

American Indian/Alaska Native Students' Use of a University Student Support Office

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American Indian/Alaska Native college students responded to two surveys: one assessing their overall psychological status; the other, their current commitment to the traditions they learned as children. Students described their psychological status in reliable, yet diverse ways: displaced and lost; comfortable and naturally embedded; sick, pessimistic, and lonely; purposeful; self-directed; invisible; optimistic; and, instrumental. In their commitment to cultural traditions, students described themselves as emigrated, adrift, and/or alienated. Self-directed students reported using a student-support office less, as did students reporting higher grades. Students describing themselves as adrift used the office more. Not using the office were two worrisome types: one alienated and in poor health; the other, wishing to blend in with others. These results were interpreted in the larger context of university culture, and a unidimensional model of assimilation versus a bi-cultural model of adaptation.

Introduction

Recent demographic data paint an uncertain picture of American Indian/Alaska Native enrollments in post-secondary education programs. During the last three decades, American Indian/Alaska Native student enrollments rose by about two-thirds (Pavel, Skinner, Farris, Cahalan, Tippeconnic, & Stein, 1998); but, despite this increase, the graduation rate of American Indian/Alaska Natives remained substantially below that of majority students. For example, at National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division-One universities, the six-year graduation rate for American Indian/Alaska Natives hovers at 36%, substantially below the rate for majority students (56%) (Pavel et al., 1998). Freshman-to-sophomore persistence rates are consistent with this difference in graduation rates: 54% of American Indian/Alaska Native freshman re-enroll for their sophomore year compared to 68% of majority students (Pavel et al., 1998). These data indicate that more American Indian/Alaska Natives are enrolling in universities, but they are not achieving baccalaureate degrees.

Even if the measure of post-secondary success is broadened to include associate degrees (i.e., community college graduation), the picture remains unclear (Pavel et al., 1998). During the last 30 years, more American Indian/Alaska Natives enrolled in four-year programs (75%) than two-year programs (61%). This difference in four-year versus two-year program attendance is greater for American Indian/Alaska Natives than for any other ethnic group (Horn, Peter, & Rooney, 2002). Summing four-year and two-year programs, degree achievement (baccalaureate and associate) by American Indian/Alaska Natives increased by 50% between 1976 and 1994. But the most substantial increase in degree achievement was at the community college level (approximately 50%), not four-year programs (25-35%).

Thus, the activities of American Indian/Alaska Natives in higher education are not easily described: Enrollments in post-secondary programs have increased substantially, especially in four-year programs. Yet, attrition remains substantial in them. Using graduation rates as an index of success, American Indian/Alaska Natives are more successful in two-year programs than in four-year programs. Although more American Indian/Alaska Natives seek baccalaureate degrees (than associate or arts degrees), they are more successful in community college programs. It appears that American Indian/Alaska Native students do not lack the motivation, but something is frustrating their efforts at the university level (Tierney, 1992).

American Indian/Alaska Natives on the University Campus

Of all ethnic groups, American Indian/Alaska Native undergraduates have the highest number of demographic risk factors associated with attrition (Horn et al., 2002). Thus, it is not surprising that their attrition rates are high. But these demographic risk factors—delayed enrollment, part-time attendance, financial independence, dependent children, single parenthood, lack of a high school diploma, and full-time employment (Horn et al., 2002)—are indices (like socioeconomic status). That is, they do not describe the day-to-day experiences that impact directly American Indian/Alaska Native students and that could be associated with their risk for attrition (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991).

These day-to-day experiences typically occur in a White ethnocentric context that is unappreciative of American Indian/Alaska Native culture (Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman, 1993). The onus for adjustment is placed on students, and when they are American Indian/Alaska Native, the challenge is potentially overwhelming (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Tierney, 1992). Kirkness and Barnhardt note that aspects of everyday interactions, such as respect and reciprocity cannot be taken for granted by American Indian/Alaska Native students. Furthermore, the very aspects of American Indian/Alaska Native culture that enhance persistence (Pewewardy, 2002) might not be recognized or appreciated on many campuses; and, students feel that they are left to choose between their cultural origins and an assimilated White identity that will erase their heritage.

