step in addressing the current problems of retention with this particular ethnic group. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to add to the research literature by identifying barriers and categorizing them. The categorization of these potential barriers may provide insights into the alleviation of barriers to graduation for

American Indian students in higher education. We must identify specific struggles of American Indian students, take steps to help them meet these challenges, and change oppressive educational systems (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002; Weaver, 2000) so American Indian students can reach their educational potential.

A good example of this Pavel and Padilla's (1993) findings that Hispanic and American Indian college students integrate into the campus academic and social environments, in part, by using heuristic knowledge acquired from ethnic/racial enclaves and minority academic advisement. In addition to this they noted that the existing research data on American Indian and Alaska Native students may be distorted and misleading because of ethnic fraud resulting from false or inaccurate self-identification in the college application process (Pavel & Padilla, 1993). By examining the way students identified their ethnicity on various survey documents, Pavel et al. (1998) found instability in the process of American Indian and Alaska Native self-reporting identification.

Ethnic Fraud

With the rising cost of college tuition, more and more students are exploring ways to fund their way through college. Some students who claim "American Indian" in the college applications feel that they may have advantages in receiving college scholarships by identifying themselves as ethnic minority students. When college students are permitted to self-identify as American Indian, they are given the discretion to develop their own idea or definition of an American Indian racial and ethnic identity, and to decide which information will be relevant for classifying themselves into that specific scholarship category. The freedom to determine one's own classification has created interesting interpretations of defining who American Indian college students in higher education institutions are. Because most higher education institutions have not established guidelines as to who may be recognized as an American Indian, a serious dilemma has manifested itself. Higher education institutions requesting that an applicant self-identify have no way of knowing precisely what is meant when someone identifies himself or herself as American Indian. This lack of criteria and guidelines leaves self-identification as an American Indian open for abuse and misuse. The American Indian and Alaska Native Professor's Association (2002) has labeled this abuse and misuse of self-identification "ethnic fraud."

There are various implications for American higher education when a student self identifies on an application for college admission and financial assistance. Due to the increase of ethnic fraud abetted by self-identification in the college application process, much of what is known about American Indian and Alaska Native student participation and achievement in higher education could be misleading (Pavel, Sanchez, & Machamer, 1994). The extent of ethnic fraud appears to be a significant institutional and national problem in higher education (American Indian and Alaska Native Professors [AIANPA], 2002). The paucity of information is quite revealing. For example, Grande (2000) asserted that "claiming one's ancestral background is not, in and of itself, problematic,

but when such claims are opportunistically used to cash in on scholarships, jobs, set-aside programs and other affirmative economic incentives, it becomes a highly questionable practice—particularly when such ‘fraudulent Indians’ quickly discard their new identity as soon as it no longer serves them” (p. 352).

In another example of ethnic fraud, the *Detroit News and Free Press* reported that among 40 University of Michigan American Indian students contacted; only eight were actually enrolled in a tribe. Another ten had some tie to an American Indian and Alaska Native community, 20 knew little about their American Indian and Alaska Native heritage, and could not even name their “tribe” or ancestor.⁴ In a study conducted at the University of California at Los Angeles in 1988-89, Machamer (1997) reported that of 179 enrolled American Indian students, 125 did not or could not provide adequate documentation of their tribal affiliation and that, on average, less than 15% of American Indian students were enrolled in federally recognized tribes. More importantly, a significant number of students who identified as American Indian at the time of enrollment relinquished this identification by the time of graduation, suggesting that economic incentives aside, otherwise White students chose to reclaim their whiteness (Machamer, 1997).

Deciding who is an “official Indian” is a major issue in higher education (Cage, 1992). Tribes are the official entities deciding legitimate membership. For example, American Indian and Alaska Native people have a trust relationship with the United States government that can be traced to Article I of the U.S. Constitution of 1787, which bestowed upon Congress the power to recognize American Indian Nations as sovereign entities. This trust relationship clearly justifies the need for universities to establish a verification policy for those students in higher education who self-identify as American Indian or Alaska Native. Without a verified enrollment policy, postsecondary institutions condone (and conceal) the existence of ethnic fraud and possibly falsify their enrollment of American Indian and Alaska Native students. Moreover, their failure to verify American Indian and Alaska Native heritage suggests that most institutions overlook the violation of their code of ethics instructing students to provide true statements during the application process.

