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Native American Students, Campus Racial Climate, and Resistance at Borderland University

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Education

By

Eddy A. Ruiz

2014

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Native American Students, Campus Racial Climate, and Resistance at Borderland University

By

Eddy A. Ruiz

Doctorate of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Professor Richard L. Wagoner, Chair

Native American campus climate studies remain scant despite the breadth and depth obtained regarding other racial groups. This two-year, critical ethnographic campus climate study, informed by critical social science, reinserted tribal peoples into the higher education discourse by including the sociohistorical forces, tribal sovereignty, and agency. The study focused on institutional culture, Indigenous students' campus perceptions and agency. The research findings suggest that the campus climate was highly conducive to racism perpetuated and sustained at all levels of the Institutional hierarchy. This campus atmosphere influenced the ways in which Native students perceived the campus racial climate, as well as their ideas of American education. Native students employed combat strategies and employed agency to survive, to protect their interests, and to claim respect for their needs and problems at Borderland University.

The dissertation of Eddy A. Ruiz is approved.

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University of California, Los Angeles

2014

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Chapter I

Introduction

My study and work are influenced by culture, environment, and experiences. I am of Mexican descent and a U.S. citizen; Chicano. Mayan ancestry flows through my veins, Mexico is not my place of birth. The United States is where my mother gave birth to me, but the dominant society is not home. I view myself as living on the border of my ancestral roots and mainstream society—Indigenous, colonized, and colonizer—being neither from here nor from there. As Bruce-Nova (1990) noted, Chicanos live in the space between the Mexican-American hyphen.

I knew as a child that my culture, ethnicity, race, and heritage were precious, but I never fully understood the struggles and impediments my family faced. My maternal great-grandmother and grandmother had labored in the fields of Southern California; my great-grandmother's life was taken by those very fields. My great-grandfather and grandfather both served in the armed forces and constantly fought their inner demons regarding abuse and alcoholism. My grandmother was functionally illiterate, and she and Grandfather would never complete their secondary education. My maternal family, Mother and many of her siblings, never completed high school and attained only manual jobs, thus gaining little financial security. Survival was the essential element of our lives.

My paternal side is less well known. At the age of five, my mother, younger brother, unborn sister, and I were abandoned. My exposure to the dominant culture's acculturation process came to an abrupt end. The Flores—Mexican and Mayan—family became my normative. The Ruiz family, from south of the border, would build upon that foundation after

my mother remarried. Therefore, my cultural, ethnic, and racial identity resides along my maternal side.

The family goals set for me as a child were to graduate from high school, to marry and have children, and to work hard. When it came to education, completing high school was an honor that too few had achieved, and no small feat to accomplish. Therefore, college was not part of our family vernacular. Postsecondary education was an abstract concept, mythical like the fountain of youth, unattainable. How could education be pursued when no map or guide existed?

In both middle school and high school, my institutions were predominantly white. African American and Asian American students could be counted on one hand; Latino/as numbered no more than two dozen. In total, we accounted for less than one percent of the student population. Even fewer minority teachers and personnel were to be found. The students of color had few if any school advocates. Our parents had minimal education and were unaware of how the “learning” enterprise worked; they never asked questions, and trusted the school’s administration and teachers to make the correct decisions regarding their children.

My education process was similar to my Latino and black peers. I was placed in the back of the room, my coursework was chosen for me, I never enrolled in or knew of advance placement or honors courses, and I visited an academic counselor once over a three-year span—my fourth year was spent at an alternative high school. School was prescribed and it did not seek to nurture or develop me. My grades slipped. I became a below average student. Neither my parents nor I were ever pulled aside and asked if there was a need for academic assistance. Despite my parents’ push for above average grades, school became a social activity, as only my close peers—mainly students of color—appeared to appreciate my presence on campus.

During my junior year, I received my driver's license and a vehicle to escape a foreign and hostile school. I began to write letters to the school excusing my own absences and signing them with my own name. The school never once questioned me or called my parents to inform them that their son was routinely skipping school. It was as if the institution condoned, or at least expected, my blatant behavior. During my senior year, things got progressively worse as we moved nine hours away into another unwelcoming, predominantly white public school, which did not alter academic behavior or perception, which landed me in an alternative, home study high school, which humored me every other week with a packet of work, complete with the answers to the problems on the back of the handouts. The undesirables—largely of color—were pushed through the education system and allowed to graduate from high school.

A high school diploma was “achieved,” and it satisfied a familial goal as did getting married and attaining employment. At 19 years of age, I had reached the goals set before me. Family, culture, and hard physical labor were my reality. My wife slowly began taking community college courses with the goal of obtaining a degree and to earn raises. Neither of our families had walked that path. One evening, she returned from class and asked me to enroll in a few classes, rather than watch television during the evening hours. At least we would have each other. I agreed and enrolled in a course despite deep reservations and scant academic abilities.

All I could recall on campus during the placement exam and first day of class was my previous high school experiences, which led me to question if college was a place for minorities. During the first semester, my persistence was extremely questionable after a professor blatantly lied to me and treated me as a second-class citizen. Academic advisors treated me no better as they prescribed certificates and degrees leading to manual labor. However, I refused to give up for some strange reason. Perhaps it was my wife's academic success and support, my anger and

resentment at being mistreated, my family's strong work ethic and heritage, or a combination of factors that drove me to resist and not live up to the majority's expectations.

College would become a tool to assist and blaze a new road for my family. The idea lacked context, but perhaps it could establish a novel example for my siblings, cousins, and my future children. If progress was to be made, it had to be based on my spouse's and my work rather than on an inequitable education system. We would direct our own academic footsteps; research every academic move and course taken, and leave our jobs to pursue an unknown future.

When my wife's childcare position was ending, we had a choice of balancing work and attending college part-time or risking it all and attending community college full-time. The words of my coworkers replayed in the back of my mind, "You don't want to do this for the rest of your life." I made the choice to attend college full-time even though no long-term plan was established. We moved in with family and lived in a ten-by-ten room for nearly two years, subsisted on unemployment, and lost our vehicles; it was an all or nothing proposition, and we had to make sense of it and make it work.

We enrolled in a new community college at one of their satellite locations. The El Dorado Center was small, approximately 2,000 students. We learned the college vernacular—UC, CSU, BOGW, and IGETC—and began to thrive in a small close-knit community college environment. The community college became my third chance and replaced my high school and first community college mis-education experiences, paving the path to continued postsecondary schooling because the staff and faculty knew us, we knew them. We excelled, giving me enough confidence in my abilities to tutor other students and work as an instructor's assistant. Furthermore, for the first time, an instructor took an interest in me. Professor Olts, an

anthropologist, appreciated my culture and experiential knowledge and began to help me navigate through the education and transfer process. In addition, he exposed me to global Indigenous cultures and a University of California at Los Angeles' Professor, Peter Nabokov, who contributed directly to my research interest—tribal communities and colonialism—transfer institution, and graduate studies.

The University of California at Berkeley became my new hope and new home. California is unlike any other campus, a political and educational environment brimming with intellect, debate, and protest. You never accept what you are told; you interrogate and question authority. It was both an intimidating and fascinating world for me. It was not for the faint of heart, and academic adjustment had to be swift and precise. Unlike my standard community college class—one book and two short papers—Berkeley history majors had on average a course reader, textbook, approximately a dozen monographs, two five-page papers, twenty-page research paper, and an essay midterm and final per course. A California course was equivalent to one semester at the community college. The workload was immense. It was a stark reality, but I knew where I belonged, and learned more during that two-year span than during my entire previous education. Courses that focused on culture, colonialism, and oppression captivated my attention and to know that resistance and change was possible drove my ambitions; I felt empowered for the first time in my life and my cultural being was awakened.

The University of Oklahoma's doctoral program in History was my next move. According to my history professor at UCLA, attending a Native American stalwart program was important if I wanted to make a difference in this world. My academic achievements were above average in graduate school, but it was the wrong choice. I served as a graduate senator, chair, and budget liaison and focused on diversity issues, which never gained much traction with my

graduate senators across campus. Social justice was not a campus priority. I was not challenged academically, there was no social agenda, and few minority graduate peers existed. Therefore, I stepped out of my doctoral program after completing my master's degree. Institutional reputations do not always live up to their expectations.

I knew that my education had to be more than a financial reward. UC Berkeley's mantra of challenging authority for the social good constantly replayed in the back of my mind, which had a direct influence on my career choices—California Work Opportunity & Responsibility to Kids, (Welfare-to-Work), Student Support Services (TRIO), Director of Student Success & Innovative Education (Native American), and Director of Multicultural Affairs (Students of Color)—in higher education. Serving students who came from underrepresented and underprivileged backgrounds provided me with satisfaction. My culture also became pivotal in interpreting my worldview and understanding the multiple barriers that had and continued to exist based on my race and ethnicity. My education, professional experience, and cultural sense of being were a powerful combination that helped me to aid disenfranchised students, many of whom had received below-standard services and support during their own educational experiences.

I knew if there was a chance to have a larger impact in society I needed to be obtained a doctorate, as the individuals who influenced institutional culture resided in the upper echelon and held advanced degrees. Choosing a doctorate school would need to be intentional and focused on empowering marginalized groups. My choices would require me to reflect on my identity, education, and future.

Personal reflection led me to realize that my Mexican heritage is a blend of the invader and invaded. Our Indigenous peoples and lands were invaded, stolen, and colonized. My

Spanish-Mexican roots imply we are colonizers who laid claim to traditional lands that were not ours, established missions to force conversion, and imposed chattel labor on Indigenous populations—some of which were our own ancestors. My American birth implies that we struggle against a dominant society even though the lands we reside on were once ours. My cultural identity existed within this complex and fluid continuum; between worlds. However, my community was full of assets. We held a unique and broad array of knowledge, skills, and abilities that allowed us to survive oppression and racism. This knowledge had to be an invaluable college resource as it could contest inequitable educational practices and discourses, acknowledge contradictions, and empower underrepresented students.

My University of California at Berkeley and University of Oklahoma education background had investigated genocide, slavery, warfare, colonialism, and education. I was more aware of colonial power and its effects on Indigenous groups. Indian Country has felt the effects of colonialism in distinct and various ways. Invasion was not a one-time event that came and went. Lives were lost, communities erased, lands stolen; the effects remain visible both on and off the reservation—including within my own Mayan communities. The past and present may differ, but previous and contemporary memories, events, and socioeconomic factors continued to depress tribal sovereignty, culture, education, and socioeconomic outcomes (Deschenie, 2006; Whitebeck, Adams, Hoyt, and Xiaojin, 2004). For me, the experiences of historically oppressed peoples had to be acknowledged, challenged, and transformed. The University of California at Los Angeles became my doctoral program of choice based on my background and the examination of Indigenous college students as my future research focus.

In 2009, Borderland University, my study site, was selected from a purposeful choice to apply for and accept a university administration position. It was a multi-directional approach

with regard to my personal, academic, and professional growth. Furthermore, and more importantly, it provided an opportunity for me to conduct my research and work with tribal communities and their students. Borderland University's newly created position was responsible for the stewardship of the Frontier Project, which was to,

Develop, implement, maintain and assess a comprehensive plan for undergraduate retention and success with particular responsibility for Native American students. This position [would] provide consultation and advice to academic and student affairs departments in their efforts to improve student satisfaction and retention. [And I would] report to the senior leadership and the coordinators/project leaders of university retention grants (Frontier Project, 2009, p. 60).

Leading a program "focused" on tribal students and institutional transformation brought me into direct and daily contact with students, staff, faculty, administrators, funders, and community members, which placed my work and me in the research narrative.

The time spent in the field collecting data and the duration spent in the academy recording findings was inseparable. As an educational critical ethnographer, my field and academy were within the Ivory Tower. I immersed myself in the cultures of campus and surrounding tribal communities. I developed strong relationships with multiple stakeholders, which provided a progressive historical and contemporary understanding of cultural relations. As the principal administrator and developer of a grant program, tribal cultural center, campus and community partnerships, and student retention and programming, I gained a favorable opportunity to observe, question, listen, and collect invaluable information regarding the campus culture and climate experienced by Native American students as we experience things in unique

ways. However, my time was not undivided. Office work and fieldwork were, at times, variously separate and interlaced. And neither environment for me—a person of color—was without issues. It was a racial war zone and a constant battle for the tribal students and me. Hence, my research and work were embedded, each influencing the other.

At times racial battle fatigue set in (Smith, 2004), but my research study and students sustained me, I drew inspiration from my background, previous research, employment, engagement with tribal communities and members, and a commitment to the moral principles of human freedom. As a Chicano—Mexican, Indigenous, and American—researcher, I was determined to assume a critical approach in the examination of the persistent colonial structure of domination, a consequence of historic conditions, which have developed differential sociopolitical, economic, and educational conditions for tribal members and peoples of color. My focus concentrated on exposing hidden messages, assumptions, and patterns. The analytical process was to unmask inequities in processes and phenomena, and provide tools to advance educational environments and outcomes for Native Americans. As Madison (2005) notes,

Critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain. By “ethical responsibility,” I mean a compelling sense of duty and commitment based on moral principles of human freedom and well-being, and hence a compassion for the suffering of all living beings.... Critical ethnography also takes us beneath surface appearances, disrupts the status quo, and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control.... [The researcher probes] possibilities that will challenge institutions, regimes of knowledge, and social practices that limit

choices, constrain meaning, and denigrate identities and communities. They make accessible...the voices and experiences of subjects whose stories are otherwise restrained and out of reach. This means the critical ethnographer contributes to emancipator knowledge and discourses of social justice (p. 5).

Knowledge, freedom, and social justice were and remain intended goals not of my own imagination, but rather in support of Native sovereignty and self-determination.

My personalized critical approach required constant vigilance. As Anderson (1989) noted, critical ethnographers need to integrate and systematize reflections, which involves a dialectical process among (a) the researcher's constructs, (b) the informants' commonsense constructs, (c) the research data, (d) the researcher's ideological biases, and (e) the structural and historical forces that informed the social construction under study (p. 254-255). Personally, this implied that my positionality and understandings required constant evaluation of biases at every study level (Davis, 1999; Nightingale & Cromby, 1999). In addition, I needed to consider how studying and representing people and situations were acts of domination because my own education, research, and administrative role represented a level of power and inborn bias (Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004). Furthermore, I acknowledged that complete "neutrality" was implausible (Novick, 1988). Therefore, "objectivity" was replaced by involvement, as knowledge is not transcendental, but situated, negotiated, and part of an ongoing process (Narayan, 1983).

