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Native American Student Participation in Study Abroad: An Exploratory Case Study

Stephen P. Wanger, Robin Starr Minthorn, Kathryn A. Weinland, Boomer Appleman, Michael James, and Allen Arnold

Research indicates that the benefits of study abroad are varied and significant. Altbach and Knight find that participation in study abroad fosters international learning.¹ Students involved in study abroad, according to Douglas and Jones-Rikkens, report positive impacts on the development of both their intercultural skills and their general cognitive development.² Durrant and Dorius find that study abroad contributes to the selection of diverse academic pathways by students and, as a result, to a growing number of students pursuing international careers.³

Not surprisingly, American colleges and universities are increasingly implementing and promoting study abroad programs to better prepare students for work in a global environment.⁴ Although growing, the percentage of students participating in study abroad remains relatively low throughout American higher education.⁵ Low participation rates are particularly true for minority students and for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.⁶

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This study explores participation in study abroad among one underrepresented group, Native American students. Conducted at the Stillwater campus of Oklahoma State University during the 2009–2010 academic year, the study assesses Native American student participation, institutional policies and practices that serve either as barriers to or facilitations of participation, and potential initiatives the university could use to increase Native participation. The location of the study, Oklahoma State University, is a midwestern research university with a high Native American population representing numerous and diverse tribes; it ranks as the top American university producing the most Native American graduates with bachelor's degrees.⁷ The purpose of this study, therefore, is to begin to explore the interrelationships between Native American student participation in study abroad and institutional factors that either facilitate or impede Native American participation. Other than inclusion in annual demographic data reported by the Institute of International Education, we are not aware of studies that are specifically dedicated to the topic of Native American student participation in study abroad. Accordingly, we believe that this exploratory case study represents inaugural research on the topic.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following review examines both participation in study abroad and research on Native American students in higher education. The review begins by assessing study abroad participation among American and international students, and by exploring issues associated with minority student participation. The review then considers factors that impact Native American student engagement with and academic achievement in higher education.

Participation in Study Abroad

Enrollment in study abroad courses offered by American colleges and universities increased in recent years. The Institute of International Education reports that during the 1998–1999 academic year, 129,770 students from the United States studied abroad.⁸ Six years later (2004–2005), the number rose to 205,983, and by the 2007–2008 academic year, the number stood at 262,461. The number of Americans studying abroad, however, is significantly less than the number of foreign students studying in the United States. Although 205,983 American students studied abroad during the 2004–2005 academic year, 564,766 foreign students attended American colleges and universities.⁹ Additionally, although foreign students typically enrolled in programs that spanned an academic year, the average stay abroad for American students was

eight weeks. These numbers indicate that foreign students studying in the United States are likely gaining a more extensive international experience than the smaller number of American students who study abroad and do so for shorter periods of time.

Although study abroad enrollment is growing, the percentage of American students participating in study abroad remains low. The 262,461 American students who studied abroad during the 2007–2008 academic year represent less than 2% of the 18,248,000 enrolled in American degree-granting institutions.¹⁰ In addition, when student demographics within the data are analyzed, significant disparities in participation become apparent. For example, during the 2007–2008 academic year, Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaskan Native students respectively represented 13.1%, 11.4%, 6.7%, and 1% of total enrollments.¹¹ However, among students participating in study abroad during 2007–2008, they accounted only for 4.0%, 5.9%, 6.6%, and 0.5%, respectively.¹² Additional Institute of International Education and National Center for Education Statistics data indicate that the participation gap between minority students (members of the groups named above) and majority students (persons who identify themselves as white) actually widened between 1995 and 2005, the same decade in which overall participation rates grew.¹³ In 1995, minority participants in study abroad comprised 15.6% of all students. By 2005, the percentage increased slightly to 17%. However, the percentage of minority students among all students enrolled in postsecondary education rose from 25.3% in 1995 to 30.9% in 2005. Minority students were thus increasingly underrepresented in the rates of American students participating in study abroad.