Consequently, those who commit ethnic fraud are usurping admissions spaces as well as ethnic-specific scholarships. Ethnic fraud directly affects those college students who have a legal right to financial aid designated specifically for American Indians. According to Runningwater (1996), one factor behind the accumulation of American Indian student college debt could be non-Indian students committing ethnic fraud. Ultimately, ethnic fraud in higher education hurts American Indian students by displacing them and minimizing their status as American Indians. Educational institutions who accept students who self-identify as American Indian are doing so to the detriment of those whose tribal heritage is verified by their respective tribes (Pewewardy, in press).

Meanwhile, some researchers have suggested that increased racial tensions on college campuses resulted from economic factors, the continuing high costs

of attending college, competitive admission standards, and the perception that Affirmative Action has only provided opportunities for minorities (Horton, 2000). Others have noted that racism has always been part of the historical fabric of our society and that many of our current college students have grown up in an environment that seldom criticizes racism (Bowser, Hunt, & Pohl, 1981; Magner, 1988). According to Guinier (1994), many Whites and some People of Color have decided that keeping silent about race is the best way to get along. As a result, unexamined attitudes remain fixed. Inattention to race relations in higher education affects the climate of the institution and may result in a lack of culturally responsive educational practices (Deyhle, 1995; Foster, 1997; Gay, 2000; Howard, 1999; Irving & Armento, 2001; Jeffries, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Pewewardy, 1998; Tatum, 1997; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Higher education institutions across the country are seeking guidance in understanding and improving the academic climate for the increasing number of faculty and Students of Color (Diver-Stamnes & LoMascolo, 2001). In the past two decades, many institutions have begun to take a serious look at how to improve campus climate through various diversity efforts and other institutional initiatives (Gregory & Horton, 1994). A desire to understand more fully the apparently divergent American Indian sentiment motivated the authors to conduct this study.

Method

Description of Institution and Sample

The study site (a state university) typifies many land grant institutions of the early 1900s in the Southern Midwest; it is a multipurpose university whose mission is to offer appropriate educational programs to the people living in its service area. This particular mainstream state university offers curricula leading to Associate's, Bachelor's, and Master's degrees. No ethnic studies courses were offered at this mainstream state university with the exception of special ethnic seminars and/or visiting professor lectures. Only two American Indian faculty could be located at the state university and no American Indian student services were available. This was a critical factor because three sovereign tribal groups were in the immediate service area of the university.

A total of 409 undergraduate students at the state university participated in the study; there were 296 females and 115 males in the sample. With regard to age, 31% of the respondents were traditional students (≤ 22 years), while 30% of the respondents ranged in age from 23 to 30. The largest age group (39%) was students 30 years of age and older. The Students of Color tended to be older than the White students, 46% of the Students of Color were 31 years of age or older; whereas only 35% of the White students were in this age group. Of those responding to the survey, 60.5% identified themselves as White (Caucasian); 17.6% were African-American; 7.4% were American Indian, 6.1% were Mexican-American, Latin American or Puerto Rican; 3.2% were Asian-American; and 5.1% chose the category of "Other." One of the challenges

confronted by the state university includes recruitment and retention of ethnic minority faculty and students who are poorly represented in the overall enrollment.