In conclusion, I continue to learn how higher education works, how to make a difference for American Indians through my studies, and how a doctorate can influence people in power to transform systems of oppression. I also hope that an example has been established for my family with regard to higher education as my siblings now speak of their children going to college. Although higher education was never planned, the pedagogies of the home, familial support,

hard work, determination, pride, and culture have contributed to my success when others said that I would fail (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Yosso, 2005). I know communities of color are the faces at the bottom of the well looking up, but hope still exists (Bell, 1992)!

Research Introduction

Many Native Americans are urged to study in hostile educational environments because people unfamiliar with their cultural values and heritages impose their own rules and worldviews on them. The United States present-day mainstream education system is often conceived as a progressive institution with the aim of liberalizing and democratizing society and redressing previous injustices (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Bowen, 1977; Rosovsky, 1990; Gutmann, 1999). However, schools continue to reproduce stratified workforces, self-images, social classes and positions (Bowles & Gintis, 2011). Students of color continue to experience hostile racial educational climates (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1999; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005). For American Indian students, unwelcoming learning environments have deep and pervasive roots; they are a microcosm of past and present experiences. Historical influences affect all levels of education for tribal peoples (Deyhle & Swisher, 1997; Rains, Archibald, & Deyhle, 2000), including mainstream higher education institutions whose missions were to explicitly support and educate tribal peoples (Perry, 2002).

These hostile campus events and environments need to be explored in relation to tribal college students from both a historical and contemporary perspective. As Horse Capture (1993) notes, the mainstream education system remains “the colonizer’s primary weapon in a war of cultural genocide” (p. xiii). Mihesuah (2004) emphasized this point further, stating, “Native students who were forced to attend federal boarding schools suffered through their experiences,” which contributed to modern disengagement with university studies. Most do not face the physical oppression of previous generations, but they still confront ideological oppression. American Indian college students who are immersed in mainstream environments face stereotypic beliefs of the dominant culture, insensitive teachers and peers, stressful campus life,

and forced assimilation (p. 192). Given the historical precedence, we need to understand to what degree colonial legacies persist in postsecondary institutions, how they influence the campus culture and perceived environment, and how tribal students resist campus oppression.

These topics are addressed in my examination of Borderland University, a predominantly white, four-year rural college, residing in relative close proximity to several tribal communities. Through a critical ethnography, which employed critical social science theory, the research represents one of the first examinations of Native American students attending a small, mainstream, rural, nondenominational New England institution. The inquiry was one of the few attempts to create a non-essentialist perspective of Indian Country by focusing on a specific group of tribal students. Moreover, my study captured a mostly forgotten socio-historical structure—colonialism— and its effects on a mainstream University's Indigenous undergraduates.

Purpose of the Study

According to Hurtado et al., (1999), the campus racial climate framework loosely guides this study's examination of campus culture, colonialism, American Indian student experiences, perceptions, and resistance efforts. Primary attention is often given to five factors that are viewed as internal and within the control of an institution: compositional diversity; psychological climate; behavioral climate; an institution's history and legacy of inclusion or exclusion; and structural diversity (Milem et al., 2005). It is a convergence of histories and traditions, programs and curriculum, values and standards (Clark, 1972; Hurtado, Carter, & Kardia, 1998). This campus context influences participant attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, and expectations

regarding race and significantly affects student development, college experiences, and success (Hurtado et al., 1999; Owens, 1998).

Two external forces, government policy and social historic contexts, are acknowledged as having an influence on postsecondary institutions and their members in relation to the racial climate, yet viewed beyond a college's control (Hurtado et al., 1999). Higher education is not immune to external forces, so social views both inside and outside the Academy contribute to the institution's culture, influencing individual and group experiences (Hurtado, 1992; Peterson & Spencer, 1990). However, social and historical structures and context are virtually ignored in an effort to resist change and maintain the status quo (Hurtado et al., 1999). As James (2004) explained,

Academic faculties and staff bring to higher education implicit cultural and class values, norms, social identities, and social status.... The structures and procedures of higher education flow from, build on, and reinforce the values, norms, identities and status systems of the mainstream majority... [Those] largely operate nonverbally, in a mental background (p. 50).¹

Despite the campus racial climate framework's limitations, our knowledge of institutional forces has provided a means to understand environmental influences.

Campus Racial Climate Studies

A majority of student campus climate studies exhibits three primary outcomes: (1) perceptions differ along racial categories; (2) minorities contend with prejudicial treatment and

¹ This argument can be extended to majoritarian students who are enculturated into and are part of the dominant culture.

racist environments; and (3) cross-racial interactions are beneficial for all students (Harper & Hurtado, 2007).² However, these studies are largely empirical and quantitative, and Native Americans' views are usually under-represented in them.

Perceptions Differ along Racial/Ethnic Categories. Majority and minority students who attend the same institution often report distinct campus racial climate viewpoints. Rankin and Reason's (2005) multi-site study found that white peers and students of color perceived and experienced college campuses differently. Minority students observed and experienced pervasive racial discrimination and viewed the institutional environment as unfavorable. They also believed proactive interventions could improve the campus climate. Conversely, majority students believed gender harassment was a primary concern with regard to the campus environment. White students were also less in favor of campus diversity initiatives. Diver-Stamnes and LoMascolo's (2001) research of rural college students reported persistent racial differences. White respondents were generally satisfied with the campus' climate and curriculum, and perceived no discrimination in contrast to students of color who voiced dissatisfaction with the diversity curriculum as well as feeling a greater sense of discrimination and prejudice than the white students on campus (Hurtado, 1992; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Hughes, Anderson, Cannon, Perez, & Moore, 1998; Biasco, Goodwin, & Vitale, 2001; Chang, 2003; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003).

Campus' racial climate satisfaction differences may be attributed to pre-college backgrounds and privilege. College students enter an institution with different levels of exposure to diversity. Students of color tend to have greater exposure to diverse groups, a predisposition

² Only student experiences are presented as empirical campus climate studies focused on American Indian college faculty or staff members remain virtually absent in the literature.

to interact with multicultural communities, and an awareness of racial tensions (Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, & Oseguera, 2008). White students largely arrive from homogenous communities having limited exposure to minorities (Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; Radloff & Evans, 2003), which is an outcome related to elevated levels of residential segregation (Orfield, Bachmeier, James, & Eitle, 1997; Orfield & Lee, 2006). Pre-college predispositions tend to accentuate future interaction patterns (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Sáenz, 2005). Furthermore, student characteristics at predominantly white institutions can have a pronounced influence in a racially privileged space as a lack of awareness or denial of white privilege mediates the relationship between race and campus climate. Therefore, colorblind attitudes tend to allow majority students to perceive the campus climate more positively, leading them to easily ignore or dismiss the “benefits and barriers associated with race” (Rankin & Reason, 2005. p.55; Worthington, Navarro, Loewy, & Hart, 2008).

Minorities Contend with Prejudicial Treatment & Racist Environments. Students of color are often confronted with the dual burden of successful transition to college and navigation of contentious campus environments (Rendón, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000; Torres, 2003). Research demonstrates that minority students face stereotyping and alienation on mainstream campuses (Cabrera & Nora, 1994; Gloria & Ho, 2003; Taylor, 2000). Many mainstream colleges and universities reflect and reproduce social inequalities and contradictory interests. Institutions that seek equal access and excellence often fear admitting too many minority students who may be underprepared and are thus conceived as eroding a college’s academic quality and reputation (Chang, 2000; Astin 1995). Prestige and the collection of assets—human and financial capital—take precedence, under which educational opportunities and talent development become tertiary objectives (Astin, 1993a, 1995). This institutional prioritizing limits access, reproduces

inequality, and fails to move beyond historical exclusion, thus increasing tension, reinforcing stereotypes, and marginalizing students of color (Fraser & Kick, 2000; Hurtado et al., 1998, 1999). This legacy heightens campus tensions and reinforces white privilege and minority stereotypes, pushing students of color to the academic margins of postsecondary education.

Underrepresented minority enrollment to predominantly white institutions can create a countervailing force when majority power and privilege is perceived to be threatened. To preserve the status quo, students of color are questioned regarding their intellectual talents and abilities (Davis, Dias-Bowie, Greenberg, Klukken, Pollio, Thomas, & Thompson, 2004). White perceptions regarding racial inferiority increase rates of anxiety and depression among minority students fearing conformity to negative stereotypes about them (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Steele, 1997). These stereotype threats are not limited to one time events (e.g., exams), as opponents to diversity initiatives continually contest affirmative action, minority scholarships, and racial/ethnic academic and student programs as lowering academic standards (D'Souza, 1995; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997; Connerly, 2000; Steele, 2007).

Students of color consistently encounter overt pejorative perceptions and subtle microaggressions that accumulate over time (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007; Sue, 2010). These majoritarian racial assumptions can be internalized by minority students, depressing their sense of belonging hindering their academic success, and creating long-term negative consequences (Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007; Bynum, Burton, & Best, 2007).

Predominantly white institutions' perceptions and behaviors can be intensified when there is a lack of compositional diversity, when making students conform to acceptable norms at

the expense of their racial heritage, or when urging them to speak on behalf of their entire community, which creates unnecessary pressure on them. Minority students carry the dual burden of learning the college curriculum and disproving racist misconceptions (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001). Majoritarian racial pressures to conform and answer majority demands isolate minority students, causing them to be viewed as unwelcome guests in someone else's home, thereby confining them to ethnic enclaves and cultural spaces when in need of support (Tatum, 2003; Sidanius, Van Laar, Levin, & Sinclair, 2004; Levin, Van Laar, & Foote, 2006; Turner, 1994).

Cross-Racial Interactions are Beneficial for All Students. A lack of student diversity can lead to continued tokenism, stereotyping, and oppression. However, increasing racial diversity and consistent and meaningful diverse student interactions both inside and outside of the classroom are vital (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004). A racially diverse student body enhances opportunities for students to socialize with and discuss relevant issues across racial lines, creating a better understanding of similarities and differences (Chang, 1999). Thus, institutional environments influence cross-racial opportunities and interactions, which can alter institutional structures of oppression, historical exclusion, and hostile attitudes and behaviors (Hurtado et al, 1999; Smith, Gerbick, Figueroa, Watkins, Levitan, Moore, Merchant, Beliak, & Figueroa, 1997; Pike & Kuh, 2006). Moreover, multiracial classes increase educational opportunities by presenting minority opinions, increasing students' satisfaction rates, and increasing the integrative complexity of education (Antonio, Chang, Hakuta, Kenney, Levin, & Milem, 2004; Maruyama, Moreno, Gudeman, & Mann, 2000).

Gurin's (1999) expert testimony exhibits that students of color and majoritarian peers learn better in a racially diverse classroom and they are better prepared to become active citizens

in the American pluralistic, democratic society once they leave college because they exhibit greater cognitive development and cultural awareness (Antonio, 2001b; Bowen, Bok, & Shulman, 1998; Hurtado, 2001; Levin, Van Laar, & Sidanius, 2003). A diverse classroom accompanied by purposeful cross-racial interactions leads to positive cognitive, psychosocial, and interpersonal educational gains, race relations, and democratic outcomes.

Research Rational

Native American campus racial climate studies, both at two- and four-year institutions, remain scant. Indigenous students are often marginalized by the studies cited above because they are considered only as a racial and/or ethnic minority group, an artificial community of color characterized simply as an American Indian (e.g., Rankin & Reason, 2005; Diver-Stammes & LoMascolo, 2001). Over 566 federally recognized Native American and Alaska Native tribes exist, a total that does not include state-acknowledged and unrecognized communities (Department of the Interior, 2012, 2011).³ Therefore, Native Americans cannot be reduced to a solitary group as political status and race intersect (Deloria & Lytle, 1984; Cook-Lynn, 2001; Horse, 2005).

Qualitative research allows for the examination of distinct tribal student campus experiences. Ungar (2003) noted that this method aids in the discovery of unnamed processes because it studies a specific phenomenon in context and provides a thick description of that

³ A tribe is a community or communities that occupy a common territory, share a political ideology, and are related by kinship, traditions, and language (Wilkins, 2002). A tribe or nation can cross national boundaries. Federally recognized tribes include both American Indians and Alaska Natives (Department of the Interior, 2008).

setting to strengthen trustworthiness. This research approach adds power to minority voices through unique local definitions and examination of resistance, thereby avoiding generalization in favor of transferability (p. 86). Unlike dominant quantitative campus racial climate studies (Harper & Hurtado, 2007), critical methods and theory can provide a discrete forum by bringing participant voices and experiential knowledge to the forefront and breaking free from quantitative methods and determinist theory (Rist, 1980).⁴

Native American experience that affects or multiple forces and structures on campus, so incorporating colonialism and racism perspectives into the present research framework can provide researchers with a deeper understanding of how American Indian students experience institutional environments (Hurtado et al., 1998, 1999; Milem et al., 2005).⁵ Native American college students who come from reservations, trust lands, or nearby locations possess unique pre-college dispositions and cross-racial interaction patterns from having lived within government-controlled radicalized spaces that can influence campus climate experiences (Fore, 1997;

⁴ American Indian quantitative climate studies are limited because they comprise only 1 percent of college students and 0.5 percent of full-time faculty and form a unique segment of society (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004).

⁵ Milem, Chang, and Antonio (2005) note, external forces shaping campus racial climate include governmental policy, programs, and initiatives as well as sociohistorical forces (e.g., financial aid policies and programs, state and federal policies regarding affirmative action, court decisions related to the desegregation of higher education). Sociohistorical forces influence the ways in which people view or experience racial diversity and serve as stimuli for discussions or other activities that occur on campus (p. 14-15). These are broad and recent sociohistorical manifestations that influence all students. However, historical legacies of inclusion or exclusion are rarely considered and often ignored, let alone with regard to tribal peoples.

Huffman, 2003; HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003).⁶ Native American values are often in conflict with mainstream citizenship, the American dream, and dominant social views, so Native Americans are often reluctant to integrate in the society, and the resulting resistance is often manifested in their modes of existence within the United States' educational system as an institution of social and cultural reproduction (Wilkins, 2002; Champagne, 2005).