These percentages reflect longstanding disparities in study abroad participation, many of which are beyond the scope of this study. Despite ongoing efforts to expand and equalize participation across student demographics, consistent disparities exist across gender, ethnicity, and academic majors.¹⁴ For example, female students studying abroad traditionally outnumber their male counterparts by a ratio of nearly two to one.¹⁵ For the purposes of this study, it is noteworthy that minority students are historically underrepresented among study abroad participants.¹⁶

Interestingly, research indicates that majority students list many of the same apprehensions about study abroad as do minority students, including concern over the availability of finances, fear about experiencing racism while abroad, general apprehension about leaving the country, and the inability to speak another language.¹⁷ Goldstein and Kim, however, find that race is not a significant predictor of participation in study abroad; other factors may be in play.¹⁸

Native American Students in Higher Education

In recent decades researchers identified numerous factors that may impact Native students in American higher education. This enabled mainstream institutions and practitioners to begin to understand the unique values and cultures that Native American students bring with them to campus, considerations that ultimately impact Native engagement with and success in higher education.¹⁹ Colleges and universities—perhaps especially those that are predominantly composed of majority students—typically model the values and cultural norms that are reflected in the world beyond academia. Tierney finds that this fosters success for some students while inhibiting success for others.²⁰ For Native students, differences in values and cultural norms contribute to difficulties within the academy.²¹ These differences may heighten perceived inequalities in the treatment of Native American students in higher education, and even lead to subtle attempts by faculty and staff to help students who identify with their own cultural perspectives while ignoring students who do not.²² In fact, the perceived lack of support by non-Native American faculty and staff to provide opportunities for interaction and mentorship is shown to impact negatively Native student success.²³

Another factor that may impact the success of Native American students in higher education at predominantly majority institutions is the underrepresentation of Native American students in retention theories and student development models, many of which do not address the specific and unique needs of Native American students.²⁴ Theoretical frameworks that address retention issues faced by Native students are beginning to emerge, and in time these may contribute to greater success among Native students.²⁵ Interestingly, however, some researchers are concerned that when these theoretical frameworks are implemented in curricula and classroom settings, significant differences between majority and Native values may lead to increased hostility toward Native American students.²⁶

To be sure, differing cultural and societal values, norms, and identities between Native American and non-Native American students may impede Native American student success in higher education. These obstacles may contribute to diminished Native American participation in campus programs, including study abroad.²⁷ *Mitakuye Oyasin*, a Lakota phrase that means “we are all related,” effectively captures a critical aspect of tribal education. The phrase reflects the understanding that “our lives are truly and profoundly connected to other people and the physical world.”²⁸ In other words, Native American culture is particularly and deeply connected to human relationships and to a meaningful relationship to place. Consequently, building relationships with other students, staff, and faculty, as well as with the campus itself, is essential for Native American students to feel accepted, welcomed, and engaged.

To go even further, the need for empowerment seems necessary for Native student success in higher education. To Mihesuah and Wilson, empowerment within mainstream higher education represents the promotion of an inclusive environment by both acknowledging underrepresented student populations and by taking steps toward familiarizing the academy with the important role that family plays in Native students' lives.²⁹ Here, the concept of family may include the extended biological family, connections to local tribal communities, the necessity for support networks on campus, mentorship by Native American faculty and staff, acknowledgment of the often unique financial needs of Native American students, assessment of the academic preparation of each student, and, if necessary, personalized assistance toward achievement of equal academic footing with fellow classmates.³⁰

As mainstream higher education institutions increasingly recognize the needs of various student populations, the inclusion of the voice and needs of Native American students is essential. Incorporating broad definitions of families, empowering students, facilitating relationships with people and place, building Native retention theories and student development models, and recognizing the culture and values that each student brings to campus are important factors associated with enhancing Native student success in higher education.³¹ Attention to these factors by colleges and universities may result in greater participation in programs and opportunities, including study abroad, by Native American students.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employs social capital theory to focus the research questions, methodology, and analysis of the findings. Social capital theory states that the social contexts of students guide their educational choices, including study abroad. Bourdieu and Passeron list beliefs, attitudes, aspirations, perceptions, and values as constructs of the home and school environments of students; each is derived from the class status and individual cultural contexts of the parents.³² The home and school settings of students thus help to create their social contexts.³³ In other words, a student's decision about educational choices, including study abroad, is influenced by a host of non-controllable variables, many of which are firmly in place before the student sets foot on a college campus. The context guides how the student perceives and takes action on educational opportunities while in college. This accordingly impacts not only access to information, resources and support, but also participation in social networks.³⁴ The decision whether to study abroad, for example, is influenced on both conscious and unconscious levels by pre-college forces from the student's

family, friends, and peers, and these pre-college forces are often reinforced by the student's peers and mentors within the university setting.