The university relies on a voluntary code for identifying racial/ethnic background that students may choose to put on their application and other materials. When the study began, the 1,752 minority undergraduate students who were enrolled made up 31.4% of the total 5,575 student population. Of these 1,752 minority undergraduate students, there were 258 American Indians; 161 full-time and 97 part-time. Because our interest was in the existence of perceptual differences between White students and American Indian students, we utilized the participants' self-report information on ethnicity to divide them into two distinct groups. Therefore, 30 American Indian and 245 White students participated in this study. Although the sample size⁵ was 30 American Indian students, it was representative of the total Native student population at the University

Instrument

Working under the guidance of their course instructor, students in an undergraduate multicultural education course composed 88 questions for the original survey instrument. A pilot test of the instrument was conducted at the study site in a large undergraduate multicultural psychology course. The sample size consisted of 40 students. Of those 40, 18 were Students of Color and 22 were White. The gender composition was 27 female and 13 male. Based on student feedback about the readability and relevance of items, the scale was eventually trimmed down to 33 questions.

The survey used in this study consisted of two sections. A background section sought information relative to personal characteristics: participant's year in college, gender, ethnic background, size of city or town lived in (currently or before coming to college), and year the participant was born. Next, participants responded to items that addressed racial climate on the campus, student support services, cultural diversity courses on campus, and perceptions and attitudes about cultural diversity. A special focus of the survey was on the issue of ethnic fraud. Items asking whether self-identification of ethnic identity without documentation is a significant problem and whether the college should establish a documentation policy to discourage ethnic fraud were included. These common student life issues were drawn from earlier research at another state university campus (Loo & Rolison, 1986). In most cases, students were asked to respond to these items by using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). However, with items like *How often have you been the victim of racial harassment on campus?* students were asked to pick between responses such as *very often*, *sometimes*, *rarely*, and *never*.

A principle components factor analysis of the 33 items using varimax rotation found that six factors accounted for a total of 64% of response variance and covariance. Items loading on those factors covered these six areas:

Institutional Support, Genetic Equality, Campus Climate, Motivation to Succeed, Ethnic Fraud, and White Privilege. Only the four items loading on the largest factor (Institutional Support, 16.25%, coefficient $\alpha = .71$) provided reliable subscale scores (Genetic Equality, $\alpha = .69$; Motivation to Succeed, $\alpha = .49$; Ethnic Fraud, $\alpha = .32$; White Privilege, $\alpha = .16$).

Procedures

The questionnaire was administered to the students in a classroom setting. An informed consent form was read aloud by the cooperating instructors who distributed the questionnaire. This consent form pointed out that participation in the study was strictly voluntary, students could withdraw at any time without penalty, and all information gathered was anonymous and confidential.

Results

The percentage of American Indian students agreeing and disagreeing with each scale statement was compared to the percentage of White students using a Z-test for proportions. Previous analysis of this survey suggested that two subscales could be used to make meaningful comparisons between groups (Pewewardy & Frey, 2002). Summed responses for Institutional Support items (e.g. "There should be more support services for minority students at this college") and summed responses for Campus Climate items (e.g. "All ethnic minority groups get along well on this campus as far as I know") were compared using t-tests between American Indian and White students.

Table 1 compares responses of American Indian students with those of White students. There were substantial differences between the two groups in their perception of the need for more campus support services and the value of multicultural courses in promoting racial understanding. Other major contrasts included the perception of differences between races as an indicator of racism, *and* the frequency of ethnic discrimination. Additional differences emerged between American Indian and White students in their responses to the ethnic fraud issues. American Indian students were more likely to view ethnic fraud as a significant problem that the colleges and universities should try to address.

A factor analysis identified meaningful groupings of items as subscales. Two of these subscales had acceptable estimates of internal reliability and were used in further analysis. The two subscales (Institutional Support: items 12, 13, 15, 22 and Campus Climate: items 23, 24, 25) produced mean scores which were compared between American Indian and White students. There was a significant difference on the Institutional Support subscale, $t(268) = 5.33$, $p < .001$, with American Indian students indicating a stronger belief in the value of institutional support, support services, and multicultural courses ($M = 7.10$, $SD = 2.73$) than White students ($M = 10.58$, $SD = 3.37$; lower means indicate stronger agreement with statements.) There was not a statistically significant difference on the Campus Climate subscale.