Research Questions

Multiple campus racial climate studies exist and have provided us with knowledge that is both broad and deep. However, this critical ethnographic campus climate study is focused on an area that remained ambiguous, sought to remove the inquiry off the academic reservation, and reinserted tribal peoples into the higher education discourse by including the sociohistorical forces, tribal sovereignty, and agency, which in the academy remain largely silent. This study, informed by critical social science, aimed at the examination of Borderland University's culture and Indigenous students' campus climate perceptions by focusing on two research questions: How did Ash-Birch students perceive campus climate?⁷ And how did Ash-Birch students employ agency to resist campus climate oppression? Undergirding these questions were potential colonial tethers that may have existed.

⁶ Native Americans do not always come from racially diverse communities. American Indians and Alaskan Natives living on reservations or trust lands account for a third of the population. Furthermore, many reside in close proximity to their tribes. Unlike other racial/ethnic minority groups, these tribal communities are often located in rural areas separated from metropolitan centers (Noris, Vine, & Hoeffel, 2012).

⁷ Ash-Birch is a pseudonym.

Organization of the Study

My study is organized in the following order. Chapter II, Literature Review & Theory, consists of four sections: (1) Indian Country examined sovereignty, socioeconomic factors, and education outcomes; (2) Campus Climate assesses American Indian experiences at mainstream colleges and universities; and (3) Theory Position & Framework, presented a historically centered argument that links colonialism and education, and offers an elastic framework focused on critical social science theory. Chapter III, Method, includes three segments: (1) Critical Ethnographic Case Study offers a rationale for blending two inquiry methods; (2) Data Collection details institutional and local tribal community backgrounds, participant selection and information collection centered on documents, observations, and interviews; and (3) Analysis discusses analytical steps taken to synthesize, triangulate, and interpret findings. Chapter IV, Research Findings, provides a local analytical narrative that addresses the study's stated research questions. Chapter V, Conclusion, revisits study findings and attempts to generalize and infer findings beyond one institution, and challenge, support, and/or develop theory.

Chapter II

Literature Review

This chapter accomplishes three goals. First, Indian Country provides the reader with an opportunity to become familiar with unique characteristics and socioeconomic and education obstacles specific to tribal peoples. Second, American Indian campus racial climate studies conducted at mainstream colleges and universities are reviewed. Last, a theoretical position based upon historical precedence and critical social science theory is presented.

Indian Country

Native America is a rich cultural and linguistic collection, and its members encompass distinct political and racial entities (Champagne, 1999). It is through this prism that one begins to understand the cultural, social, and educational realities of American Indian students. “Indian Country” is a legal term that describes tribal reservations, communities, and trust lands; a collective or individual community right to self-government or sovereignty (Deloria & Lytle, 1994). Indian Country denotes a broader expression of any cultural area (e.g., home, urban center, reservation). Though the perspective of the mainstream U.S. society unifies Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latino/as into a homogeneous group of racial minorities, such a view inhibits intra-cultural and intra-community diversity, and diminishes the rights of Native Indians in the USA (Grande, 2004; Pelto & Pelto, 1975).

Sovereignty. Sovereignty is an inherent aspect of nationhood. Tribal sovereignty is a legal right established through colonial and post-revolutionary treaties, which acknowledged government-to-government relations and the right to self-government, self-determination, and

self-education (Wilkins & Lomawaima, 2001; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002, 2006). Native Americans maintain a distinct position because they possess pre-constitutional and constitutional status having existed as political bodies prior to the foundation of the United States and the Constitution. Consequently, federally recognized tribes are acknowledged as a third power alongside the states and federal government (Winstead, Lawrence, Brantmeier, & Frey, 2008). American Indian sovereignty does not refer to a single political group, but rather to 566 distinct tribes (Department of the Interior, 2012) Therefore, Native Americans are unique and distinct from other communities of color.

American Indians also maintain dual citizenship with their tribal communities and the United States because of the *Indian Citizenship Act* (1924). Therefore, Native Americans maintain both civil and tribal rights (Deloria & Lytle, 1984). As Wilkins (2002) noted, tribal sovereignty is,

the intangible and dynamic cultural force inherent in a given Indigenous community, empowering that body toward the sustaining and enhancement of political, economic and cultural integrity. It undergirds the way tribal governments relate to their own citizens, to non-Indian residents, to the corporate world, and to the global community (p. 339).

Many Native Americans identify first and foremost with their ancestral communities, viewing themselves as “part of long-standing communities or nations with rights to self-government, land, and resources” regardless of urban, federal trust, or reservation location (Champaign, 2005, p. 22). Grande (2004) further emphasizes that “Indigenous peoples have not, like other marginalized groups, been fighting for inclusion in the democratic imaginary, but rather for the right to remain distinct, sovereign, and tribal peoples” (p. 98).

Native Americans are sovereign peoples whose primary citizenship and identity resides with their tribes. The United States government is legally obliged to support federally recognized tribal governments through “special” services and benefits that do not extend to non-federally recognized and non-Indian groups, including Indian Health Service, Bureau of Indian Education, Native American Housing Program, Cultural and Fossil Resources, and Tribal Consultation (Peroff, 1997; Wilkins, 2002). Nevertheless, this support of tribal nationhood does not reflect deep commitment to sovereignty.

Native Sovereignty is also a contradictory term as it is subject to federal trust doctrine and plenary power (Fredericks, 1999; Winstead et al., 2008). First, the 1886 United States Supreme Court case, *United States v. Kagama*, 118 U.S. 375, ruled that Congress had the right to legislate tribes as they saw fit because they were considered wards of the State. Second, the 1903 United States Supreme Court case, *Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock*, 187 U.S. 375, ruled that Congress possessed plenary power, the authority to arbitrarily and unilaterally abrogate any treaty (Lomawaima, 2000). The *Indian Reorganization Act of 1934* usurped traditional Indigenous governments, replacing them with federally designated and maintained tribal councils who sign off on federal reservation development programs, feigning native consent, while exploiting natural resources (Churchill, 1997). The *Indian Civil Rights Act* of 1968 required Indian tribal governments to adopt elements of the United States Constitution and Bill of Rights, and aligned Indigenous jurisprudence with the U.S. legal system. Hence, these legislative changes in the status of Native Americans in the U.S. legal system show that the relationships of this ethnic group with the mainstream society have always been complex and unequal.

Demography. The United States’ Native American population equals 5.2 million (1.7 percent of the American population), with 2.9 million or 49 percent claiming American Indian or

Alaska Native descent only (Norris, Vines, & Hoeffel, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau News, 2013).⁸ The Native American totals include both 566 federal and 100 state-recognized tribal governments and those who self-identify (Department of the Interior, 2011, 2012). A majority live in 10 states; California and Oklahoma had the greatest shares of individuals who identified as American Indian and Alaska Native by race—mono or biracial (Norris, Vines, & Hoeffel, 2012). Most Indian/Alaska Natives reside outside of federal and reservations, trust lands, and statistical areas (78%); 30.7 percent of those who self-identify with a tribe only are located in tribal areas compared to 7.3 percent of those with a mixed identity (Norris, Vines, & Hoeffel, 2012).⁹ The Iroquois, Creek, Blackfeet, Apache, Sioux, Chippewa, Choctaw, Mexican American Indian, Navajo, and Cherokee, who constitute the largest sovereign groups, number from 81,002 to 819,105 tribal members (Norris, Vines, & Hoeffel, 2012). Approximately 175 distinct Native American languages are spoken in the United States (Office of Minority Health, 2008; Krauss, 1998)¹⁰ with 20.4 percent of those five years of age or older speaking a language other than English in comparison to the United States' general population of 21 percent (U.S. Census Bureau News, 2013). Although American Indians may constitute the smallest social segment,

⁸ United States Census (2002b; 2013) data is based on self-identification. It does not imply that individuals who self-identify as American Indian are tribal citizens.

⁹ A total of 41 percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives live in the West, with the majority living in ten states: California, Oklahoma, Arizona, Texas, New York, New Mexico, Washington, North Carolina, Florida, and Michigan (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013).

¹⁰ According to Krauss (1998), 175 of the 300 plus Native languages that existed at the time of European contact are still spoken today. Of these languages, 155 or 89 percent are moribund. By 2060, it is estimated that 90 percent of Native American languages will be lost as elder language keepers pass on.

they comprise a large percentage of the nation's languages and cultures with each community, exhibiting incredible differences (Deloria, 1988).

Native Americans have similar characteristics regarding their socioeconomic status, with average American household incomes reaching \$51,371 or \$16,061 greater than that of Native Americans. Average Indigenous salaries are also significantly below the general population (U.S. Census Bureau News, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006; U.S. Census Bureau, 2004a). Primary Native American employment was in manual and labor-intensive industries. Prior to the Great Recession (2007-2009) and after, reservation unemployment rates averaged 49 percent with a high of up to 80 percent depending on the location (Federal Interagency Reentry Council, 2011).¹¹ Furthermore, the U.S. Census News Brief (2013), noted, "29.1% "percent of single-race American Indians and Alaska Natives were in poverty in 2012, the highest rate of any race group. For the nation as a whole, the poverty rate was 15.9 percent" indicating severe racial inequities.

Native American health conditions often resemble those of developing countries (Churchill, 1997). Quality of life issues create a sense of disempowerment and can have a direct influence on the health and vibrancy of many tribal communities as they inhabit the bottom of virtually every socioeconomic scale (Rosser, 2005). American Indian communities encounter an array of other socioeconomic and political realities. Indian Health Services funding has remained inadequate for decades, with 27.4 percent of Native Americans being uninsured, nearly twice the rate of all other corresponding racial groups at 14.8 percent (U.S. Census Bureau News, 2013; DeNavas, Proctor, Smith, & U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). Limited healthcare access is correlated with the long-term consequences of poor diet in federal schools subsidized by government

¹¹ During the Great Depression (1933) national unemployment rates reached 25 percent for all groups.

programs, and in conjunction with the loss of traditional lifestyles (Wilson, 2004). Furthermore, some reservations lack the necessities many of us are accustomed to, such as running water, electricity, paved roads, and public facilities (Raajpoot, 2000).

Indigenous youth comprise the youngest segment of American society. American Indians 65 and older account for only 8.3 percent of their peoples. Native American median age is 31 years old in contrast to the United States' median of 37.4 years of age (U.S. Census News, 2013). The U.S. Census Bureau, (2006) noted, 33 percent were under the age of 18 in comparison to 26 percent of the total population. This youthful generation has or will soon reach the formative college years, which means that this generation has the potential to change socioeconomic and political obstacles and to ensure sovereignty.

Education. Socioeconomic, sovereignty, and other factors face may create barriers related to educational struggle at all academic levels. American Indians accounted for the lowest number of “gifted” students at .87 percent and highest percentage (12%) of “disabled” users (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005b).¹² The K-12 system over the past three decades has contributed to the demise of tribal culture. Only 30 years ago, a majority of students who entered school spoke their mother’s tongue. Now a new student generation enters school with minimal proficiency in their ancestral language due to the unwillingness and/or inability to accommodate English learners (Spolsky, 2004; Holm & Holm, 1995). Racist beliefs and perceived cultural deficits persist today (Dehyle, 1995; Swisher & Hoisch, 1992). These structural barriers continue to push Indigenous students out of mainstream schools, leaving a

¹² Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: Native American (12%), African American (11%), Hispanics (8%), Caucasians (8%), and Asian/Pacific Islanders (4%).

disproportionate number of children left to feel rejected, depressed, and abandoned by their institutions (Jeffries, Nix, & Singer, 2002).

K-12 obstacles have resulted in low graduation rates. Adelman, Taylor and Nelson (2013) noted, 2004 desegregated data for Native Americans suggest that 28 percent did not graduate from high school compared to 15 percent nationally. However, the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center (2007), reported, Native American high school graduation rates for the 2003–2004 academic year were 49.3 percent nationally; only 44.6 percent of males and 50 percent of females graduated with a traditional high school diploma, compared to 76.2 percent of majority peers. Regardless of one’s vantage point, severe educational gaps exist. Contributing factors include that Indigenous students achieving below- average national test scores on both the verbal and mathematical sections of the college entrance exam (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005a; College Board, 2005). And inadequate Native graduation rates and college preparation have contributed to the highest high school dropout rates and lowest academic performance, college admission, and retention rates in the nation (Swisher & Hoisch, 1992; Pavel, Skinner, Cahalan, Tippeconnic, & Stein, 1998; Choy, 2002; Jeffries, Nix, & Singer, 2002; Benally, 2004).

K-12 education and socioeconomic factors influence college success. Many Indigenous students come from poor communities with low education attainment (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004b; Volkwein, Szelest, Cabrera, & Napierski-Prancl, 1998). This results in low financial support from family, delayed employment, part-time enrollment, lack of financial independence, and full-time work (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). High levels of stress related to family and community responsibilities and economic pressure can “pull-out” students (Jackson & Smith, 2001; Deyhle, 1992; Pepion, 1991).

American Indians entering higher education also encounter limited support structures (Pavel, 1999; Brown & Kurpius, 1997). Approximately 50 percent of those who enroll in colleges and universities survive the first year compared to the nearly 70 percent for the general population, and they hold the lowest baccalaureate degree percentage of all racial/ethnic groups (Adelman, et al., 2013, p. 33). Why? For starters, universities and colleges often offer inadequate financial assistance (McAfee, 1997, 2000; Jackson & Smith, 2001; Jenkins, 1999; Thomason, 1999; Thomason & Thurber, 1999; Wells, 1997) and lack high school-to-college transition programs (Hoover & Jacobs, 1992). Support services that could simplify accommodation of Native Americans to campus life include specific ethnic programs, assignment of advisors, mentoring, promotion of peer relationships, etc., are absent in the majority of educational establishments (Padilla & Pavel, 1994).

Campus Racial Climate

Persistence and success obstacles for students of color are often related to the quality of life as expressed through campus diversity (Hart & Fellabaum, 2008). As Tierney (1992b) notes, Native Americans remain invisible in academia because “researchers neither study them nor do institutions devise specific strategies to encourage Indian students to attend, to participate, and to graduate” (p. 309). Only a few empirically-based campus racial climate studies focused on American Indian experiences exist, with most exhibiting hostile college environments stemming from mascots (Connolly, 2000; Staurowsky, 2007), tokenism (Castagno, 2005), stereotypes (Hanson & Rouse, 1987; Owens, 2000; Pewewardy & Frey, 2004), isolation (Lin, LaCounte, & Eder, 1988; Buckley, 1997; Taylor, 2000), and racism (White, 1991; Huffman, 1991; Harles, 1995; Perry, 2002; Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003; Lindquist Mala, 2006).