For this study we assume that the social contexts of Native American students differ from the social contexts of non-Native American students. Like the theoretical framework, this assumption guides the study. The research design of the study accordingly includes information about Native American students' families and communities because, as attested above, the literature demonstrates their relevance. Likewise, information is included regarding influences within the university setting because students' decisions and actions may be affected by their interactions with other students, faculty, and staff. Including information on these sources of influence will help to clarify their roles in a range of social and cultural influences on student decisions and actions. We further assume that using appropriate strategies, Native American social contexts and preconceived ideas about study abroad programs can be positively influenced, such that Native American students are more likely to participate in study abroad. Ultimately, we assume that, independent of ethnicity or background, participation in study abroad is a positive action in the life of a student, and that participation in an international experience such as study abroad can significantly improve the quality of a student's educational experience.

METHOD

This is an exploratory case study that draws on survey data for a specific sample of Native American students. The intent is to gain a greater understanding of the range of experiences and views of Native American students, including those who have participated in study abroad and those who have not.

The study was designed and conducted within the confines of a single semester by doctoral students, under the supervision of the lead author, in a course on institutional research. During the semester students explored the research problem, conducted an extensive review of the literature, designed the study, submitted an Institutional Review Board protocol and subsequently received permission for the study, pilot tested the survey instrument, collected the data, analyzed the data, and prepared a written report.

Site

The study was conducted during the spring 2010 semester on the main campus of Oklahoma State University (OSU), located in Stillwater, Oklahoma. OSU–Stillwater is a land-grant research university that enrolls students from across

Oklahoma, the United States, and the globe. At the time of the study there were 20,285 students enrolled, of which 1,786 (8.8%) were international.

Participants

A similar percentage comprised the sample from which participants were drawn for the study. A total of 1,776 Native American students were enrolled at OSU–Stillwater, representing 8.8% of the total. Of these, 198 students completed the survey that is described below, yielding an 11.2% response rate. The respondents included 119 female students and 79 male students, a ratio that corresponds well with recent national and institutional gender distributions for study abroad. As tables 1 and 2 indicate, participants closely paralleled the Native American student population on campus.

Procedure

Two research questions guided the study:

1. What factors, as perceived by Native American students at Oklahoma State University–Stillwater, either impede or enhance participation in study abroad?
2. What policies, if any, may be implemented at Oklahoma State University–Stillwater to enhance the participation of Native American students in study abroad?

The Dillman Tailored Design Method for survey implementation was utilized for the study.³⁵ All Native American students enrolled at OSU–Stillwater were sent a pre-notice e-mail that notified them of the purpose of the study, the timeline for the administration of the survey, and the contact information for the primary investigator and the campus research office. One week later they received an e-mailed request to participate in the survey, an informed consent document that described the voluntary nature of the survey, and a link to the web-based survey instrument (Appendix A). A reminder e-mail was sent seven days after the initial distribution of the survey. An on-campus office that is trusted and heavily used by Native students agreed to support the research study by facilitating e-mail correspondence, and all e-mails were sent by the OSU Inclusion Center for Academic Excellence. However, due to the time limitations associated with the single-semester course, the researchers departed from the Dillman Tailored Design Method in that they contacted prospective participants only twice with embedded links to the web-based survey. This factor—and additional factors considered in the discussion—likely restricted the participation rate.

Participants completed a 24-question survey that employed Likert-scale, multiple response, and open-ended questions. Open-ended questions asked

students to identify perceived barriers to study abroad experiences for Native American students, and to identify ways that the university could help increase participation in study abroad opportunities. Closely modeled after Kasravi's instrument that examined barriers to study abroad for minority students, the survey was pilot-tested to address validity and reliability.³⁶ Conducting the study within a single semester—from design to analysis—negated the possibility of follow-up interviews or focus groups with participants.