Table 1
American Indian and White Student Responses to Survey Items

Survey Item	American			
	Indian		White	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
12. All (this college's) students should be required to take courses in multicultural education or ethnic studies.	63.3	10.0	49.6	26.3
13. Multicultural classes would be helpful in promoting racial understanding.	93.3	0	73.3**	11.5
14. When a minority professor is hired, it is usually because of his/her ethnicity first.	60.0	10.0	35.99***	37.5
15. There should be more support services for minority students (at this college).	70.0	0	16.8***	32.2***
16. In general, African Americans are genetically inferior to White Americans.	20.0	61.0	3.30*	84.9***
17. In general, Whites are genetically inferior to Asians.	16.6	63.3	2.9*	85.5***
18. All races are intellectual equal.	64.4	20.0	79.9*	9.5
19. Ethnic minorities are not as motivated to succeed as Whites.	46.6	46.7	22.1***	61.9*
20. Ethnic minorities strive to succeed the same as Whites.	63.3	26.7	62.7	20.9
21. Whites are carefully taught not to recognize White privilege.	41.4	41.4	21.4**	52.6
22. Ethnic minority groups on campus should try to maintain their racial/ethnic identity as much as possible.	72.4	10.3	50.0***	19.2
23. There are very few instances of racial conflict or harassment on campus that I know of.	56.7	20.0	67.0	11.1
24. All ethnic minority groups get along well on (this) campus as far as I know.	70.0	16.7	73.1	7.4
25. On (this) campus, ethnic minorities are often the targets of prejudice and discrimination.	30.0	33.3	6.2***	68.8***
26. Self-identification of ethnic identity without any official documentation (i.e., tribal membership) appears to be a significant institutional and national problem.	63.3	10.0	34.6***	12.2
27. (This college) should establish/ensure a position on ethnic fraud for both students and faculty requiring documentation of tribal enrollment in a state or federally recognized American Indian nation/tribe with preference given to those who meet this criteria.	73.3	13.4	57.0*	10.7

Note. Survey items 1-11 are demographic questions and are not shown here. American Indian N \cong 30, White N \cong 245. Sample sizes varied slightly across items. Statistical tests compared percentages between American Indian and White students. Values do not sum to 100% because a "Neutral" answer option is not shown.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Responses to two items asking about the issue of ethnic fraud were used in an analysis of variance (ANOVA) among students identifying themselves as belonging to one of four ethnic groups. Because this is an issue that may have particular salience for American Indian students, an ANOVA was chosen that would allow distinctions to be made among responses of specific ethnic groups.

Responses to one item did not vary significantly across ethnic groups: “[This university] should establish/ensure a position on ethnic fraud for both students and faculty requiring documentation of tribal enrollment in a state or federally recognized American Indian nation/tribe with preference given to those who meet this criterion,” but the ANOVA for the other item was significant, $F(3,368) = 4.002, p = 0.008$: “Self-identification of ethnic identity without any official documentation (i.e., tribal membership) appears to be a significant institutional and national problem.” Follow-up comparisons indicated that the difference across groups was due to American Indians’ responses showing greater agreement with the statement than the responses of the other three groups. The four groups and their responses to this item were American Indian/Alaska Native ($M = 2.20, SD = 1.16$); White (Caucasian, $M = 2.70, SD = .95$); Mexican-American/Latin-American/Puerto Rican ($M = 2.84, SD = .99$); and African-American ($M = 2.94, SD = 1.14$). Low answers indicated agreement on a five-point Likert scale.