Native Americans (92%) primarily attend mainstream colleges and universities, but comprise about 1% of all students, which results in their cultural estrangement (Lindquist Mala, 2006). From 1996 to 2002, American Indian college enrollment numbered 137,600 - 165,900 (National Center for Educational Studies, 2004; Boyer, 2002).¹³ This numeric effect highlights their low enrollment and forces them to become spokespersons not only for their tribe, but also for all of Indian Country, which tokenizes their presence (Richardson & Skinner, 1992; Jackson et al., 2003; Lindquist Mala, 2006).

American Indian “invisibility” on many campuses leads to inaccurate and negative stereotypes. Anti-Indian racism in the form of mascot, cliché, and prop stereotypes exist at an estimated 80 colleges and universities (Feagin & Feagin, 2003). Native Americans were viewed through this lens as athletic, brave, and ferocious enough to win (Castagno, 2003, 2005). American Indians were commoditized and exploited as “souvenirs of the white cultural domination” (Connolly, 2000, p. 530). These Indigenous stereotypes remind tribal members of their limited roles in college, constricts self-image, and narrows non-tribal member views of them (Fryberg, Markus, Oyserman, & Stone, 2008). Pejorative caricatures create hostile racial environments, while those trying to oppose stereotyping may face stronger racial opposition (Baca, 2004).

¹³ Some have argued that American Indians have gained greater college access. Perna, Steele, Woda, and Hibbert (2004) note, Maryland’s state-supported two-year and four-year colleges and universities from 1990 to 1998 enrolled more first-time, full-time freshmen than previous years, indicating greater access. American Indian/Alaskan Natives enrollment grew by 74 percent. This fact obscures their actual presence on campus as total state college enrollment grew from 50 to 87 individuals over eight years.

Native Americans in mainstream educational institutions may face dual stereotypes. Castagno's (2005) study revealed that American Indians were viewed as both "minority others" and "white others." As racialized others, whites scrutinized them as gangsters, racial curiosities, and ethnic tokens. As white others, students of color perceived American Indians as privileged because of the few benefits derived from their sovereign status (e.g., health care, hunting rights, tax exempt, gaming) and were dismissed as "real" peoples of color (Castagno 2005; Mihesuah, 2004)¹⁴ Hanson and Rouse's (1987) study revealed that peers considered Native Americans to be submissive, withdrawn, docile, and in need of assimilation. Majority peers pressured Natives to conform to racial stereotypes and to assimilate in order to fit them within the dominant norms, while dismissing ethnic differences (Lewis, Chesler, & Foreman, 2000; Lindquist Mala, 2006).¹⁵ White students tend to maintain more negative racial beliefs than their minority counterparts, thus objectifying, essentializing, and isolating some Indigenous students from majority and minority racial spaces on campus.¹⁶

¹⁴ Ancis, Choney, & Sedlacek (1996) also reported that non-Indian students believed that Native American peers should not receive free healthcare. One reason is the continued opposition toward affirmative action to achieve racial equality, which is viewed as violating individual achievement based on merit.

¹⁵ White students are reported to view Native women as more stupid, physically dirty, and ignorant than women in general (LaRocque, 1995, 1999).

¹⁶ American Indians also hold stereotypes regarding other racial/ethnic groups. Pewewardy and Frey (2004) note that a majority of Native American students dismiss stereotypes even though they have a higher response rate to the belief that blacks are inferior to whites and whites to Asian students. And Coreneblum and Stephan, (2001) report that Native Americans hold less extreme stereotypes than whites who perceive Indigenous worldviews to be incompatible with their own.

Racial perspectives can also extend to on- and off-campus racist acts. External Indian-white relations can have a direct influence on campus climate. Tenured professors promoted racist ideologies that depict Indigenous peoples as genetically inferior, expressed contempt for Native Americans and their treaties in class, “blacklisted” opposition, and still received institutional support in the name of academic freedom. Even institutions with a strong mission and commitment to American Indians can exhibit a hostile campus climate. Indigenous college students often encounter pervasive racial verbal attacks initiated by non-Indian students (Huffman, 1991; Castagno, 2005).

Perry’s (2002) Northern Arizona University study of an institution with a strong commitment to tribal people, showed that of Native American students surveyed, 40 percent encountered ethno-violence, verbal assault, and harassment from students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Over 40 percent reported hearing disparaging comments or seeing derogatory literature—leaflets, posters, graffiti, and articles or cartoons in the school newspaper. This unwelcoming environment limited student reports of racist incidents as many believed that university authority figures would do little to alleviate the situation or dismiss their complaints.

Mainstream universities and colleges have largely failed to acknowledge institutional racism, develop multicultural environments, or move away from social integration/assimilation models (Tierney, 1992a). Experiences are often denied, increasing loneliness (Tierney, 1992b; Trimbal, 1987; Jackson et al., 2003). Oppression is maintained, which negatively affects academic performance and contributes to the sense of powerlessness and alienation under white-privilege conditions (Lin, LaCounte, & Eder, 1988; Reyhner & Dodd, 1995; Fore, 1997; Matthews, 1998; Yang, Byers, & Fenton, 2006).

Not all environments maintain white privilege, with some making efforts to develop positive student perceptions of the campus climate. Native American faculty and staff role models and students provide a support network that maintains ethnic identity, assists in the high school to college transition, and develops a level of independence and assertiveness (e.g., willingness to ask questions, speak in class) that often conflicts with their cultural norms, while engaging the dominant culture (Wax & Thomas, 1961; Hoover & Jacobs, 1993; Winrow, 2001; Chee, 2002; Jackson et, 2003). American Indian campus comfort levels can increase in these positive social environments. Institutions can develop multicultural environments by means of involving in overt actions to value minority identities on campus, intentional recruitment of American Indian faculty and staff, and inclusion of tribal course content to decrease marginalization (Falk & Aitken, 1983; Bennett, BigFoot-Sipes, Dolores, 1991). Development and/or expansion of culturally appropriate services and programming can increase persistence (Falk & Aitken, 1983; Healy, 2000).

Theoretical Position and Framework

My theoretical position resided in critical social theory. As Sudersan (1998) states, critical social theory bridges a vast void between theory and practice because it has historical and situational relevance aimed at understanding and “[Jurgen Habermas] supplanted [Karl] Marx’s paradigm of ‘production’ with ‘language’ which is a reservoir of the past, the prime vestige of the present, and a pointer to the future” (p. 253-254). Therefore, critical social theory is a critique of the existent society (most things that people believe) and social and intellectual acts (p. 258). Language or discourse was a manifestation of the consciousness; it was overtly subjective and viewable through interpersonal interaction. In addition, Guba and Lincoln (1994)

note, critical theory maintains a historical realism position that “reality is assumed to be apprehendable” as social, political, economic, cultural, race, and other factors have solidified over time into discernable structures that are inappropriately viewed as historical reality. As such, there is an interactive link between the researcher and specific object or group, which influences inquiry and leads to findings that are value mediated. Its methods are transactional and require dialog. It is “dialectical in nature to transform ignorance and misapprehensions (accepting historically mediated structure as immutable) into more informed consciousness (seeing how the structures might be changed and comprehending the actions required to effect change)” (p. 110). Therefore, my lens is informed by the historical manifestations of colonialism, race, and education.

My theoretical view was a means to decipher qualitative data while acknowledging that mainstream education systems reflect a long history of cultural warfare. As Wright (1991) recalls, Native Americans have contended with ethnocentrism, bigotry, racism, cultural chauvinism, and assimilation since contact. For many American Indians, the present reconstitutes “the same isolation, alienation, low self-esteem, melancholy, and deviant behavior which oppressed” in previous centuries, a by-product of the mainstream “education process” (p. 448). American Indian education has long been the colonizers’ primary weapon of choice used to destroy and assimilate tribal society into the general population (Rains, Archibald, & Deyhle, 2000). Hence, the present work’s theoretical framework is based on the complex relationships of colonization and inequality that have persisted, and have been perpetuated for centuries, between the mainstream American and the Native American community.

Theoretical Position: History, Colonialism, & American Indian Education. Anglo-European colonial conquest pivoted upon an egocentric notion of innate superiority. Foreign

domination and exploitation symbolized colonialism, an inherently unequal relationship based on domination by an alien source (Said, 1993). Colonists viewed themselves as the harbingers of civilization, while American Indians were labeled “pagan,” “savage,” and “barbarian” to justify the theft of tribal lands and resources, and enslavement and subjugation of Indigenes (Jordan, 1974; Williams, 1992; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Stein, 1997). Conversely, Anglo-European racial “superiority” and “privilege” obligated them to rule and direct their “inferior” subjects, affecting the social, legal, and educational practices (Said, 1993).

The post-Civil War era gave rise to industrial schools or boarding schools and maintained its predecessor’s racial/ethnic foundation. During the 1870s, Congress appropriated \$100,000 to construct schools with the intent of reeducating and assimilating Indigenous children into the dominant culture (Wright & Tierney, 1991; Carney, 1999). This political action culminated with the end of the so-called “Indian Wars” that occurred in the Southern Plains and Southwest during the 1870s and 1880s, and fit the prevailing ideology that instituted the *General Allotment (Dawes) Act of 1887*, which dispossessed American Indians of over 90 million acres (Hamley, 1994; Buffalohead & Molin, 1996). By 1880, the United States government officially approved the first of two Indian boarding schools at Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania and Forest Grove Indian Industrial and Training School in Oregon (Reddick, 2000). In 1891, Congress made education compulsory for only American Indian children (Ahern, 1976; Child, 1996). Tens of thousands of American Indian children across the country were forcibly sent to boarding schools without parental consent (Keller, 1999; Noel, 2003). Police, Indian agents, and soldiers were used to enforce mandatory attendance (Paxton, 2006). Rewards were offered for student captures (Child, 2000). American Indian education was no longer a choice, but rather an entrenched social and political mandate for tribal children, many of whom entered by age six

and were separated from their families until they reached seventeen or eighteen years of age (Almeida, 1997).

Indian Boarding Schools promoted a curriculum for cultural extinction (Adams, 1995). Dismissed were the great traditions of storytelling and oral history that maintained individual and tribal identity. History courses bypassed North America's original inhabitants, started in 1492 with Columbus, and celebrated Anglo expansionist goals. White educators isolated tribal heritage from the dominant culture and expected tribal peoples to embrace the ideals of American exceptionalism and patriotism if they were to live amongst them (Boyer, 1989). Educational reforms intended to "uplift" the American Indian undermined tribal self-determination and strengthened Anglo beliefs in racial superiority, segregation, and the subordination of Indigenous communities (Ahern, 1976).

Some Native American groups did seize control of and utilize mainstream education to serve their tribal communities. From 1778 to 1871, the United States and American Indians entered into over 500 treaties, with approximately 100 containing education services and facility provisions (Deyhle & Swisher, 1997). The Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, and other tribes sent their young men and women to mainstream high school academies and colleges (Carney, 1999). For the Choctaws, the *Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek* (1830) initiated the first government-to-government agreement with higher education provisions. Choctaw leadership viewed Anglo-American higher education as a viable and valuable resource for their men and women, full- and mixed-bloods. The Choctaws attended college as a cohort, which provided a small support network within a foreign environment, and in turn created prominent tribal leaders and administrators with the ability to interact effectively with Anglo-America (Crum, 2007).

American Indians had limited access to higher education even though a select number of tribes possessed a higher percentage of college graduates than surrounding Anglo-American communities (Carney, 1999). Treaties provided only temporary entrance into higher education as the *Curtis Act* (1898), *Allotment (Dawes) Amendment* (1901), and *Five Tribes Act* (1906) ended tribal control of education, abolished tribal governments by assuming control of tribal revenues, and dissolved the Indian Territory for Oklahoma statehood in 1907 (Prucha, 2000, Szasz & Ryan, 1988, Almeida, 1997, Wilkins, 2002; Crum, 2007). Second, predominately Indigenous colleges were converted to predominantly white institutions of higher learning (e.g., Fort Lewis College, Hamilton College, Ottawa College, University of Tulsa). As Wright and Tierney (1991) reported, by 1932, “only 385 American Indians were enrolled in college and only 52 graduates could be identified” (p. 17). While some did prosper, many others never graduated and lost their tribal identity, and were rejected by their people (Boyer, 1989). Native society was devastated by mainstream education as it had sought at all levels to assimilate, deprive, and eviscerate tribal peoples.

Historical and contemporary evidence would suggest that while some positive changes occurred, we still reside within a colonial system that continues to affect tribal students and societies. Today’s predominantly mainstream institutions have failed to accommodate American Indian students or advance sovereignty. Even tribal colleges that exceed average retention, graduation, and satisfaction levels are undermined by the federal government (Stein, 1999; American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2000; Martin, 2005; Boyer, 1997). Colonization has not disappeared from contemporary education; it has simply changed its appearance as previous overt manifestations have become covert expressions (Smith, 2005).

Theoretical Framework: Critical Race Theory

The theory implemented is Critical Race Theory (CRT), a set of assumptions, methods, and pedagogy, which seeks to identify, analyze, and transform structural, cultural, and interpersonal aspects of education that preserve the subordination of racial minorities (Solórzano, 1998). The theory developed within law scholarship during the 1970s, in response to the stalled racial reform of the Civil Rights movement (Taylor, 1998). CRT's development sought to counter racial hegemony and privilege, increase racial awareness, and improve the lives of communities of color (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995). Its roots are closely aligned with critical theory as it addresses "the processes by which social inequality is produced and sustained and the struggle to reduce inequality to bring about greater forms of social justice" (Tollefson, 2006, p. 44). Since the 1970s, Critical Race Theory has branched off into other disciplines (e.g., education, history, sociology) as it seeks to uncover and reduce socio-cultural and ideological processes embedded in power relationships.

Cultural Wealth. CRT research has expanded our notion of cultural capital within the context of social inequality. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) originally posited that individuals in a hierarchical society consider middle- and upper-class knowledge as valuable. Being born into the "right" family or gaining access to the "appropriate" culture provides potential for social mobility. Cultural codes infused into specific types of art, music, and literature are associated with elite education and the avant-garde in society that reproduce social inequalities (Bourdieu, 1977). "Art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 7). For example, academic outcomes for peoples of color are significantly lower than that of whites, and it is assumed that cultural deficits obstruct and disadvantage their upward social mobility. This issue

is exacerbated by persistent and pervasive negative schooling conditions, such as segregation, funding inequality, and curriculum isolation (Pearl 2002; Valencia, 2002; Teranishi, Allen & Solórzano, 2004). Race and class often determine privilege.