Analysis was conducted in three manners: (1) descriptive statistical analysis of Likert-scale questions using the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 16, (2) coding of open-ended questions to determine themes, and (3) analysis of emergent themes. Triangulation of the data was facilitated through the use of multiple investigators, multiple data analysis procedures, and both Likert-scale and open-ended questions.

FINDINGS

Tables 1 and 2 present comparisons of two variables: tribal affiliation and class standing. Both tables also compare the tribal affiliations of the survey respondents to the Native student population at OSU–Stillwater. The descriptive findings reveal that students affiliated with the Choctaw, Creek, and Chickasaw tribes responded to the survey in greater proportions than students affiliated with the Cherokee or other smaller tribes. Similarly, greater proportions of freshmen, sophomore, and junior students participated than did seniors or graduate students.

Native students enrolled in every college of the university participated. Among the respondents 60.1% were female and 39.9% were male. In addition, 41.4% of the respondents identified their primary residence as rural, 31.8% as suburban, 21.7% as urban, 2.0% as reservation, and 1.0% as tribal community; 2.1% did not specify their primary residence. Similar to data for majority students, participants reported that they pay for college in a variety of ways and that they typically use more than one method of payment. Findings associated with how students pay for college are reported in table 3.

TABLE 1
TRIBAL AFFILIATION

Tribe	Survey Respondents	OSU Native Population
Cherokee	34.3%	37.8%
Choctaw	15.2%	12.9%
Creek	10.6%	8.7%
Chickasaw	9.6%	5.6%
Additional tribes	30.3%	35.0%

TABLE 2
CLASS STANDING

Class	Survey Respondents	OSU Native Population
Freshman	13.6%	12.3%
Sophomore	17.7%	16.4%
Junior	25.3%	24.0%
Senior	23.2%	30.1%
Graduate	20.2%	17.2%

TABLE 3
METHODS OF PAYING FOR COLLEGE

Method	Percentages
Scholarships	20.4%
Work	15.7%
Family support	14.0%
Private grants (i.e., tribal grants/scholarships)	13.5%
Federal loans	12.9%
Personal funds	10.7%
Federal and state grants (i.e. Pell grants, OTAG)	9.7%
Private loans	3.1%

Respondents indicated that studying abroad is beneficial. The perceived values associated with studying abroad generally reflect the literature, with the primary values reported by the respondents being: (1) learning about another culture, (2) enhancing professional growth in a globalized world, (3) becoming more marketable to future employers, (4) increasing independence, (5) learning or improving a foreign language, (6) making friends from other countries, and (7) strengthening critical thinking skills. Table 4 presents these findings.

TABLE 4
PERCEIVED EFFICACY OF STUDY ABROAD

Benefit	Percentages
Learning about another culture	15.1%
Enhancing professional growth	13.5%
Becoming more marketable to future employers	12.7%
Increasing independence	11.9%
Learning or improving a foreign language	10.9%
Making friends from other countries	10.7%
Strengthening critical thinking skills	10.4%

Responses to the open-ended question, “What do you believe is the value of study abroad for Native American students?” closely aligned with the multiple-choice question regarding the perceived efficacy of study abroad. Learning about other cultures was the most frequently cited value. However, students also connected learning about other cultures with learning about their own culture. One student stated that “The value of entering another culture helps you to understand your own,” while another said that the value for Native American students is “to learn about different cultures as well as our own.”

The second most frequently cited value in the open-ended question was enhancing professional growth, again similar to the multiple-choice question. A student offered, “I believe that it looks great on your resume [*sic*] and the experience as a whole will better you for the world in the future.” Another stated, “A study abroad program would definitely improve foreign language skills and would be a plus for employers because of the multi-cultural experience.” One student noted, “Aside from how attractive it makes an individual’s resume [*sic*], a study abroad experience would allow Native American students the opportunity to visit destinations that their parents didn’t or don’t have the possibility of enjoying. I believe it is of great value. It expands your knowledge of other cultures as well as expanding your independence as a person.”