In addition to differences between American Indian and White perceptions of the importance of ethnic fraud, the two groups differed in areas related to racial stereotypes. On the topic of motivation to succeed, American Indian students were more likely to believe that “ethnic minorities are not as motivated to succeed as Whites” (American Indian, 46.6%, White, 22.1%). While the majority of American Indian respondents rejected notions of ethnic genetic superiority, they were more likely to endorse the statements that “in general, African Americans are generally inferior to White Americans” (20.0% compared to 3.3%) and “in general, Whites are genetically inferior to Asians” (16.6% compared to 2.9%) that their white counterparts.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that colleges must find ways to reduce prejudice and discrimination. One way to do this would be to focus on the characteristics of Students of Color and White students who do not display prejudice for disenfranchised groups (Ambler, 1999). As previously mentioned, the potential attributions leading to lowered amounts of prejudice may include greater levels of empathy and nurturance as well as a heightened interest in interpersonal harmony. However, it may be that these prejudice-reducing qualities are not valued to the same extent on college campuses as are other attributes such as competition and aggressiveness. Also, it is unclear if these differences are real; that is, if American Indian students actually differ from White students in their views on these issues, or whether White students are more likely than American Indian students to provide the socially desirable response to such questions.

Traditionally, American Indian people provided an education for their children in their own cultural context, but many have now encouraged formal education, considering it crucial to economic, social, and cultural survival (McDonald, 1992). Despite Civil Rights legislation, the national goal of providing ethnic minorities with equal access to quality institutions of higher education and opportunities for academic success has yet to be realized. Attaining the educational vision requires understanding of the forces that preclude and promote equal opportunity and academic success. Higher college dropout rates, lower levels of academic preparation in high school, lower socioeconomic status, and greater alienation or isolation in the White college environment have been cited as problems facing ethnic minority college students (Burbach & Thompson, 1971; Loo & Rolison, 1986; Madrazo-Peterson & Rodriguez, 1978; Smith, 1989; Suen, 1983; Turner, 1994). This problem has nowhere been as great as it is among American Indian college students (Lin, et al., 1988). This research has found causes for alienation in unwelcoming climate, in cultural domination, and in social isolation.

Increased racial and ethnic diversity has transformed colleges and universities. This is evidenced by the ways in which scholarship in ethnic and women's studies has changed the nature of what is studied, how it is studied, and how excellence is defined in particular disciplines. Attrition rates for minorities in higher education are often greater than those for the rest of the population. This is particularly true in the Southwest where attrition rates in the 75-85% range are common for American Indian students at four-year institutions (Pottinger, 1990). Recent studies examining the effects of orientation and advisement on persistence indicate the importance of informal or heuristic knowledge of American Indian students, which helps them negotiate barriers to completion of their degree program (Pavel & Padilla, 1993; Tierney, 1992; Wright, 1985). This means that American Indian college students must know how to cope with the daily demands of pursuing a postsecondary degree and getting involved in campus life while simultaneously trying to find a satisfying social and academic "home" (Astin, 1993; Garrod & Larimore, 1997; Guyette & Heth, 1984; Richardson, 1988). Thus, full understanding of perceptions of the racial climate on campus and the American Indian student's use of support services are paramount.

A stark reality of educating American Indian students in predominantly White institutions is the acute difference between the cultural backgrounds of their instructors versus those of their classmates. Although colleges and universities have become increasingly diverse in recent years, the composition of the faculty and student body has remained predominately White, middle class (Fenwick, 2001). The dissonance in mores, customs, and values between faculty and students has profound implications for the success of American Indian students attending predominantly White colleges and universities.

Education is the essential element for the survival of American Indian people. Education builds community. Building community is an ongoing and long-term venture. American Indians support and study programs are just

beginning to take hold at some schools, which offer promise for creating American Indian communities at mainstream institutions. Professional programs in higher education such as Teacher Education, Social Work, Nursing, Law, and Medicine, have placed a priority on educating American Indian students for entrance into their respective programs (Tate & Schwartz, 1993). These new programs can help going to school and getting an education move closer together (Hill, 1995).

The practice of ethnic fraud is believed to have become so widespread that the Association of American Indian and Alaska Native Professors composed a statement condemning its proliferation (Pewewardy, in press). Though such statistics and their implications need to be taken seriously, communities should be cautions of the ill-effects of identity fixation and note that surveillance tactics ultimately work against those they were designed to protect (Grande, 2000).