In an effort to move beyond a racial dichotomy and class-based construct, Yosso (2005) and Villalpando and Solórzano (2005) constructed the concept of cultural wealth. Cultural capital like income is a narrow view, unlike wealth that considers multiple layers of assets. Communities of color are places full of assets. They have a unique and broad "array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized" to survive oppression and racism (Yosso, 2005, pp. 77). Cultural wealth can take the forms of aspiration, experience, education, socioeconomic, and resistance capital (Moll, Amanti, Neff & González, 1992; Bernal, 2001; Villalpando & Solórzano, 2005; Yosso, 2005; González, Moll & Amanti, 2005). For American Indians, this often consists of spirituality, family and community strength, elders, ceremonial rituals, oral traditions, and tribal identity and language, which play an important role in maintaining cultural resilience and aiding college graduation (Hertzberg, 1972; Huffman, Sill, & Brokenleg, 1986; Lin, 1990; Willetto, 1990; Ward, 1998; Whitekiller, 2004; Fann, 2005). When educators acknowledge, appreciate, focus on, and view distinct cultural wealth as a critical ingredient in education, they begin to move beyond a one-size-fits-all construct.

Microaggressions. CRT has increased understanding of stereotype threat and its impact on depressed academic testing. Self-doubt regarding their ability is not internal, but identified with a specific domain (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Steele 1997). Racial and gender situational pressures can tamp down educational outcomes despite intellectual abilities. Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso (2000), built on stereotype threat and coupled it with the concept of microaggressions (Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, & Wills, 1978)—subtle insults that over time accumulate,

which work to support white supremacy and perpetuate minority inferiority. Their research linked stereotype threat and cumulative microaggressions with negative academic performance and a hostile racial campus climate, expanding single events to cumulative occurrences. Microaggressions influence retention and persistence, and can push minority students out of certain classes where they are perceived as unwelcome interlopers; responding to such practices, Native American students form safe havens both on- and off-campus such as support networks providing a secure environment, and allowing individuals to survive academically and socially. American Indian Studies is one type of environment that is noted for creating a sense of community, a counterspace and “home” within a college (Wright, 1985, 1991; Reyhner, 1997). Microaggressions call into question notions of equal education and uncover subtle forms of racism that influence students of color (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

Counterstories. Critical Race Theorists have developed counterstories to majority narratives regarding peoples of color. For example, John Ogbu (1990) argued, “Involuntary minorities (American Indian, African American, and Latino/a), have not developed a widespread effort of optimism or a strong cultural ethic of hard work and perseverance in the pursuit of education” (p. 53). This value system places minorities at a distinct disadvantage. Narratives grounded in the lived experiences of people of color challenges majority narratives (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Counterstories develop from topical literature reviews, data collection, and professional and personal experiences and allow a researcher to humanize and place a recognizable face on educational theory and practice, challenge and reshape dominant knowledge, present alternative realities, and create a rich source of data derived from stories and reality (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Transformative Resistance. CRT posits that peoples of color are not simply acted upon but can resist oppression. Transformative resistance is the intersection of student awareness, the ability to critique social oppression, and the motivation to seek social justice (Giroux, 1983). Human agency allows an individual to not simply be acted upon by an institution. Rather, these interactions are negotiated, struggled against, and create meaning (Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995). Transformative resistance is made up of the strategies American Indians employ to challenge the university and push the institution to seriously address their educational needs. It can liberate and empower, but also exact a personal toll on the individual and one's willingness to fight for social justice (Brayboy, 2005b). The maintenance of culture and sovereignty can sustain one's place in a tribal society and make one more likely to succeed in the white world of education and employment (Deyhle, 1995). American Indian students can use Western education as a tool to resist hegemony, assimilation, and cultural eradication, and assert tribal sovereignty and self-determination as they acquire the tools and credentials to serve their Indigenous communities (Brayboy, 2005b).

TribalCrit. CRT and its applications are based on five central tenets, which intend to: (1) center the conversation on race, racism, and power and how it intersects with other forms of oppression (e.g., gender, immigration); (2) challenge American educational claims of being objective, meritocratic, and colorblind (Solórzano, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995); (3) advance social justice for the oppressed (Bell, 1987); (4) recognize the experiential knowledge of people of color as it is crucial to understanding the affects and manifestations of racism (Delgado, 1989; Williams, 1997); and (5) employ an interdisciplinary approach that broadens our research scope. Critical Race Theory provides a solid foundation for inquiry that when

combined with Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit)—a branch of CRT—adds a critical component that is applicable to the examination of Native American students.

TribalCrit adds an extra dimension and places colonialism, rather than race, at the center of education analysis because it is endemic to Indian Country (Brayboy, 2005a). Racism is a byproduct of colonialism. TribalCrit acknowledges American Indians as both political and racial beings. United States policy is rooted in imperialism and white supremacy; tribal communities seek autonomy, self-determination, and sovereignty; governmental and education policy centers on the assimilation of Indigenous peoples; oral histories intertwine with theory; and theory and practice seek social change that moves away from colonization and assimilation and towards tribal self-determination and sovereignty (Brayboy, 2005a).

Chapter III

Methodology

My qualitative research examines campus culture and climate, to what extent colonial legacies persist, and how tribal student participants resist oppression. The research utilizes critical social theory and critical ethnography to analyze data derived from observations, interviews, and documents. To advance the present study its methodological process is presented in the following order: critical ethnography, institutional and tribal community background, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

Critical Ethnography

Critical ethnography's lineage can be traced to Malinowski (1922) who was concerned with the point of view, local knowledge, and negotiated meanings (Geertz, 1973). Critical ethnography raises questions concerning the role of the education system regarding social and cultural reproduction of social classes, gender roles, and racial and ethnic prejudice (Anderson, 1989). The pairing of critical theory and critical ethnography provides a strong research structure as they challenge commonsense assumptions (Thomas, 1993); they are used as a critical assessment, a political fight to emancipate, and a transformative practice to mitigate suffering and overcome subjugation, by gaining knowledge and a deeper understanding how minority groups are repressed by the interests of their oppressor and how dominant beliefs control peoples (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005; Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011). The scholarship acknowledges culture as a dynamic process, focuses on a single unit of analysis that occurs in a natural setting, and considers observation and in-depth interview as data collection cornerstones

supplemented by other information sources, allowing for the examination of recurring social phenomena related to perceptions and behavioral patterns (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

A critical approach differs from traditional descriptive and interpretive approaches that claim to remain detached, objective, and value-free (Lather, 1987). Neutrality is a noble perspective, but it is also an unattainable dream (Novick, 1988). As social animals we are influenced by experiences, values, local knowledge, and other factors (Denzin, 2001). A critical perspective considers the social context regarding how group structures and power influence knowledge, value, and privilege.

Ethnography investigates and describes cultures and subcultures through long-term in situ involvement. The methodology provides a researcher with an *emic* (insider) and *etic* (outsider) perspective and thick description, which provides the investigator with personal and relevant viewpoint (Wolcott, 1999).¹⁷ An insider's perception is important as it can allow a researcher to comprehend how participants perceive meaning and see the world around them (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). LeCompte and Schensul (1999) note that this vantage point allows for the examination of cultural "beliefs, behaviors, norms, attitudes, social arrangements, and forms of expression that form a describable pattern in the lives of members of a community or institution" that persist over time (p. 21). Taken together, it is virtually impossible to separate one's voice entirely from the research as one seeks to describe cultural phenomena.

Critical ethnography examines culture with the intent to expose repressive influences that marginalize specific groups. The methodology is informed by critical theory, which seeks "emancipatory knowledge" through the voice of the oppressed to create change (O'Leary, 2004).

¹⁷ Wolcott (2005) believes that two years of direct institutional immersion is a sufficient ethnographic timeframe.

Critical ethnography and critical theory are concerned with deconstructing dominant social structures and realities that have direct and indirect effect on culture, ethnicity, race, class, and power (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Furthermore, the method pursues the empowerment of oppressed peoples through an in-depth critical analysis of hidden elements within society by exposing dominant systems of an unequal power relation (O’Leary, 2004) and reveals both contradictions and myths (Sandywell, 2004). Therefore, for the purpose of this critical ethnographic approach is to understand the campus climate culture, experiences, and agency as culture.

Ethnographers and education researchers tend to view critical theorists research as too theoretic and biased. Critical ethnographers do apply standard practices, conduct member checks, and triangulate methods and data sources to ensure trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, critical ethnographers do not accept indiscriminate evidence, recognize that external social forces construct and maintain cultural units and processes, and attempt to unmask dominant social constructions and their interests, with the goal of transforming it, and unfettering individuals from domination and repression (Anderson, 1989).

Data Collection

Data collection began soon after my FP Director appointment in 2009. In 2011, after a two-year consistent participant observation and interactions with participants, data collection ceased, as I moves to another institution. During that collection period, my study focused on three central questions regarding the campus culture and climate, colonial legacy persistence and influences, and student agency to resist campus oppression. The present questions were explored through the deployment of participant observations (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995), interviews,

and document analysis (Brewer, 2000) in order to triangulate findings and create historical meaning (Maseman, 1982; Jordan & Yeomans, 1995). These directives were pursued through two years of direct institutional immersion as an administrator and researcher, allowing for the observation of campus activities, program and policy decisions, and the recording of community member and participant experiences (Wolcott, 2005). The following section provides an overview of the study's setting and participants, recruitment procedures, data gathering, and interpretative protocols that addressed the stated research question and goals.

Institutional Setting. Borderland University is a public, rural, and non-selective baccalaureate college that maintains a relative balance between arts and sciences and professional fields (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2010; Borderland University, 2010a). The New England institution is a predominantly white institution enrolling over 1,300 full-time equivalent students. Minority students constituted approximately seven percent of the student body with four percent being Native American (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). As a small institution, it provides a low student-to-faculty ratio approaching 15:1 and a class size average of 20 (Borderland University, 2010a).

The Institution provided a unique opportunity for my campus climate study. First, "New England State" has not been examined and is home to federally recognized tribes.¹⁸ The Native American communities have formed historical alliances, and many continue to reside within or near their ancestral lands, some maintaining both Canadian provincial and United States federal membership—a colonial artifact. Most of the tribes have retained their traditions and cultures and have living native speakers. Second, the Frontier Project was a newly grant-funded program whose implementation proposal or mission was to develop activities and build informed

¹⁸ New England State or the New England State is a pseudonym.

relationships to improve Native American student retention and academic success. The project would develop strategies that assisted Native American students to bridge their Native and college communities and expand their life tools to achieve their goals within the dominant culture and their own culture. The key strategies were: data management and evidence development, creation of a Native Cultural Center staffed with a retention team, review of academic affairs and curriculum to offer more effective support to marginalized students, and the reconfiguration of student support and advising services (Frontier Project, 2008). Therefore, Borderland University's rural location, size, the Frontier Project initiative, and a Native American student population that comprised the largest "minority" group—four times the national average—on campus offered a novel research setting and view of Indian County.

Ash-Birch Participants.¹⁹ The Ash-Birch Confederacy communities have maintained a long history of diplomatic cooperation since the mid-seventeenth century, lived in close proximity to one another, and shared a similar Algonquin language and culture (Alias, 2000; Alias, 2001). They were among the first groups, as early as the 1500s, to make contact foreign explorers (Alias, 2010).

Ash-Birch peoples have had first-hand experience with colonial education. From the 1870s until the 1960s, the Canadian government, in conjunction with Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, and Presbyterian Christians, founded Aboriginal residential schools near or in tribal communities and remained a formative presence in Ash-Birch society (Alias, 1974; Alias, 1986; Knockwood & Thomas, 1992). Canadian residential schools acted as colonial laboratories

¹⁹ In order to provide the greatest measure of tribal anonymity, the Ash-Birch pseudonym was given to its tribal participants. Likewise, citations that offer a clear indication of who the groups are have been obfuscated and are denoted as "Alias" to prevent any identity breach.

designed to create a subservient Native labor class and a path for non-Native expansion (Alias & Alias, 1974). Ash-Birch peoples confronted colonial education, social domination, and reconstruction on both sides of the border. Ash-Birch histories are unique, and yet they shared similar Native socioeconomic realities. Ash-Birch peoples, specifically those who resided on the reservation, experienced, on average, elevated unemployment and poverty rates, and displayed lower access to education in comparison to the general population and some Native peers.

New England State Native American educational opportunities and achievement levels proved to be formidable obstacles to self-sufficiency and sovereignty. The New England State's four-year high school graduation rates for whites and all students hovered near 75 percent, while Native Americans resided in the low 40s approximately 36 percentage points lower, creating a large educational gap (Alias, 2009). At Borderland University, Ash-Birch student graduation rates averaged 10 percent over a seven-year span during the 2000s, over 300 percent lower than the general population (Borderland University, 2005). As tribes with a long-standing history of colonization, the Ash-Birch students have some distinct socio-economic attributes and unique cultural heritage shaping their Borderland University experiences.

Recruitment Procedures. Recruitment began with gaining access to community members, simplified by my employment as a Borderland University's Director. Ash-Birch students' agreement for participation was granted by my direct involvement with Indigenous students of the University, a high level of trust from Ash-Birch communities due to close collaboration, and my support for Ash-Birch college volunteers and staff. A reciprocal relationship was established with local tribal and non-Native key informants, with initial information provided through the copy of this dissertation proposal. Participants were informed

about research phases, preliminary results and analysis, and were given an opportunity to critique the current research to better reflect the realities of Native students.

My participant interview solicitation combined purposeful and snowball sampling, with the first stage involving sending a mass e-mail to the targeted sample with research intentions and an invitation for participation (see Appendix A) (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Babbie, 2007). During the snowball sampling process, key informants and interview participants were asked to refer some potential study contributors (Creswell, 2003). Overall, criteria for study participation included: Ash-Birch enrolled tribal member, Borderland University enrolled student, and 18 years of age or older. Consideration was given to maintain gender balance among the 18 participants who agreed to be interviewed, and a minimal gift card was provided as a form of compensation.²⁰

Documents. My data sources include institution and program documents, college newsletters, diversity and faculty committee minutes, and local and national media sources that address Borderland University and Native Americans. Documents set the stage because they are stable and offer insight into the culture and features of a site (Yin, 2003; Merriam, 1998).

As Axtell (1997) noted, historical documents “reconstruct cultural normative codes of the past” that can be critically analyzed to affirm or dismiss evidence, which can produce a “downstream” method of connecting the past to the present (p. 14). Thus, the presented choice of documents for analysis provided a sound basis for study analysis.