American Indian/Alaska Native students could face a unique challenge, even compared to other ethnic minority students (Tierney, 1991). St. Germaine (1995) argues that when American Indian/Alaska Native students come to school, they face more than a cultural discontinuity, that is, a setting that articulates values which are orthogonal to those that they learned at home. They actually confront a culture conflict in which school-setting values directly contradict their cultural traditions: Success in one setting represents failure in the other, and vice versa. Recognizing this, some students are proactive in their school failure: Their attrition is not passive, but an active process. This reaffirms their commitment to their cultural tradition, just as succeeding in school represents a rejection of their traditions. Consistent with St. Germaine's hypothesis, James, Chavez, Beauvais, Edwards, and Oetting (1995) found that tribal language use and cultural identity were associated with drop-out risk in middle and high school students.

Student-Support Offices

On many university campuses are offices which provide omnibus support to ethnic minority students. These offices help students with their academic programs and embed them in a social context of other similar students. Staff in these offices offer counsel and support to students, some of whom feel as if they are foreigners to the campus community (cf. Feagin & Sikes, 1995). The activities of these offices are as much directed to socially integrating students to the campus as assisting them in academic activities. This is consistent with Tinto's long-standing research (1975, 1993, 2000) demonstrating the equal importance of social and academic integration in preventing attrition, even among American Indian/Alaska Native students (cf. Kerbo, 1981).

Many of these offices have moved away from a unidimensional model of cultural assimilation to one that is more appreciative of multicultural orientations (Manning & Coleman-Boatwright, 1991; McEwen & Roper, 1994; Pope, 1993). Working from this multicultural perspective, these offices celebrate students' cultural heritages *and* encourage them to adapt to the demands of campus life. Students are supported in maintaining a bi-cultural orientation. This is an improvement over the unidimensional assimilative model used by universities prior to establishing these student support offices. Arguably, this unidimensional model unintentionally supported the cultural conflict faced by American Indian/Alaska Native students.

The multicultural approach used by these offices is consistent with a model of acculturation developed by Oetting and Beauvais (1990). They describe acculturation as a process that can lead to any of four outcomes. Immigrants to a host culture can: 1) come to identify with the host culture (i.e., assimilate in the traditional sense); 2) come to identify with the host culture while retaining identification with their culture-of-origin (i.e., be bi-cultural); 3) retain identification with the culture-of-origin (i.e., remain a foreigner); or, 4) come to identify with neither culture (i.e., be marginalized). The advantage of Oetting and Beauvais' model is its versatility; it describes an independent relation (i.e., a

correlation of zero, or an orthogonal relation) between a culture-or-origin and a host culture. Persons can be classified in terms that are not mutually exclusive; the model precludes the negative correlation between the host culture and culture-of-origin that is implicit in the older models of acculturation. The bicultural model has been used to describe stage-like developmental outcomes as minority and American Indian/Alaska Native students struggle to meld their traditions and the values articulated in modern American education (Garrett, 1996; Peavy, 1995; Yang, 2003). We used this orthogonal model to help us understand students' coping with the university culture.

American Indian/Alaska Native Student Adjustment and Use of the Student-Support Office

The office that serves American Indian/Alaska Native students is one of several whose missions emphasize helping minority and under-represented students cope with the demands of campus life. The office helps students with courses, study skills, provides some personal counseling, and serves as a place of respite. Students can also network with other Native students through the office.

We were interested in whether the multicultural orientation of the office facilitated students' adjustment to campus life. Given St. Germaine's (1995) and James et al. (1995), contentions, even this office could be challenged to respond to students who feel that coming to campus is a prelude to denying their heritage. We examined three aspects of American Indian/Alaska Native students' campus experience: 1) their over-all psychological adjustment to the campus community; 2) their sense of how relevant their cultural heritage (articulated in their childhood experiences in their families) was to their college endeavors; and, 3) their use of the student-support office.