The findings indicate that similar to majority students, Native American students strongly desire to participate in study abroad but encounter multiple barriers to participation. Six key barriers to participation emerged, corresponding well with existing literature. These findings are presented in table 5.

TABLE 5
PRIMARY FACTORS THAT PREVENT NATIVE AMERICAN
STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN STUDY ABROAD

Factor	Percentages
Program costs	22.2%
Restrictions on the use of financial aid	15.6%
Poor fit between study abroad and student's academic program	11.2%
Family obligations	9.4%
Study abroad may delay graduation	8.7%
Lack of foreign language knowledge	8.2%

Like students nationally, the respondents to our survey indicated that obstacles associated with finances prevent them from studying abroad. Responding to an open-ended question, a student stated that the best way to increase Native American student involvement in study abroad programs is by “providing more financial support.” This was echoed throughout the open-ended responses, as reflected in statements such as “Provide them with more money to cover expenses,” “more funding for the trips,” and a host of similar comments.

However, responses to the open-ended question related to barriers to participation revealed that Native American students face a particular convergence of barriers. The confluence is the result of personal, family, tribal, and institutional aspects of life, with the most significant obstacle being family constraints. One student noted, “I have a three-year-old daughter and study abroad doesn't pay for family members like that.” Another student wrote, “I am an older student and I have a husband and children at home and a mother who depends on me.” These statements are indicative of many comments that spoke of family and tribal expectations that impede the possibility of studying abroad. Interestingly, when viewed not as a constraint but as a positive influence for study abroad, the most frequently cited response among multiple factors was “parents.”

Included within the consideration of influences for study abroad was a series of five questions that asked respondents with whom they would feel comfortable talking about study abroad opportunities. The categories queried were academic advisers, study abroad advisers, professors, family members, and tribal members. The respondents indicated that they would feel most comfortable talking with family members. A total of 80.8% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they would feel comfortable talking with family about opportunities associated with study abroad. For academic advisers, professors, study abroad advisers, and tribal members, the percentages of respondents who either agreed or strongly agreed were 68.7%, 60.1%, 58.1%, and 55.6%, respectively.

A subsequent question asked respondents who would influence their decision to participate in study abroad. Optional responses included academic adviser, Native American adviser, professor, study abroad office, parents, siblings, tribal community members, and friends. Table 6 presents these findings.

TABLE 6
PEOPLE INFLUENCING THE DECISION TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY ABROAD

Influence	Percentages
Academic adviser	18.5%
Parents	18.4%
Friends	15.2%
Professor	14.7%
Study abroad office	10.3%
Native American adviser	8.8%
Siblings	7.8%
Tribal community members	6.2%

The findings also indicate that tribal and institutional considerations are important. A recommendation that arose repeatedly focused on ways to include tribal participation in study abroad programs. Potential avenues for this included: (1) establishing an institutional partnership with tribal organizations that would not only emphasize better understandings of tribal roles and perspectives, but also focus on funding, promoting, and marketing study abroad opportunities; and (2) seeking ways to enable a Native American liaison or Native American faculty member to travel with students on study abroad trips.

Respondents indicated that the university could best increase Native American student participation in study abroad by: (1) increasing funding for study abroad; (2) better understanding Native perspectives; and (3) promoting study abroad at Native American events on campus through a variety of media.

Finally, 61.1% of the respondents indicated that they had traveled outside the United States, and 38.9% stated they had not. Just 6.1% of the respondents reported that their international travel was associated with a study abroad course at OSU.

DISCUSSION

Overall, the findings reveal an interesting snapshot of Native American student participation in study abroad. Native students agree with majority students that study abroad is beneficial and, like majority students, face barriers to participation that often are associated with finances. For Native students, however, a convergence of barriers exists that highlights the need not only for greater institutional understanding of Native perspectives, but also for institutional promotion of study abroad that incorporates these perspectives. We expand on these considerations in the following paragraphs.