²⁰ According to McCracken (1988), a sample range of between 8 and 12 participants engaged in long interviews is needed to obtain a saturation of data for concurrent analysis. To ensure that no new observations or statements develop, the study will surpass the stated minimum standards.

Observations. Fieldwork described my observed setting. My intent was to understand the campus climate through descriptive information and the way participants experienced the environment. Patton (2002) argued that contact with social settings offers several distinct advantages: understanding the context by which people interact, gaining personal experiences within a setting, observing routine social activities, moving beyond selective perceptions, gaining a comprehensive view of the researched setting, and drawing upon personal knowledge during interpretation (p. 262-264). My fieldwork utilized participant observations, sought an *emic* and *etic* perspective, disclosed the role of the observer, maintained on-going observations, and focused on a narrow set of elements derived from the research goals.

To prevent the loss of details and impressions, my field notes—documents, observations, and interviews—were written up within 48 hours and coded. My field notes underwent continued revision (written and rewritten), which provided analytic signposts, while retaining memo's, original portraits (details and time points), to guide my research (Leompte & Schensul, 1999). Memos were used to record my observations and allowed for conceptual thoughts, intuitional notation, and theory development (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The first level of examination consisted of walking inspection. Observations were made of specific institutional zones and artifacts celebrating the Native culture (Banning, Middleton, & Deniston, 2008). The second level of fieldwork involved attending programs and student organization meetings, pow-wows, and selected classes to alleviate a sense of obtrusive surveillance. Both levels of observation required a focus on both things seen and those not readily discernable to a passive observer; consideration was given to the physical location, sequence of events, who and/or what was present/missing in a room, and how they related to each other (Kratwohl, 1998).

Interviews. Native American narratives are intended to give voice and dimension to their experiences (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). Mainstream knowledge remains limited to what exists through the media and social tropes, so detailed multi-vocal information regarding student campus experiences were constructed in a collaborative retelling (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). My interviews were conceived as social encounters and knowledge construction, not a unidirectional process of “mining and prospecting for the facts and feelings residing in the respondent” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003, p. 4). Native American perspectives were intended to give meaning to their experiences that are often in conflict with majority discourses and practices (Fine, 1994).

I asked key informants or cultural experts to participate in informal, unstructured, and open-ended interviews to develop a clear understanding of cultural influences that affected beliefs and practices (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Native community members and college personnel served as key informants based on their long-term institutional memory. Potential informant “biases,” based on their willingness to communicate, and points of view were also scrutinized, but not assumed to be misleading. These were given anonymity (Bouchard, 1976).

Ash-Birch student participants—my principle interviewees—were asked to complete an icebreaker conversation to gather demographic and experiential information prior to a “formal” interview (tribe memberships, home communities, parental education, family boarding school attendance, student status, student services used, and organization membership). Understanding where a student’s tribal community resided—reservation and non-reservation—provided important clues in discerning campus experiences. All of them have resided on ancestral lands for a substantial period of time (Scott, 1986; Huffman, 2003). Parental and family education and experiences with off-reservation boarding schools often contributed to perceived historical forms

of oppression (Metcalf, 1976; Lin, 1990; Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt, & Xiaojin, 2004). Student status and activity provided insight into the length of stay within the campus environment and possible avenues of resistance and support (Benjamin, Chambers & Reiterman, 1993; Huffman & Ferguson, 2007; Weaver, 2001; Rhoads, 1998; Brayboy, 2004; 2005b). Second, experiential information allowed for the cross checking of responses; demographic or descriptive information was used only for study guidance and follow up questions.

My formal student interviews were semi-structured, with open-ended questions used to elicit participant views and opinions (Creswell, 2003). A semi-structured format allowed respondents to provide answers to similar questions (See Appendix D). This structure enabled interview transcription to occur in a coherent fashion through an established set of questions, which led to the collection of information from different participants for comparison regarding similar domains.

Proper consideration was given to confidentiality of participants' responses: (1) access was only granted to me; (2) storage of transcripts and recordings was in a secure password-encrypted computer to ensure protection of participants; (3) conversations were digitally recorded with participant consent that allowed for verbatim transcription; (4) observations were recorded on paper to capture emotions, body language, and environment (5) interviews were transcribed within one-month, personal identifiers (e.g., name, high school, personal descriptors, tribe) were removed, and a copy of the interview offered to each participant; and (6) interviews were conducted in the Native Cultural Center.

Data Analysis

Data analysis methods used in my research involved moving between concrete and abstract concepts, inductive and deductive reasoning, and description and interpretation to formulate study findings. It was guided by three research questions that focus on campus climate experiences, prevalence of colonial related byproducts, and resistance utilizing a critical social science framework. It was an ongoing, repeated process to classify data. In turn, coding allowed me to identify information about the data and interpret constructs related to analysis (Merriam, 1998). The present study utilized three levels of data analysis that worked independently and in partnership with each other.

Level-one analysis created a low level of inference and demarcated specific data units, which were measurable and observable, and guided by stated theoretical assumptions. A unit of data was any potential or meaningful segment of data, which consisted of a small word (e.g., assimilation), participant feeling (e.g., tokenized), or phenomenon (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999; LeCompte, 2000). These codes identified pre-formed, relevant, and emergent themes, ideas, issues, and differences related to campus climate and racism and potential colonial elements, (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Level-two analysis formulated a higher level of inference. Categories were constructed in conjunction with my data collection. Codes were folded into appropriate and naturally occurring units, reducing data into manageable components. In addition, theory assisted me in determining what to consider and what to remove. Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte (1999) noted that high-level inferential codes are theoretically constructed concepts that attempt to “make sense of a series of observations, statements, events, values, perceptions, and correlations” (p. 10). These linkages created junctions between two or more variables and

allowed for the formation of a causal chain, a technique known as pattern matching (Yin, 1994; Emerson, Fritz & Shaw, 1995; Merriam, 1998).

Category construction began with my first reading of a document, interview, or field note. Each set of data was handled in a similar manner and allowed for the development of a merged master list of concepts and comparisons. Consistent analysis began to reveal recurring patterns that formed themes by which future data was sorted (Merriam, 1998). Category selections did not follow a preset or borrowed classification system in order to avoid artificial formation and constriction (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Furthermore, my study derived categories based on five guidelines established by Merriam (1998):

1. Reflect study purpose and answer research questions
2. Exhaustive, all relevant data is placed into a category or subcategory
3. Mutually exclusive, a unit of data should fit into only one category
4. Sensitizing, named themes should capture the exact meaning of a phenomenon, and
5. Conceptually congruent, all categories and subcategories exhibit the same level of abstraction and make sense together (p. 183-184).

Level-three analysis shifted from descriptive to abstract concepts. It involved inference making, model development, and theory creation (Merriam, 1998, p. 187). The practice moved away from coding to explaining phenomena (Emerson, Fritz, & Shaw, 1995). As Miles and Huberman (1994) noted, I was no longer dealing with what was observable; the visible and invisible were connected and produced successive layers of inferential glue (p. 261). The final analysis process allowed me to draw on and verify student campus climate perceptions and experiences and examine potential colonial legacies that would allow me to critique, modify, or reframe theory and campus climate assumptions based on empirical evidence (Bogdan & Biklen,

1998). I employed theorizing aimed at developing theory in this qualitative study, reached beyond the data, and transcended category formations.

At each successive level, campus climate, racial, and potential colonialism, assumptions were tested on the basis of my original framework. Code and classification refinement became the building blocks of my interpretation and theory generation, allowing for continued data analysis. NVivo software was used to assist the analysis of documents, observations, and interviews, which aided the organization of information, coding, and analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Bazeley, 2007). All electronic research materials were uploaded into the software, with consequent data reduction and pattern matching for identification of salient topics, categories, and associated phenomena (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Merriam, 1998). My triangulation process utilized multiple data sources across time, space, and persons and multiple methods to minimize a weakness in one data set with the strength of another (Denzin, 1978). To ensure trustworthiness of the data, my participants were invited to authenticate or invalidate the syntheses of what they reported in regards to study findings—a technique referred to as “member checks” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical Consideration

To “obstruct” the power dynamic of me, the researcher and director, I took proper care of certain ethical considerations arising within my study. The presented research observed two levels of ethical protection. The University of California at Los Angeles’ and Borderland University’s Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) gave study approval. Therefore, Borderland University’s institutional leadership knew that participant observations and conversations were known to be ongoing. In addition, during my finalist campus interview, my campus study was

made known to all participants. Informed consent, confidentiality, and potential risks and benefits were also relayed to administrators and students. A second level of ethical considerations was added to prevent previous mainstream research misgivings perpetrated against tribal communities. Ethical practices related to IRB, decolonization, and reciprocity attempted both to defuse an unwanted power dynamic between me, the researching administrator, and student participants, and the empowering of disenfranchised campus tribal members.

Study Limitations

My research study has several limitations related to its study's emphasis. The Native students under consideration came from reservation communities which have their own unique cultures and histories, thereby potentially limiting comparisons. Some Indigenous groups may not derive benefits from the findings, and other underserved racial/ethnic groups may obtain no assistance from the outcomes because they are not political beings. Some students may not interpret or perceive colonialism as having an influence on campus climate. The research may be too localized to generate broad generalizations regarding other campuses and Native student climate experiences. Using documents as research evidence also possesses such limitations as biased selectivity, accessibility issues, and material availability (Yin, 2003, p. 86). However, given my training as a historian and previous document analysis experience, these noted limitations are of minimal concern as all data collection types express a specific perspective.

Critical social science, with an emphasis on Critical Race Theory, possesses a number of limitations. First, theoretical suppositions based on cultural wealth, microaggressions, counterstories, and transformative resistance are at times rejected because some research studies

have failed to differentiate one minority racial/ethnic group from another and have essentialized African Americans, Latino/as, and American Indians as homogeneous units under the label of “communities of color.” American Indian religion, culture, political structure, and acculturation levels vary greatly. A Native American majority does not reside on reservation and federal trust land, but rather in metropolitan centers. CRT elucidates the understanding of white privilege, power, and hegemony, but its theoretic position often infers that minority-majority coalitions and partnerships are dead on arrival because of previous interactions. Third, Critical Race Theory can be depicted as viewing all non-minority-based institutions as being in direct conflict with communities of color. Most institutions were founded to advance majority interests, but just as communities differ, so do institutions. To interrupt these stated theoretic misgivings, it is imperative that my research critique and uncover oppression, remain open- minded, and provide workable solutions for a specific population while considering the rich diversity within Indian Country.

Chapter IV

Results

The results chapter presents my study's findings derived from two-years of ethnographic fieldwork as both a researcher and institutional administrator at Borderland University. An analysis of the Ash-Birches, New England State's, and Borderland University's histories provides a cultural context for revealing the racial campus climate perceived and experienced by Native American students at Borderland University, and how Ash-Birch students perceived the campus climate and employed agency to resist campus climate oppression.

Ash-Birch Country

The Ash-Birch communities have maintained a long history of diplomatic cooperation. From the mid-seventeenth to late-nineteenth century, they built an alliance to repulse other tribal aggressions. The Ash-Birch coalition acted as a form of protection and advanced group interests (Alias, 2001). The Ash-Birch—a collective reference for the sovereign nations—is distinct, yet shares some commonalities.

Ash-Birch communities lived adjacent to one another for hundreds of years. These neighboring communities shared a similar Algonquin language and culture (Alias, 2000). Their ancestral locations brought them into contact with foreign explorers prior to the colonial invasion, and they were amongst the first Aborigines to encounter French explorer Jacques Cartier in the 1540s, European anglers in the fifteenth century, and perhaps Viking explorers during the eleventh century. Ash-Birch peoples were kidnapped by Portuguese explorer Esteban Gomez and sailed to Spain in the 1520s (Alias, 2010). They encountered French explorer Samuel de Champlain in the 1600s, prior to the settlement of Quebec. Ash-

Birch-European contact also brought new alliances and trade, in addition to the spread of disease and warfare, decimating neighboring tribal populations (Alias, 2000).

Ash-Birch peoples had first-hand experience with colonial education. From the 1870s until 1969, the government, in conjunction with Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, and Presbyterian Christians, founded Aboriginal residential schools near or in Native communities and remained a formative presence. Even though residential schools were not constructed in their principle lands, residential boarding schools enrolled Indigenous children from every tribal culture within the region, which included the Ash-Birch communities (Alias & Alias, 1974; Alias, 1986; Knockwood & Thomas, 1992). These residential boarding schools were colonial laboratories designed to create a subservient Native American labor class and a path for non-Native expansion (Alias & Alias, 1974). Thousands were removed, often forcibly, from their tribal communities and placed in the “care” of complete strangers whose mandate was the disassembling of Native cultures (Adams, 1995; Churchill, 2004). The Ash-Birch peoples confronted colonial education, social domination, and reconstruction on both sides of the United States-Canadian border.

The New England State

The New England State is the ancestral Ash-Birch homeland of the federally recognized tribes, which comprise a sizable portion of the State’s Native American population, but this does not imply that government-to-government relations have been or are amicable (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). During the 1800s, Alias (2001) noted the dominant society’s belief that Native American populations would dissipate and become extinct if governmental protective measures were withheld from the tribes. Therefore, the New England State rendered tribal peoples voiceless and powerless and utilized every political measure to erode American Indian legal status. Although Natives were allowed to vote

nationally, their voting places were located in adjacent municipalities, off the reservation, and their right to vote in state elections was not granted until the mid-1900s. The New England State also denied public assistance to tribal members based on race; aid went only to needy majoritarian families. Therefore, most Ash-Birch peoples subsisted on day labor and crafts while socially segregated in shantytown reservations (Borderland University, 2005). The Ash-Birch, by the mid-nineteen hundreds, had lost most of their tribal lands and only a couple of tribes had managed to maintain a fraction of their ancestral territories (Alias, 2008).

The Ash-Birches, deprived of their rights, began to examine the historical records related to tribal lands and, ultimately, sovereignty. During the 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement activists rallied together and mobilized participants to reverse their political and socioeconomic status (Alias, 2001). Utilizing the *Trade and Intercourse Act of 1790*, it was deemed that only Congress could validate and ratify transactions, which invalidated New England State claims (Alias, 2005). Thus, Ash-Birch tribes received millions of acres (held in trust) including federal recognition (Alias, 2008; Alias, 2005; Alias, 2001).