Method

Participants

Surveys were mailed to 322 students who self-identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native on their university applications. Sixty-seven surveys were returned. Of the 67, 10 respondents reported an ethnic identity other than American Indian or Alaskan Native. These students' surveys were dropped from the sample. Of the 57 remaining respondents, the most frequent tribal affiliations were Cherokee and Navajo. The low percentage of returned surveys, although disappointing, is not atypical of non-incentivised, voluntary returns that are not prompted (i.e., with a "reminder" postcard) (Dillman, 2000).

Respondents averaged 26.2-years of age (SD = 9.3-years; range: 17- to 55-years) and ranged from freshmen to graduate students. Sixty-eight percent (39) of respondents were female. Self-reported grade-point average was 3.11 (on a four-point scale).

Measures

Students responded to two surveys: the Basic Human Needs scale (BHN) and the “My Life Then and Now” scale (MLTaN) (Yang, Byers, Ahuna, & Castro, 2002). The Basic Human Needs Scale (BHN) was modified from Ossorio (1979), who developed the scale to assess the broad-ranging needs of persons suffering “cultural displacement.” According to Aylesworth and Ossorio (1983), cultural displacement occurs when persons, experientially steeped in their culture-of-origin, emigrate to a host culture, and discover aspects of the new culture that actually conflict with the norms and conventions of their culture-of-origin. The conflict does not reflect inadequate assimilation or lack of skill, but rather the host culture’s demand that these persons behave in ways that their culture-of-origin deems inappropriate. These persons can develop misperceptions of the host culture and, eventually, maladaptive patterns of behavior. Concomitantly, the host culture can develop its own misperceptions of these persons.

The modified BHN scale is comprised of 39 items assessing 13 areas of basic human needs: physical health, safety and security, self-esteem and worth, love and affection, agency and autonomy, adequacy and competency, identity, belonging and acceptance, disengagement, order and understanding, personal and social legitimacy, meaning hope and significance, and extension of self. Each item is accompanied by a six-point Likert response ranging from Very Untrue for Me to Very True for Me. We modified a few items to make them specifically applicable to university campus life.

The “My Life Then and Now” (MLTaN) is an original scale designed to compare a person’s current context to his or her culture-of-origin. Fifteen items compare recollections of life growing up as a child to life now (i.e., in college). Each item is a phrase (e.g., “My cultural heritage...”) followed by four Likert-like stem phrases from which respondents select the one that most accurately describes their feelings (from “...is not very important to me now” to “is very important to me now”). Five items focus on life in one’s family-of-origin, five on the current context, and five on a comparison of the two. The items emphasize cultural traditions and practices, without asking respondents to identify with a specific ethnic group. This is because the typical classifications of ethnicity (e.g., White/non-Hispanic; Hispanic/Latino, Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian/Pacific Islander) conflate, in fact, different cultural practices (e.g., Carey, 1997). Items are designed to be compatible with Oetting and Beauvais (1990) model of cultural adaptation. The scale presumes that culturally formative experiences are gained during childhood and in one’s family of origin. (Both surveys are available from the first author.)

On a cover sheet for the scales, students reported their age, class standing (e.g., freshman), grade-point average (GPA), and responded to a question about their use of the office designated to assist American Indian/Alaska Native students. Students were asked whether they visited or used the office “daily; once or twice a week; once or twice a month; once or twice a semester; [or] haven’t visited or used the Office.”

Results

Our analyses were conducted in three steps: (1) The Basic Human Needs Scale (BHN) and the My Life Then and Now Scale (MLTaN) were factor analyzed (varimax, orthogonal rotation) to reduce each scale to a smaller set of empirically derived dimensions. These dimensions were examined for their psychological interpretability. Earlier analyses of these surveys using ethnic minority students produced reliable and interpretable factors (Yang et al., 2002; Yang, Byers, Weidman, Salazar, & Salas, 2006), thus we used factor analysis in spite of the small sample size. (2) Relations between the BHN and MLTaN factors were examined to determine whether students' on-campus needs are related to their sense of their cultural tradition. (3) The relation between the factors (that were psychologically interpretable and sufficient reliability as measures) and use of the student-support office was examined.