Racism, oppression, and unexpected intergenerational grief caused by the American Indian holocaust in our country's history, have led to economic and social problems in many American Indian families and communities today (Stannard, 1992; Thorton, 1987). These problems act as direct barriers to the goal of becoming successful in higher education (Huffman, 1991; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). Special attention needs to be paid to the barriers confronting American Indian students in higher education (Garrod & Larimore, 1997; Wenzlaff & Biewer, 1996; Wilson, 1996). The importance of this study is affirmed by Johnson and Rodriguez (1991). They suggested that a "hostile" learning environment and racial prejudice are seldom mentioned in university reports on ethnic minority student issues; yet these are the very forces that cause students to leave during their first year of study. Implementing suggestions contained in our study may help ameliorate some of these barriers, thus increasing retention rates.

Research clearly indicates that greater exposure to racial and ethnic diversity in college ultimately leads to growth in democracy. Students who have been exposed to greater diversity are more likely to have greater racial understanding, cultural awareness and appreciation, engagement with social and political issues, and openness to diversity and challenge (Milem & Hakuta, 2000).

Daily harassment and verbal assaults are relatively common experiences in the lives of many American Indian students in higher education (Perry, 2002). When institutions of higher education are scrutinized from the inside out, real change should occur (Blue & Day, 1999). Policymakers must establish education systems within that contribute productively to the growth and development of all American societies (Charleston, 1994). Although our research does not compare American Indian students with those of other ethnic groups, the programs suggested may have benefits for all students. Since American Indian students appear to have the greatest difficulty with retention, programs in higher education should be designed with their unique cultural differences in mind.

Limitations of the Study

The results of this study cannot be generalized. They cannot be applied to other sets of American Indian students or to other college campuses without some caution. Our sample was selected from the population of one state university, and it may not be representative of a culturally diverse population of undergraduates on other college campuses. Returning and new students will surely have other adjustment demands, and those students majoring in other fields may also be different. Additionally, the geographical distance of this university from the American Indian students' reservations, tribal towns, and hometowns makes this university distinct. American Indian students attending a predominantly White university located in their own metropolitan area would experience a very different transition, as would students who reside with their families during college. The social climate for American Indian students surely varies from campus to campus, as well as does the quantity and quality of multicultural student support services available. Individual campuses must be studied to determine the nature of their racial climate for diversity.

Implications

Two implications can be drawn from this study. First, American Indian students believe in the importance of student support for their ethnic group and they value multicultural courses; to increase their numbers institutions, should build on these services and strengthen them. Second, there is a perception of racism on the campus, that races are viewed differently, so this is an area that needs focus by campus faculty and staff as well as students, both American Indian and White.

According to the Association of American Indian and Alaska Native Professors (2002), ethnic fraud has become a major problem because of the documented incidents of abuse. The Association of American Indian and Alaska Native Professor's statement on ethnic fraud is intended to assist universities in their efforts to develop culturally diverse campus communities and serves three purposes:

1. To assist in the selection process that encourages diversity among students, staff, faculty, and administration;
2. To uphold the integrity of institutions and enhance their credibility with American Indian and Alaska Native Nations/Tribes; and
3. To recognize the importance of American Indian and Alaska Native Nations/Tribes in upholding their sovereign and legal rights as nations to determine membership.

Pavel (1993) raised questions concerning the reliability of national data on American Indian student enrollment, retention, and graduation rates, given what he identified as the "widespread incidence of ethnic fraud" (p. 215). Undergirding these concerns are the ways in which categories of race and ethnicity have

become institutionalized vis-à-vis “Affirmative Action” and used in the decision-making process for employment and admission to selective institutions of higher education. Subsequently, while opponents and proponents of Affirmative Action do battle in the courtroom, a recent phenomenon has emerged among a growing number of American Indian students and faculty, who are demanding that their institutions verify the ethnic identity of those identifying as American Indian for purposes of employment, admission, and financial aid. This has led to a heated and emotional debate among those identifying as American Indian as to the definition of the category and its criteria (Gonzales, 1998; Haynes Writer, 2001).