That the respondents view study abroad as efficacious is not surprising. With 61.1% having traveled internationally, this perspective should be expected. It appears, in fact, that students holding this perspective self-selected and disproportionately participated in the survey. We suspect that self-selection based on previous international travel restricted the participation rate. Although the reality that most respondents had traveled abroad does not correspond with the general Native student population, skews the data, and certainly impacts interpretation, we believe that the impact is positive for multiple reasons. First, the fact that the majority of respondents had traveled abroad better enabled them to speak to specific values of study abroad. This is particularly beneficial for an exploratory study such as this one. Second, this type of self-selection highlights the strength and the importance of Native connections to people and place; simply stated, Native students without prior connections to the people and places associated with study abroad are not likely to participate in a study that assesses their perceptions. This is a critical consideration and likely negatively impacted the response rate. And third, these considerations underscore the need for empowerment and the strengthening of Native student voices in higher education.

The voices heard in this exploratory case study emphasize the strong role that family and community play in Native student participation in study abroad. Nearly 81% of the respondents indicated that they would feel

comfortable talking about study abroad with their families. Juxtaposed to the 60% who stated that they would feel comfortable talking with their professors about study abroad, and the 58% who would be comfortable exploring the topic with study abroad advisers, this is an important finding: Native students value the perspectives of their families regarding important educational considerations. This is echoed in the findings presented in table 6, in which 56% of the respondents cumulatively stated that members of their social networks (parents, friends, Native advisers, siblings, tribal members) influence their decisions regarding study abroad. These findings suggest that, in comparison to official institutional representatives, the families, communities, and members of Native students' social networks shape their decisions to participate in study abroad. Conversely, as will be discussed, these social networks present unique barriers to participation. These dual considerations accordingly impact the relationships between universities in general, study abroad offices in particular, and Native American students. Subsequent paragraphs will address these relationships further.

We find it noteworthy that respondents not only said that study abroad is valuable for learning about other cultures, but that they frequently wrote that it is beneficial for learning about one's own culture. Social capital theory may illuminate this finding. According to the theory, a multitude of non-controllable variables that are formed prior to college influence a student's perception and response to educational opportunities; the emphasis here is on the word "perception." These variables are formed in the student's home and school environments and include constructs such as values, attitudes, and aspirations.³⁷ Thus, a student raised in an environment that encourages greater understanding of one's culture may perceive study abroad as an opportunity not only to learn about another culture, but also to better understand their own culture. If this motivation is in play it may be important for how institutions promote study abroad to Native students, which we examine later.

A corollary to this perspective emerged in the findings as a theme and should be noted. Numerous students expressed the opinion that study abroad is beneficial for helping people from other cultures to understand Native cultures. Students communicated this in a variety of ways, but one student was particularly expressive. He wrote, "Most people that I have met overseas are under the impression that all Native Americans are tee-pee dwelling horse whisperers that sit around smoking out of pipes all day. Study abroad should be used as an outlet not only for us as students to learn but also as 'myth buster,' if you will."

This study identified multiple barriers that impede Native student participation in study abroad. The two most formidable barriers—program cost, stipulated by 22.2% of the respondents, and restrictions on the use of financial

aid, listed by 15.6%—are clearly related to finance. Together, these obstacles indicate that financial considerations may prevent nearly four out of ten Native students from studying abroad, although financial barriers are not unique to Native students. A recent study found that students eligible for family-based financial aid are less likely to participate in study abroad.³⁸ However, at nearly 40%, we suspect that finances erect an inordinate barrier for Native students. The complete lack of research in this area accordingly warrants attention.

Social capital theory may be an important tool for understanding nuances associated with this finding. Literature indicates that students make decisions regarding educational choices based on their financial and social backgrounds.³⁹ Home and school environments, including economic background, impact student choices.⁴⁰ Not surprising then, financial considerations potentially linked to social capital may impact Native student participation in study abroad. As an exploratory study, explication of this prospective connection is beyond the scope of our research. However, we hope that subsequent research will explore potential relationships.