Factoring the Basic Human Needs Scale

Factoring the 39 items of the BHN scale reduced them to 12 factors with eigen values greater than one. The 12 factors explained 76% of the total variance. (A list of the BHN items and their factor coefficients are available from the first author.) The first factor we labeled *Displaced/Lost*. The factor contained seven high-loading (>.40) items: I catch a lot of colds; On this campus, there is no place where I really belong; I feel things are out of my control; Although I am doing all that I can, it still isn't enough; It is difficult for me to relax and forget about my problems; On this campus I am misunderstood and different. The factor describes a student who feels marginalized, ineffective, stressed, and confused. The Cronbach alpha reliability for the seven items was 0.81.

The second factor we labeled *Comfortable/Naturally Embedded*. The factor contained three high-loading items: I am respected by family and friends; I feel really comfortable and natural with certain people; on this campus, I am of not much use to anyone (negative loading). The factor describes a student who feels comfortable and useful on campus, and is respected by family and friends. The Cronbach alpha reliability for the three items was 0.69.

The third factor we labeled *Sick/Pessimistic/Lonely*. This factor contained five high-loading items: On the whole, my physical health is good at present (negative loading); Right now, my physical health is bad; I do some very enjoyable things just because I want to (negative loading); I have almost no hope that I can ever live the kind of life I want to live; There are people on this campus who really care for me (negative loading). The factor describes a student who is in poor physical health, does not do things for self-enjoyment, and is pessimistic about the future. The Cronbach alpha reliability for the five items was 0.71.

The fourth factor we labeled *Purposeful*. This factor contained six high-loading items: I have a good understanding of people on this campus and how they think; I do not have enough good friends on this campus (negative loading); There are people on this campus who really care for me; I have respect for people

who live good lives; There is a group of people who like me and accept me; On the whole, I feel safe and secure. This factor describes a student who understands people on campus and is embedded in a supportive social network. The Cronbach alpha reliability for the six items was 0.79.

The fifth factor we labeled *Self-Directed*. This factor contained four high-loading items: I understand myself very well; I know what is natural and right for me; Nobody else decides for me what I should do; There is a group of people who like me and accept me. The factor describes a student who feels that she knows herself very well and that people accept her for what she is. The Cronbach alpha for the four items was 0.69.

The sixth factor we labeled *Invisible*. This factor contained five high-loading items: I wish I could just blend in with other students on this campus; Nobody listens to what I have to say; I do not get enough affection from other people; On this campus, I am misunderstood and different; I do not have enough good friends on this campus. The factor describes a student who wishes he could blend in with other students, feels ignored, misunderstood, and lacking in friends and support. The Cronbach alpha reliability for the five items was 0.72.

The seventh factor we labeled *Optimist*. This factor contained four high-loading items: What I do today will make life better for me in the future; There is someone I love or like very much; I have respect for people who live good lives; I have almost no hope that I can ever live the kind of life I want to (negative loading). The factor describes a student who feels positive about the future, is supported by someone, and has role models. The Cronbach alpha reliability for the four items was 0.66.

The eighth factor we labeled *Instrumental*. This factor contained three high-loading items: I know how to do the kind of things that will get me what I want; I am able to improve my life through my own efforts; Things are so unpredictable that it is hard for me to plan ahead (negative loading). The factor describes a student who makes his own decisions about how to achieve his objectives. The Cronbach alpha reliability for the three items was 0.66.

The eight factors explained a total of 57% of the variance. The last four factors were comprised of only two items each; for that reason, we chose not to interpret them.

We decided to factor analyze this sample, even though it was small, because two previous analyses (Yang et al., 2002; Yang et al., 2006) had produced reliable and interpretable factors. These previous analyses had generated stable factors describing students who felt lonely and insecure—similar to the first factor generated by the analyses reported here (Displaced/Lost); who felt accepted and comfortable—similar to the second factor reported here (Comfortable/Naturally Embedded); who felt in poor health—similar to the third factor reported here (Sick/Pessimistic/Lonely); and, who felt a sense of confidence and purpose—similar to the fourth factor reported here (Purposeful). The substantive similarities among the factors from these three samples suggest a common reaction among these students of different ethnicities.