Ash-Birch “sovereignty” or “quasi-sovereignty” never came to fruition as the tribes were reduced to municipalities. Municipality “sovereignty” was intended to provide the Ash-Birch tribes with funds to rebuild and replace dilapidated infrastructure, but it was used instead as a means to curtail Native American autonomy. The Ash-Birchs’ victory gained much and conversely lost much in return (Alias, 2008). As Alias (2005) noted, despite Ash-Birch tribes receiving some of the federal recognition benefits and their relative success, they continued to encounter higher rates of unemployment, health-related issues, and had lower rates of adequate housing and education attainment than the overall population. Educational opportunities were formidable obstacles to self-sufficiency and sovereignty, with

Native American and African American students having the fewest opportunities to attain proficiency in basic skills and to graduate on time (Alias Foundation, 2009).

Education disadvantages have contributed to significant disparities among American Indian students. Four-year high school graduation rates for all students accounted for over 75 percent, Native Americans approximately 40 percent (Alias Foundation, 2009). These secondary education inequities have a direct influence on higher education access and attainment, and perpetuate socioeconomic disadvantages; baccalaureate attainment was 1.9 times lower (United States Census, 2000). At Borderland University, Ash-Birch student graduation rates totaled 11 percent over a seven-year span from 2000 to 2007, over 300 percent lower than the general student body (Borderland University, 2005).

In total, while the Ash-Birch have shared similar socioeconomic, education, and demographic attributes with other tribes, they are also a unique group. They have encountered colonization for a protracted period of time, remained within or in close proximity to their ancestral lands, formed alliances that drew upon a shared language and culture, experienced multipronged government and religious reeducation initiatives, and, survived persistent efforts to undermine sovereignty and socioeconomic self-sufficiency.

Borderland University

Borderland University is nestled in a bucolic region whose principle economic mainstays are agriculture and education. Borderland University was one of the area's first educational establishments to open its doors around the turn of the twentieth-century. The campus originally developed as a normal school to teach and train teachers. A two-year curriculum was offered, and its first entering class consisted of nearly twenty students—female majority (Borderland University, 2003). During World War II, the institution was temporarily transformed into barracks for the war, but soon returned to its educational

functions. This era also manifested gender discrimination as men and women were forced to study on separate floors and use separate entrances (Borderland University, 2003).

During the 1960's, the campus witnessed its first student protest (Borderland University, 2003). And C11—alum, staffer, activist, and local community member—noted other protests arose, during the 60s and 70s:

Some [students] used college—got married, had children, or were sole surviving males in combination—to avoid the Vietnam draft. Protests and sit-ins occurred on campus and soapbox speeches were given. The staff and young faculty members appeared to be good with this type of student expression. However, the senior administration was not flexible and ignored us. There was not much contact with the campus administration as a student.

Regarding other social movements that may have arisen during their stay, C11 stated, “[Native American social movements centered on] Rosebud and Alcatraz were tangential and distant from the campus. We were isolated and they didn’t impact the local and campus community.”²¹

²¹ “C” (e.g., C11) refers to a community member that often has no direct (paid) affiliation with Borderland University. The C code is primarily used for advocates and/or tribal community members (e.g., education, administration, volunteer). “A” (e.g., A3) refers to a senior and upper level campus administrator. The A code is used for both past and present administrators, although the majority were still employed during my stay. Furthermore, 99 percent of them were white. “F” (e.g., F1) refers to a campus faculty and staff members. The F code is used for both adjunct and tenured faculty and permanent staff members. All of those noted in the research worked on campus during my duration. “S” (e.g., S9) refers to a Native American enrolled student. The S code is used for Ash-Birch, tribally enrolled, and/or those with whom my staff and I had a working relationship with on campus.

By the early 1970s, Borderland University had grown its functions and expanded educational training and courses (National Accreditation Board, 1982; Borderland University, 2003). As Senior Administrator A3's 2010 speech noted, extensive scholarship, public service, and community service projects had been enumerated, including recent work with the tribal community's marketing plan for a fishing hatchery and geographic information system project that stemmed from two student class projects with the local tribes. Borderland University appeared to be functioning coherently and effectively at multiple levels.

Ash-Birch Students' Perceptions of Campus Climate

Native American student interviewees (N=18) and engagement, with another 28 peers through participant observations, represented Borderland University's Ash-Birch Indian community. Student interview participants discussed with me a range of issues including their general attitude toward education and its importance, their communities' support for education, and the impact that the history of mandatory residential boarding schools might have had on their perception of education. Moreover, students were asked to give their own estimates of the campus racial climate at Borderland University, thus disclosing their own encounters with racism, cultural inequality, oppression, stereotyping, and colonialism as well as to recount successful strategies for dealing with a chilly campus environment. Qualitative discussion themes are presented in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

Native American Communities

Student perceptions of the campus climate were at times intertwined with how they felt the institution viewed their tribal community. Overall, Native American students felt that Borderland University paid scarce attention to their tribal communities. Student comments

acknowledged the University administration's lack of involvement with the Ash-Birch tribes, neighbors with a rich Indigenous culture that required respect and attention.

Borderland University's inconsistency between its stated official policy and the real state of affairs was reported by key informants who recognized that the relationship between the University's administration and the tribal communities was historically uncomfortable and chilly, even though some attempts were made to get to know each other better. F1, a faculty member pointed out, "A4 was committed to working with tribes. He visited the Salmon Ash-Birches. He was the most open-minded regarding Native Americans, but there were other reasons why he was not successful" that stemmed from other senior administration. F1 mentioned that the campus had offended the tribes when they planned to obtain military property and negotiated unfairly with the tribes regarding the division of land and housing. Similarly, A5 displayed complete ignorance of the Native American students when he offered to "create" an international student organization for American Indians to join—lumping them together with the French and International clubs—when such an organization already existed, thereby ignoring their racial and political status and local context. These unsuccessful and disinterested campus efforts to collaborate served as a strong negative foundation for the present-day relationship between Borderland University and the Ash-Birch tribes.

Continued poor interpersonal/intercultural contact and negative perceptions of the tribal communities exuded from an unwillingness to accept Indigenous people as equal community members. Such refusal resulted from a number of negative stereotypes and attitudes in relation to tribal reservations and life styles. For instance, S14 pointed out, "I've heard some students say, 'If you go onto a reserve, you need to watch out. It is not a good place. You are going to get beat up.'" This majoritarian philosophy of Natives gone wild was not held by just one student, but repeated by several individuals in distinct conversations.

S11 explained this incapacity as follows: “In theory, they want to accept you, but there is underlying feelings that they can never truly accept you. You’re judged by their standards and deemed unacceptable.” S5 reported a similar feeling: “They don’t take us seriously. Borderland University has to accommodate us, [but they never accept us] while we’re in college; there’s nothing here for us.”

Stereotypes played a role in the formation of majoritarian perceptions’ regarding Native American students. S3 confided, “They see us living in little houses that are 10 to 12 feet apart from each other. They automatically assume that we’re all poor, struggling, and less fortunate than them because they have a big, fancy, shiny car, a [large] yard, or a five-bedroom home.” S3 provided a similar story about a trip she took with several white college friends and their perceived reservation images. They believed Native Americans still lived in tee pees, had no television, or other “modern” amenities. Hence, they were amused to see that the reservation looked like their own neighborhood. As S11 explained, “I don’t think they really know much about our tribal communities. I’m sure they get their information from the media, movies, and textbooks. It’s a Hollywood perception of the reservation and tribes.” This is a stereotypical image that often portrays Indigenous peoples as being stoic and of few words, possessing magical powers, and dressing as “warrior” savages, or Native American women as beautiful maidens who are sexually available to white men that influences the public’s racial view (Rollins & O’Connor, 2011; Mihesuah, 2009; Aleiss, 2005).

Many of the student respondents pointed out that stereotypical attributes have been assigned to them for many generations, and they continued to play a part in the modern vision of tribal communities. According to S3, “Faculty views the tribal communities as dumb. We’re not the norm.” However, the major problem is the lack of interest from white students, staff, and faculty; they do not want to change their established perceptions even if

they do not correspond to a colored reality and hurt Native Americans. For example, professor F83 and I were discussing her class in the Native Cultural Center, as some of her Native students were getting “restless” and proceeded to share, “I don’t know why S20 is so angry. I didn’t sign those treaties from hundreds of years ago. I wouldn’t say this to his face, but I can see him becoming a drug addict or alcoholic” (Participant Observation, 2010). A faculty comment provided insight to campus race relations and stereotypes based on one’s cultural background (Miles, 2004)—racism intended to support her perceived superiority and the “others” inferiority and dependency (Quintero, 2001; La Marr, 2003). Unfortunately as S14 illustrated when some students asked her “about being Native and her heritage,” the majority of the “class looked at [her as if] they really didn’t care” to know anything about her and her actual community’s history. Such stories illustrated the persistence of powerful stereotypic and “racial curiosity” images and the difficult task for Indigenous peoples to break through miseducated tropes, which evolved in part from a campus unwillingness to learn about tribal cultures, traditions, and peoples.

Negative Native American perceptions and behaviors held by some senior administrators supported disparaging attitudes. C10, a tribal elder, reported that his first impression of Borderland University’s administration was “The administration belittled our Native students, our culture, and our way of life.” C11 pointed out, that throughout the Institution’s history, the administration has largely ignored the tribal communities and rendered them invisible. Borderland University’s Native American student presence was absent or rendered invisible due to the administration’s hostile attitudes, which precluded establishing any relationships with the tribes, indicating that American Indians were not welcomed on their campus.

Fortunately, some understanding and appreciation had become evident at the Borderland University. S11 noted, “I think it’s getting better since the Frontier Project [was]

started; before the program, there was really nothing. We had the American Indian Student Association and that was it. The campus never really focused on us.” Likewise, S18 noted, in his social work classes, some students were eager to get acquainted with Native American cultures. Incorporation of Native American cultures has become one of the University’s priorities via the Frontier Project, which signaled an increased awareness of the need to build closer ties with the local tribal communities (Frontier Project, 2008a, 2009, 2010a). As S4 confided, “There were a few classes where the instructors had mentioned that they were starting to put Native Americans into the curriculum.” S16 clarified, “Professor F6 said that, ‘The University wanted instructors to try to incorporate [elements of our cultures] into what they were teaching.’” In fact, F6 completely revamped her entire psychology curriculum to be more inclusive of Native Americans, while inviting local tribal members to serve as guest speakers for her classes; F14 also invited guest speakers into her social work course, which had a profound effect on Indigenous students, many of whom saw themselves in the curriculum for the first time (Participant Observation, 2010).

S2 underlined that noticeable changes were taking place on campus: “I think that people’s perceptions of Native Americans are changing. People are more aware that there are tribes living in this area. Natives and other students should be able to learn about our cultures.”

S18 agreed with the positive institutional efforts regarding inclusion: “I think the campus as a whole is trying to make efforts to recognize us as a people.” Yet she felt in her heart that there are many individuals who were not yet ready to accept Indigenous peoples, as this inclusion was perceived as a drastic change both on campus and in society.

The Native American Tuition Waiver

White opposition to and discrimination toward Native American students was, at least in part ,centered on funding, as some tribally-enrolled students received an institutional

tuition waiver. The Waiver Advisory Group (2010) sought to encourage American Indian students to participate in public higher education and prepare them for personal and professional opportunities. Furthermore, the goal was to provide an opportunity for members of the campus community to become familiar with Native American students individually and collectively through relationships, which would provide them a greater understanding and appreciation of American Indian peoples, their histories and cultural heritages, and their contributions to the United States.

In spite of the tuition waivers' goals, it was a source of animosity towards Native students and their communities. As S13 noted, the campus "talks negatively about the whole money issue and how we get paid to go [to college] and take advantage of the system. I've overheard negative comments as [to how] we're spoiled and lazy." S10 shared a similar opinion of the campus, and attributed it to white student opposition who viewed the tuition waiver she received as unfair. "I notice a general dislike toward me because they think, 'Oh, they get everything; they get all this money [for free]!'" S14 shared how the public holds the same racist ideologies concerning them. "Natives get everything for free and whites get nothing" (Churchill, 1997; Carney, 1999; U.S. Census News Bureau, 2013).

The perception of relatively free and easy access to education irritated and caused envy in many white counterparts struggling to receive an education, being urged to work at several jobs to pay for their tuition. I observed this very attitude during my first few months of employment. I remember standing against a reception counter, which is an open area that did not provide privacy, when a white female started to rant to her peer about the class she had just finished. She stated, "I don't understand why we had to discuss the past because it's the past. [white's] are not responsible anymore for their tribal predicament. I have nothing to do with them, and yet, they still receive 'special benefits' like the tuition waiver. It's unfair, we're paying the price. I work my ass off. Why don't they? The past is over. They need to

move on and get a life.” Aside from the need to ignore her own privilege as a member of the “master” race, and the stereotyping of the “other” as indolent, her peer brought solace to the conversation by noting, “The past has never been corrected and what little the tribes received from the government would never make up for the loss of land and lives lost.” Despite her peer’s point and me entering the conversation to provide some historical context, she remained unmoved and could only see the tuition waiver as special benefits; inequitable and biased (Participant Observation, 2011).

The reaction of majoritarian students who find out about Native American tuition recipients proved mostly negative, as many do not believe that American Indians deserve a waiver. As S2 stated, “The reaction I get when I have told people that my tuition is covered isn’t good. It’s not something you just come out and tell people, but when I have, their reactions force me not to tell anybody because they make me feel that I should feel lucky” as though it is not warranted. S15 took it a step further and recounted that she did not share information about the waiver with students because “they start asking nasty questions about what made Native Americans so special or what made you so different. They asked you in a confrontational manner as to why whites did not receive similar educational subsidies.”

F3 supported students’ perceived negative Institutional imprints of them, “I got the impression that the University didn’t want them. They couldn’t just come right out and say, ‘We don’t want you,’ but they could and did make it very difficult [for them]. I found that behavior to be discouraging.” Borderland University’s administration’s efforts sought to complicate the Indigenous enrollment and financial eligibility at the behest of multiple stakeholders involved. F1 recalled a tuition waiver letter sent by F5, the former coordinator, to the Ash-Birch tribes, which informed them of new financial aid qualification rules for students who sought to obtain or maintain the tuition waiver even before many had applied and regardless of enrolled students with no “grandfather clause” in place. Students who

wanted the tuition waiver had to now live in the dormitories, although the administration was aware that many lived minutes away from their home communities and/or had families to care for, rendering them ineligible and allowing the college to purge the system of their presence—a cathartic action attempted more than once that drew the fury of tribal supporters and the tribal education directors, specifically as the Intuition’s moves were unsanctioned (Participant Observation, 2010). F1 confessed that financial concerns have always stopped the campus’ senior leaders from active cross-cultural participation: “Borderland University was saying, ‘We don’t want too many [Native] students because we have to waive their tuition.’ I was so depressed after that, I felt like giving up.”