The convergence of barriers to study abroad for Native students appears to be particularly arduous. Limited financial resources, access to information that is impacted by social constructs, the frequent lack of support from family and tribal communities, and added family and tribal responsibilities deter participation in study abroad for Native students. The need to provide for family members was a dominant theme in the findings. In open-ended responses, students noted that this obligation inhibited their ability to participate in study abroad. Similarly, for many Native students, tribal expectations may impede study abroad. Financial limitations and family responsibilities are not unique to Native students, but the particular convergence of barriers to study abroad may be.

This study highlights the need to promote study abroad to Native American students in ways that will reach them, will be culturally relevant, and will address their questions about participation. Students identified the lack of promotion as a barrier to study abroad. This emergent theme reveals that students believe they do not receive sufficient access to requisite information and resources. Respondents also identified the lack of access to social networks, which could provide the information and guidance they need, as an impediment to study abroad.

Again, social capital theory is relevant to these findings. The theory suggests that promotion of study abroad among Native students is most effective if it reinforces tribal and cultural values. This underscores the need for study abroad offices to be familiar with Native populations on campus and to build relationships with potential new social networks. These may be achieved in a variety of ways, including collaboration with Native American student affairs

professionals, Native student organizations, and higher education offices of the tribal nations represented among the students. At a minimum, study abroad offices should carefully consider the importance of family and community to Native students.

The impetus for this study was the realization that although Native American students comprise 8.8% of student enrollments at the Stillwater campus of OSU—one of the highest percentages among American universities—no institutional data were available regarding Native student participation in study abroad. This lack of institutional data both illustrates the frequent disconnect between Native students and the universities they attend, and underscores the need for additional research, not only at OSU but also among other American colleges and universities that serve Native students.

LIMITATIONS

Exploratory research by nature represents substantive limitations. The paucity of literature alone constrains exploratory research. Framed as an exploratory case study, this study resides within these parameters. The study was conducted at a single university among one student population within a specific time-frame. All of these considerations accordingly indicate that generalizability of the findings is not possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this exploratory study suggest that further examination of Native American student involvement in study abroad programs, as well as the potential impediments to participation, is necessary. Although we do not want to overemphasize the distinctions, we believe that additional inquiry is needed both as academic research and as institutional research: the former to broaden and deepen the line of inquiry, and the latter to focus on dynamics, implications, and potential mitigations within specific institutions and types of institutions. The exploratory nature of this study sways us to offer general rather than highly focused recommendations.

First, this study shows that Native student participation in study abroad is influenced by Native culture. Multiple considerations comprise this reality, including the desire among students to learn about their own culture by exploring international cultures, the motivation to help others learn about Native cultures, and a host of factors associated with social capital theory. These considerations warrant extensive inquiry beyond the design and scope of this study. Further research should seek to gain a deeper understanding of

Native American values, needs, and perspectives as they relate to and potentially influence the decision to study abroad. In particular, better understanding the roles and values associated with families and tribes would likely produce significant illumination. We especially encourage research along this line of inquiry. Such research should accordingly be conducted through the lens of tribal and familial relationships.

Second, subsequent qualitative and quantitative studies should expand the inquiry into the financial barriers that impede participation. As attested in this study, however, additional research should not be limited to traditional conceptions of financial barriers, but should explore how financial barriers comingle with other realities to create obstacles that are unique to Native American students.

Third, future research should assess the quality and quantity of institutional marketing of study abroad to Native American students. Professional marketers understand that repeated promotion to targeted audiences develops interest and engagement. Within American higher education, however, the marketing of study abroad likely is neither culturally sensitive nor culturally effective among Native student populations. In terms of practice, therefore, the promotion of study abroad to Native students should include family and tribal considerations; conceiving study abroad as a decision that encompasses immediate and extended family, as well as tribal members, will likely increase Native student participation and warrants further exploration.

And fourth, we encourage researchers at other institutions to conduct similar studies. The rapidly expanding global environment in which we all live, and the increasing promotion of study abroad as a tool to better prepare students for full citizenship in this reality, highlight the need for the inclusion of all students in the educational process. By examining Native student participation in study abroad and the potential barriers that impede participation, this exploratory case study lays part of the initial foundation for this line of inquiry and hopefully contributes to broader conceptualizations of inclusion within higher education.