Factoring the “My Life Then and Now” Scale

Factoring the 15 items of the MLTaN scale reduced them to five factors with eigen values greater than one. The five factors explained 64% of the total variance. (A list of the MLTaN items and their factor coefficients is available from the first author.) The first factor we labeled *Emigrated*. This factor contained three high-loading items (>.40): The “way of life” I grew up with as a child and during my youth ... is not at all important to me now; My old community/neighborhood ... I don’t think about my old neighborhood and community; The things my parents taught me and that I learned in my family ... don’t apply at all to what I am doing now. The factor describes a student who feels that what she learned as a child in her family-of-origin no longer applies to what she is now doing. The Cronbach alpha reliability of the three items was 0.78.

The second factor we labeled *Adrift*. This factor contained four high-loading items: My friends here ... are completely different from the people I knew when I was growing up; Overall, I am comfortable ... with almost nothing about my current situation, and would, if possible, change almost everything; Compared to what I am accustomed to ... where I am now is totally different; The things I was taught while growing up ... are the same for none of the people I’m around now. The factor describes a student who is uncomfortable with his campus situation and finds it dissimilar to things he was accustomed to. The Cronbach alpha reliability for the four items was 0.66.

The third factor we labeled *Alienated*. This factor contained three high-loading items: Things I enjoyed doing when I was young ... I have no one here to do these kinds of things with; The people I know here ... are not the types of people I’ll seek out in the future; Most of the people I know here ... I don’t really care for. This factor describes a student who cannot find friends or enjoyable things to do on campus. The Cronbach alpha reliability for the three items was 0.68.

The fourth and fifth factors contained three and two high-loading items, respectively. Their Cronbach alpha reliabilities were very low; we did not label them and dropped them from further analyses. The three interpretable factors explained 48% of the total variance.

Unlike the substantive similarities among the BHN factors (Yang et al., 2002; Yang et al., 2006), these MLTaN factors were not similar for the different ethnic groups.

Relations Between the MLTaN and BHN Factors

Three MLTaN factors and eight BHN factors were interpretable and had Cronbach alpha reliabilities sufficient for further examination. Intercorrelating these factors generated three statistically significant correlations and one suggestive correlation: *Alienation* with *Sick/Pessimistic/Lonely* ($r(52) = .380, p = .005$), and with *Purposeful* ($r(52) = -.274, p = .049$); *Adrift* with *Invisible* ($r(52) = .365, p = .008$). The suggestive correlation was *Alienated* with *Optimist* ($r(52) = -.237, p = .091$).

The pattern of correlations among these factors depicts two students: One feels in poor health, alienated, and alone. Friendships and social relationships are sadly lacking. He reports being without friends and has no one with whom he can do the things he once enjoyed; he does not do enjoyable things alone, either. He does not care for the people with whom he currently interacts and will not seek out people like them in the future (about which he is pessimistic). He feels that he does not understand others, but nonetheless, has little respect for them. He feels vulnerable. This student is self-exiled.

The second student feels misunderstood and ignored by other students and wishes he could blend in with them. By blending in, he feels he could be more accepted. His current situation is uncomfortable and he would change it if he could. This is not how it was in the past when he was younger; but now, things are very different from the way they were then. This student is “at sea.”

Relations of These Descriptions with Use of the Student-Support Office

Students reported using the student-support office daily (4%) to not at all (65% — the modal response). The average response was once or twice a semester.

Correlating the reliable factors with use of the student-support office produced two statistically significant and one suggestive relation: a negative correlation with *Self-Directed* ($r(53) = -.298, p = .030$); a positive correlation with *Adrift* ($r(56) = .443, p = .001$); and, a negative correlation with *Emigrated* ($r(56) = -.224, p = .098$). The more students feel self-directed and that they have left their culture-of-origin behind, the less they use the office. The more adrift students feel, the more they use the office.