Questions concerning American Indian and Alaska Native identity were addressed within student responses to the ethnic fraud inquiry. How students in this study responded to the inquiry about ethnic fraud should sound an alarm to administrators in higher education institutions. The recent rise in racism on college campuses and also within the general population demonstrates the continued need for research in understanding the “whys” of this issue (By Any Means Necessary [BAMN], 2002; Qualls, Cox, & Schehr, 1992; U.S. Dept. of Justice, 2000; Winbush, 2001). In spite of all the historical barriers to educational achievement, some American Indian students do excel in school and continue on to the highest levels of education. What lessons can be learned from these students that might be applied to the situation we reflect upon during the late twentieth century?

The present study findings also imply the need for higher education institutions to gain more than superficial/stereotypical knowledge and experience with regard to cultural diversity, because insufficient knowledge and contact appear to be correlated with high levels of prejudice. Since the 1780s, this nation has failed to address the critical educational needs of American Indians (Boyer, 1997). Historically, educational policy for American Indian and Alaska Native students consisted of externally imposed concepts; most of these were misguided disasters and almost all were failures. Today, many higher education institutions are offering reservations and tribal communities the chance to build knowledge, skills, confidence, and pride in a way which historically had not been possible for non-Indian institutions to offer—a way to undo the harms of the past.

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Endnotes

¹Given the multiplicity of worldviews and perspectives on this important issue of terminological identity, the term *American Indian* rather than *Native American* is used in this article to refer to the descendants of the original inhabitants of the U.S. Jeff Corntassel (2001) suggested three reasons for this usage: (a) *American Indian* is the predominant term used in numerous treaties, congressional statutes, and Executive Agreements; (b) *Native American* is an imprecise term as it also includes Native Hawaiians, who are not the subject of this article; (c) the term *Native American* could be construed to imply that Indigenous nations have been incorporated into U.S. society and are consequently “American,” despite their aboriginal and treaty-based claims as prior sovereigns. Whenever possible, however, we attempt to refer to American Indian peoples by their preferred community, tribal affiliations (e.g., Comanche Nation, Kiowa Nation, etc.), but understand that group members may self-identify using broader terms, such as Indigenous Peoples or First Nations Peoples, to place their tribal identities in a wider context.

²According to Churchill (1994), the term *genocide* was coined by Polish jurist Raphael Lemkin in 1944 by combining the Greek *genos* (*race* or *tribe*) and the Latin *cide* (*killing*). Moreover, like Howard Zinn (1999), we prefer to tell the story of the discovery of America from the viewpoint of the Arawaks—from the people’s history of the United States.

³The history of American Indian education is older than the history of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and of the arrival of the first Europeans on the continent. In 1794 the first treaty was signed specifically calling for efforts by the Federal government to educate Indian children.

⁴Ethnic groups not only vary across cultures, but they differ within cultures. For example, American Indians who remain on the reservation tend to have different cultural values and experiences than Indians who do not live on the reservation and are more influenced by the dominant society (Choney, Berryhill-Paapke, & Robbins, 1995). How acculturated an individual is to the dominant society could influence his/her level of hope. Historically, acculturation has been viewed as unidirectional, meaning that a person gives away his/her cultural way of life in exchange for the majority cultures (Aponte & Johnson, 2000). When different cultural groups interact, the result is a change of values and beliefs for either both or one of the cultures. Therefore, in order to determine acculturation in individuals, both assimilated and retained cultural components should be measured.

⁵As mentioned early in the article, the low number of American Indian students surveyed in this study reflects the number of American Indian college students as the most underrepresented, most underserved, and least noticed ethnic group in higher education. With this in mind, American Indian students were sought after on campus to complete the surveys. Major effort was made to seek out American Indian college students to administer the survey. For example, the course instructor/researcher attended Indian Club feast days, powwows, club meetings, and other cultural events trying to make contact with as many American Indian students attending the study site. According to Pavel (1999), the small size of the American Indian population (approximately one percent of the U.S. population) has meant that these students and the school personnel who serve them are almost never represented in sufficient numbers in national educational studies to permit reliable and valid generalizations about their characteristics.

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