NOTES

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Appendix A

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Definition: For the purpose of this survey, *study abroad* is defined as any activity conducted outside the United States for which a student will receive academic credit.

1. Have you previously traveled to another country?

No _____ Yes _____

If “Yes,” was it part of a study abroad program at OSU?

No _____ Yes _____

2. Do you know of a family member, tribal member, or friend who has studied abroad?

No _____ Yes _____

3. Information about study abroad programs is readily available to OSU students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

4. The variety of study abroad programs offered through OSU is good.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

5. OSU offers good sources of funding for students who want to study abroad.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

6. OSU encourages international experiences for Native American students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

7. I feel comfortable talking to my academic advisers about study abroad opportunities.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

8. I feel comfortable talking to the Study Abroad advisers about study abroad opportunities.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

9. I feel comfortable talking to my professors about study abroad opportunities.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

10. I feel comfortable talking to family about study abroad opportunities.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

11. I feel comfortable talking to tribal members about study abroad opportunities.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

12. I believe that participating in a study abroad program would help me to:
(please check all that apply)

- a. Fulfill elective requirements _____
- b. Fulfill major requirements _____
- c. Learn/improve a foreign language _____
- d. Make friends from other countries _____
- e. Learn about another culture _____
- f. Increase my critical thinking skills _____
- g. Make me more marketable to future employers _____
- h. Help me professionally in a globalized world _____
- i. Increase my independence _____
- j. Other _____

13. How have you heard about study abroad programs at OSU? (please check all that apply)

- a. Academic adviser _____
- b. Study Abroad advisor _____
- c. Professor _____
- d. Former participant _____
- e. Family member _____
- f. Tribal member _____
- g. Email _____
- h. Flyer _____
- i. Study abroad website _____
- j. Study abroad catalog _____
- k. Classroom Presentation _____
- l. This is the first I have heard of Study Abroad _____

14. The following people would influence my decision to participate in study abroad: (please check all that apply)

- a. Academic adviser _____
- b. Native American adviser _____
- c. Professor _____
- d. Study Abroad office _____
- e. Parents _____
- f. Siblings _____
- g. Tribal community members _____
- h. Friends _____

15. The following factors might prevent me from participating in study abroad: (please check all that apply)

- a. Program cost _____
- b. Study abroad courses might not fit my academic program _____
- c. Lack of foreign language knowledge _____
- d. Family obligations _____

- e. Study abroad might delay my graduation _____
- f. Not wanting to be away from home _____
- g. Fear of traveling to a new country _____
- h. Fear of racism in other countries _____
- i. Fear of safety in other countries _____
- j. Fear of getting low grades while abroad _____
- k. Passport requirements _____
- l. Restrictions on financial aid for study abroad _____
- m. Time of year _____
- n. Other _____

16. What is the best way(s) that OSU can help Native American students to participate in study abroad?

17. What do you believe is the value of study abroad for Native American students?

18. What is your gender?
Female _____ Male _____

19. What is your current year in college?
- a. Freshman _____
 - b. Sophomore _____
 - c. Junior _____
 - d. Senior _____
 - e. Graduate Student _____

20. What is your college of enrollment at OSU?
- a. Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources _____
 - b. Arts & Sciences _____
 - c. Spears School of Business _____
 - d. Education _____

- e. Engineering, Architecture and Technology _____
- f. Human Environmental Sciences _____
- g. Center for Veterinary Health Sciences _____
- h. Graduate College _____
- i. Center for Health Sciences _____

21. What is your tribal enrollment?

22. What best describes your home community?

- a. Urban _____
- b. Suburban _____
- c. Rural _____
- d. Reservation _____
- e. Tribal Community _____

23. How do you currently pay for college? (please check all that apply)

- a. Scholarships _____
- b. Federal and state grants (i.e., Pell grants, OTAG) _____
- c. Federal loans _____
- d. Private grants (i.e., tribal grants/scholarships) _____
- e. Private loans _____
- f. Family support _____
- g. Personal funds _____
- h. Work _____

Thank you for taking this survey. Your time is much appreciated and your opinions are very important!