Self-reported GPA was negatively correlated with use of the student-support office ($r(55) = -.404, p = .002$). A reasonable interpretation of this correlation is that students performing poorly use the office more. Students felt that their grades reflected their ability if they were more *Comfortable/Naturally Embedded* ($r(51) = .341, p = .014$) and if they were more *Self-Directed* ($r(53) = .312, p = .023$). In contrast, the more students felt *Adrift*, the less they felt their grades reflected their ability ($r(56) = -.366, p = .005$). Female students reported being more *Frustrated* than male students ($r(51) = 2.87, p = .006$); there were no gender differences on any of the other factors.

Discussion

These American Indian/Alaska Native students described themselves in both diverse and holistic ways: displaced and lost; comfortably and naturally embedded; sick, pessimistic, and lonely; purposeful; self-directed; invisible; optimistic; or instrumental. Reports on their experiences ranged from confused to self-directed, and emigrated to culturally connected. Based on the pattern of intercorrelations among these descriptions, two types of students emerged: one, sick, lonely, and alienated; the other, adrift. Importantly, scores for these grouped factors ranged from high to low, indicating that some students, for example, felt sick, lonely, and displaced, while others (with low scores) did not feel that way at all.

This diversity is comparable to Garrod and Larimore's (1997) individualized stories of American Indian/Alaska Native college students on a single college campus. These students had extraordinarily different experiences, including prejudicial exchanges among themselves (Carey, 1997). We found comparable results with other ethnic minority students. Asian/Pacific Islander and Latino students described themselves in diverse and holistic ways, too, ranging from confused to self-directed, and emigrated to culturally connected (Yang et al., 2002; Yang et al., 2006). Some of these students, too, felt the sting of prejudicial comments from their peers.

The diverse and holistic reactions of students are consistent with the contention that the university campus is a culture with its own norms and customs (Barzun, 1968; Getman, 1992; Readings, 1996). The campus is more than a place where students go to classes. The campus is a community, and to become bonafide members of the campus community, students need to enculturate. This is consistent with Tinto's assertions (1975, 1993, 2000) that social integration is as important as academic integration for students. Ethnic minority students could face especially substantial acculturative challenges for three reasons: First, they are notably distinctive from majority students; second, some of their culturally defined virtues could conflict with majoritarian virtues (e.g., St. Germaine, 1995; Tierney, 1991); and third, the implicit extant model of acculturation could be unidimensional and assimilative rather than bi-dimensional (Oetting & Beauvais, 1990).

In the case of American Indian/Alaska Native students, even the usefulness of the bi-cultural model of adaptation (Oetting & Beauvais, 1990) remains uncertain. Oetting and Beauvais' model permits cultures to be orthogonal, that is, independent of and uncorrelated with each other; thus, American Indian/Alaska Native students should be able to easily adapt to university culture. But, some American Indian/Alaska Native virtues could be in direct conflict (i.e., negatively correlated) with the majoritarian virtues of university campuses (Tierney, 1991): For example, in American Indian/Alaska Native cultures, an emphasis on cooperation and group recognition could directly conflict with the valuation of individual competitiveness and public recognition for personal achievement (Byers, Yang, & Forward, 2000). To accommodate this, Oetting and Beauvais' model would need to depict cultures that were negatively correlated (i.e., non-orthogonal).

Tierney's critique (1992) of the university community is more substantial. He describes Tinto's research as embedded in conventional culture and unaware of the vulnerabilities revealed by critical deconstructive analyses. These analyses show that American Indian/Alaska Native students need empowerment, not integration (Wright & Tierney, 1991). Integration aligns with institutional indifference, ironically preceded by official encouragement (Tierney, 1992). Extending beyond Tinto, Tierney observes that "...if college is an integrative ritual, it is a dysfunctional ritual for American Indian students" (Tierney, 1992, p. 112). From Tierney's perspective, our finding that students feel displaced and

lost on campus (i.e., BHN survey, first factor) needs to be placed in the broader institutional context of the university campus which first welcomes and then ignores them. In that broader context, students are not so much “lost” as they are displaced. Furthermore, by welcoming and then ignoring them, these communities actually facilitate these students’ sense of displacement. Our findings suggest that American Indian/Alaska Native students feel both aspects—being welcomed and ignored—and react to the dissonance of it.

Implications for Practice

American Indian/Alaska Native students who felt less self-directed and more adrift visited the office more frequently. Students’ reporting lower GPAs used the office more. Clearly, the office provides students with help.

Students who visited the office less were those who felt that they had departed their culture-of-origin. And, among the two worrisome types of students emerging from the analyses—one in poor health, alienated, and self-exiled, the other adrift and “at sea” because he feels ignored and departed from his valuable past—neither reported using the student-support office. Both of these students could surely benefit from the services provided by the office. The office clearly provides assistance to some students, but does not reach these two, who do not avail themselves of it. Why is the office not reaching more students, especially those who feel alienated and “at sea?”

A combination of two phenomena could explain it. Tierney (1992) suggests that American Indian/Alaska Native students are both welcomed and ignored when they come to campus. This paradoxical encounter could combine with the cultural conflict American Indian/Alaska Natives discover there: the opposition between their familial values (e.g., contributing to collective pride and not seeking personal aggrandizement) and campus values (e.g., public recognition through individual competition) (Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003; St. Germaine, 1995). The combined effect of this confrontation could be to dismantle these students into two groups: one, relating appropriately to the student-support office; the other, in the process of rejecting holistically all that the university has to offer. The first group is comprised of students who use the office if they have low grades, and those who do not use the office because they feel self-directed (i.e., they have acculturated to the campus); this is what we found. The other group does not use the office in spite of their needs. Their separation is holistic because they view the university as a cultural entity. These students are the two types of students we described: one, in poor health and alienated; the other, ignored, but wanting to blend in (but, not with other American Indian/Alaska Native students). Although these are distinctive students in that they react differently to the confrontation, they share a perspicacious assessment of the university’s reaction to them. But, they do not cope effectively with it. This combination of phenomena—the paradoxical welcome and conflict of virtues—could overwhelm some students because they are unable to reconcile these differences.

Reaching these two types of students could require special strategies. The alienated student who is in poor health seems at imminent risk for departure from campus. Actively recruiting this student could be more appropriate than waiting to respond to a request for help; the request might not come. The recruitment of the student who feels ignored could be more complicated. He wants to blend in, but not with other American Indian/Alaska Native students; thus, he is unlikely to use the office. This student apparently uses the unidimensional assimilative model of acculturation to view the university community. He has accepted the university's demand that he abandon his cultural origins and embrace the predominant stereotype of the university student. Furthermore, he is not cognizant of a bicultural model of acculturation. He should be approached on "his terms," that is, in a way that is appreciative of his *immediate* concerns and will, therefore, probably not reject.

We found this type of student in another analysis of Asian and Pacific Islander students and suggested that these students are approachable outside the context of an ethnic identity (Yang et al., 2002). That is, the initial contact should be on a student-to-student basis, not from a representative of the student-support office. Challenges affecting all students could be the initial topics, for example, course-work (e.g., specific classes, selecting a major), interaction with faculty, or on- or off-campus life generally. The frustrations (e.g., feeling ignored) that we found in this student would probably emerge, and at that time, solutions not yet explored could be broached. One potential solution could include meeting other students who have faced the same frustration. These could include American Indian/Alaska Native students who are comfortable with a bicultural model of adaptation.

Among ethnic minority students are diverse types. The two types of American Indian/Alaska Native students found in this study seem to need different approaches when assistance is offered. To our knowledge, other researchers have not found this to be the case. Thus, our recommendation, if implemented, must be closely monitored. We suggest that this type of diverse approach to students be accompanied by periodic assessment: students should be periodically asked, "How are you doing?" Their responses should shape ensuing support. The value of this periodic reassessment is that it could measure the effectiveness of a bicultural model of coping that is applicable to more than American Indian/Alaska Native students.

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