Borderland University’s Admissions Office proved to be a gatekeeper to Native American students as the tuition waiver influenced campus policy. The Frontier Project had gotten word that certain students were being denied access, left uninformed, or having to appeal admissions decisions. Therefore, it was within my purview to ask questions due to the grant and our ties with the tribal communities. F15 and I sat down to discuss some potential issues we were hearing, specifically that Native American students were being denied access due to their grades and asked to attend a community college first, although, the campus was a non-selective institution that required a minimum 2.0 grade point average (Participant Observation, 2010). What came from that meeting was a subtle admission. F15, stated, “I hate to say this because it sounds bad, but recruiting and admitting [First Nation] students is great because their tribes pay for them to attend. They don’t get the tuition waiver” and pay 1.5 times the tuition rate (Participant Observation, 2010).²²

²² First Nations is a Canadian political term that identifies Indigenous groups residing within its borders. The concept is convoluted, as United States and Canadian borders can intersect tribal communities that share a similar language, culture, political structure, and history. These “borders” are arbitrary colonial constructs to many Native peoples residing within these nation states.

The primary concerns were, in fact, radiating from potential tuition waiver recipients. F18, a staff member, had begun to receive calls from potential admits. F18 relayed, “I just got off the phone with S27.” He explained to me that S27 did not plan to attend our school even if they reconsidered his application after the way F15 had treated him. S27 said, “She basically made him feel like he was intellectually inept to attend our college and basically called him stupid to his face in a meeting that he had with her last week. Furthermore, he was accepted to two other campuses” that had higher admissions standards. F18 then noted that S27 had told his “friends and family what had happened” (Participant Observation, 2010). Five days later I received an email from A3. “How many Canadian (Indians) do we have incoming?” (Participant Observation, 2010), not how many Native Americans have you been able to recruit to campus, but rather, how many non-waiver Indigenous applicants who were willing to pay for their tuition.

This “Indian problem” was brought to the attention of senior leadership. A12, F15’s supervisor, was brought into the conversation. I brought S27’s case to the forefront. I noted that “I was unsure how a kid can get into mid-level state colleges and yet be rejected by Borderland University. From a food chain perspective, it’s not rational.” A12 noted that the two campuses that accepted S27, “just skim and admit whomever,” while disregarding our own minimal selectivity. Furthermore, our office began to notice that tuition waiver students, specifically those from the Sweetgrass and Turtle Ash-Birch reservations, or those who lived further away and would require a room and board scholarship, appeared to incur the brunt of the Institution’s animosity (Participant Observation, 2010).

Borderland University’s administration, though having no legal right to prevent Native American enrollment, still used methods that made the process complex. For example, when the Native Cultural Center mailed letters to Indigenous student applicants that thanked them for applying, discussed potential program services, financial aid information,

and the tuition and waiver application, A12, an executive administrator, and F15, middle management, gave a blanket cease and desist order as it was perceived that too many “non-paying” Native Americans were applying. I responded:

Frontier Project and the Native Cultural Center promote its program, just as admissions and the University promotes its programs, even if students have or have not applied. Mailings are a standard practice in getting potential students to cross that acceptance threshold if admitted. Knowledge is power and can be a deciding factor in choosing an institution.

As S18 noted, “The application process was not friendly; it’s a pain,” specifically as the rules of the game were ever changing and central components, such as admissions, financial aid, and other student services, were reluctant to provide Native American students with feasible and realistic help. S9 noted that, in the end, “They viewed the waiver as an issue” they wanted to rid themselves of because they weren’t “making enough money”; no waiver, no Native Americans students or, at least, very few.

Borderland University’s economic “burden” of financing Native American education had become entrenched in the attitudes and behaviors of the faculty, staff, and students, which caused Indigenous students to feel unwelcomed and to question their belonging. According to S7, the only attention shown was in terms of finding alternative ways for the campus to exploit the tribes in the higher education enterprise. The University only saw “them as another way to make a dollar.” As S6 pointed out, “They don’t appreciate us [because] they don’t want us here.” Or as S15 overheard her classmates saying, the campus should round up and send all the Indians home. These feelings of rejection and opposition were felt by many tribal students, as many campus members stood in sharp opposition to their presence.

S5 confided that many white Americans considered the funding and tuition waiver for Native Americans excessive. In the Financial Aid Office, he faced negative and racist comments. An employee asked him why he needed his student loan when he was already receiving the tuition waiver. He translated this comment to mean, why do they need “all of that money?” S11 noted the same attitude: “I went to sign my award letter, and I checked Pell grant and a student loan.” She commented that, “[She] didn’t need all that money” because she was also a recipient of the tuition waiver (Participant Observation, 2010). S1 interpreted these actions as, “The Business Office [being] aggravated by anything having to do with the Native American tuition waiver. I believe that they don’t agree with [it]. I think they feel that we don’t deserve [it]. We’re treated as crap.” Furthermore, S3 stated that Native Americans were treated as “mooches, as if [we] were personally asking them if they had some extra money” or a handout when all they wanted to do was to follow up on the status of their financial aid refund as did the majoritarian students.

Students feared the Business and Financial Aid Offices as it related to their racial identity and the tuition waiver. As S41 succinctly put it, “The Business and Financial Aid Offices always treat me bad, they’re assholes” (Participant Observation, 2010). Things devolved to the point that some students were crying and asking me and my office to accompany them to the noted offices (e.g., S3, S10). S40 was an incoming first-year student who came to the Native Cultural Center in tears during the first week of classes. She had visited the Business Office after receiving a letter that noted an “outstanding” tuition bill.. She told them that tuition was “paid through her tribe and they knew this because of her sponsorship by the tribe,” a known agreement between the Salmon Ash-Birch and the University. Despite the known facts, the Business Office proceeded to apply pressure on her and treated her “as though she was stealing from them or was a free loader. They wanted their money” (Participant Observation, 2011). Another incoming first-year student, S39,

recalled that she had followed up on her financial aid status and asked that her fees be removed as she was eligible for the tuition waiver. The Financial Aid person replied, “Oh, you’re Native American. We’re going to reduce your financial aid package.” S39 told me that, “It’s not right for them to reduce my financial aid because of my ethnicity. Financial Aid provided her a brief explanation, “They informed me, that ‘Native students don’t need to take out loans because they receive a tuition waiver. All she knew was that “I don’t fit the right description—white”. It was a bitter pill to swallow for a single mother, with an estimated family contribution of \$0 (Participant Observation, 2010). S6 noted, they were always “rude, and it felt that they could smell a Native American a mile away.”

Students did not disappear never to return; rather, they found solace and a way to vent frustrations through social media. Regarding the Business and Financial Aid Office, their comment string (S3, S6, S14,S30, S42) noted: they were treated like shit every time that came in; they were lied to and kept in the dark regarding financial aid refund checks; personnel acted aloof, stuck up, and bitchy, and gave off a vibe that tribal members were only into education for the free monies (Participant Observation, 2010).

Native American students indicated a continuous disregard for them regardless of whether they were sponsored by their tribes, which paid tuition, or whether they received a tuition waiver. By all indications, the waiver was an issue, but the larger problem appeared to be related to students’ race. Regardless of legitimate student concerns and campus racism encounters (observed by me and others), senior leadership paid no regard even when behavioral patterns were documented and relayed to them in reports (written and verbal), specifically as no ombudsperson office or closely related entity existed on campus. A3 poignantly told me, these were non-issues. He “needed specifics” and “not just how they [Native American students] perceived or felt” about specific office encounters (Participant Observation, 2010). After the failed attempt with A3, I spoke with A10, another senior

executive, about the systemic and continued race issues and noted that A13 was a major concern behind the racism,

A13's message was that Indigenous students were leaches due to their tuition waiver. All his examples regarding Native students given have been negative. He even asked two individuals that work with me, "What are you doing with that dirty old Indian (Participant Observation, 2010)?"

A13's Business Office and Financial Aid supervisory role had an undeniable impact on the campus culture. However, A10 retorted that A13 was "going to retire soon" and that "we have had several individuals who weren't so good retire." Rather than remedy the racism or value the fact that the tribes would find this dismissal and derogatory remarks offensive, their legitimacy was ignored. The Institution's stance was no different for F19, a staff known to be racist who was "officially" removed (from her location) because of her continued racist remarks and attitudes directed at the tribes and their students. This removal involved moving her 10 feet back from the service counter and into a corner desk until she retired. A10 responded, "That's true. It wasn't very responsive" (Participant Observation, 2011).

Financial Aid department issues were also brought to A10's attention. This was a department whose leader happened to also be a relative of A13. I noted,

Native American students are consistently stereotyped. They're asked, "Do you need a loan? You already get everything paid for." Or they are told, "Your tribe has enough money." These issues are not limited to two offices, and it speaks to the difficulties Native American students face at an early and fragile period of their academic career. If you don't have any support and are typecast, you don't feel a sense of belonging and leave.

A10 refused to see the race connection despite my own, and other lines of, evidence. He reasoned that this atmosphere constituted only “rude” behavior and reminded me that senior executive A12 was not an ally regarding Native Americans:

Every Native American student we enroll or retain in our Institution loses money. We need tuition-paying students. Otherwise, it is a losing proposition. I was all for the Frontier Project because it’s for all the right reasons, but we need to make money. The Institution never committed to the Frontier Project. We don’t have the funds to support its initiatives. We knew this when we first started. (Participant Observation, 2011).

Superficially, this may have appeared reasonable to individuals who saw no redeeming cultural value in recruiting, retaining, and sharing their campus with tribal peoples. However, on an economic basis, the argument fell flat.

Borderland University did earn monies for each student enrolled. The campus received an annual appropriation from county, state, and/or other sources of approximately \$6,100 per full-time equivalent student. In 2010/2011 Native American full-time students, excluding part-time students, generated nearly \$300,000 for the year due to their enrollment. First Nation students who were ineligible for the tuition waiver paid out-of-state tuition and fees of approximately \$90,000 and eight self-identified students who were waiver ineligible paid nearly \$54,000 for the year, with all full-time students spending a total of \$49,000 on books, which were purchased primarily at the institution’s bookstore (Frontier Project, 2011b). Based on those figures, the campus generated revenues of almost \$500,000, not including incidentals (e.g., supplies, food) purchased on campus or by the many part-time attendees; a tidy profit for “free-loading” American Indians, which could only add to the campus coffers with increased student persistence and enrollment.

Nonetheless, only one senior personnel recognized this myth of Natives as “noncontributing” citizens. All noted,

I can’t believe this shit! They are still trumpeting that bullshit that Native students cost the Institution. That belief has a long tradition and just won’t die. Former executive A5 made it an unwritten policy not to inform Native applicants and students that they were eligible for the tuition waiver in an attempt to take their monies. They wanted to keep them uninformed. Money is all that matters. It was an unofficial-official policy of the institution. No wonder we have never had any institutional commitment to Native student recruitment and retention. (Participant Observation, 2011).

American Indian students recognized the duplicity of campus culture. Borderland University provided the tuition waiver and simultaneously sought to take it away and complicate future Native American enrollment. S7 noted,

The waiver was put in place to help us; now they are changing it. How do they expect to assist us then? Room and board is included for some athletes.

Tuition and fees are also paid for some. I don’t see how our waiver is any different.

The dominant group on one side perceived fiscal inequalities in the allocation of education subsidies as it related to Indigenous peoples—even though the tuition waiver incurred no money transaction—that caused outrage among many majoritarian members who willingly espoused their racist beliefs and attitudes through racial attacks. Incentives for high school students, senior citizens, children of fire fighters and law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty, persons in foster care, veterans, and other “special programs” that offered tuition waivers to a vast majority of white peoples were viewed as legitimate, impartial, and normative (University System, 2011). Therefore, when eligible First Nation (“international”)

students sought admissions, were in financial need, and ineligible for “their” own tuition waiver, management overlooked mainstream tuition subsidies, and my conversations with them were chilly (Participant Observation, 2010). Native Americans were viewed as having their own “illegitimate” and “special” opportunities, while the dominant group maintained control over primary and “legitimate” access opportunities to preserve their racial superiority. As the financial inequality problems were deep rooted at Borderland University, Native students were attacked overtly and covertly for their “free” education which stood out as one of the most significant problems leading to intensified racism.

Native American Cultures and Histories

Tribal cultures and histories, both their presence and omission in- and outside of the classroom, proved to be a running theme among student interviews and in my own observation notes. A majority of students recollected certain ways in which the Native American cultures and histories were celebrated on campus, which included Native American Heritage Month, the American Indian Day Experience, American Indian Student Association, Ash-Birch Garden, Native Cultural Center, and some classes. S18 recalled, “One year the library had a book display for Native Heritage Month. I remember the American Indian Day Experience ever since they started. However, outside of that, it is unclear as to how they express or celebrate our histories and cultures.” Perhaps this is one of the reasons why, during a conference call, A10 noted, “The institution’s library has done nothing for diversity and cultural preservation for approximately 15 years” (Participation Observation, 2010). In 2010, I noticed this neglect. The library had a small 3x5-index card in a nondescript area that announced Native American Heritage Month. Senior leader A3 was notified about the cultural significance, but no institutional acknowledgement was ever made unlike other holidays or recognitions (Participant Observation, 2010).

The Frontier Project sought to bring awareness to Native American Heritage Month. In November, 2010, C9, a tribal member and high-ranking (mainstream) foreign dignitary—equivalent in stature to a state governor or senator—was invited by us to celebrate the cultural month. He served as our keynote speaker on education and Indigenous cultures and was flanked by two local tribal members' presentations focused on a similar topic. A12's daily brief gave it a one-time obligatory announcement days before the signatory month and only after A10 had made an earlier announcement (Participant Observation, 2010).

Campus members complained openly and loudly regarding the cultural event. Media relations were expected to plan for a small cadre of faculty to attend a formal campus venue. University catering management supported the normative culture and called into question the communities bringing moose, deer, and bear meat to the event because they did not know the cleanliness of the individuals and their homes in which the meals would be cooked. In addition, A13 questioned the use of the gym because the floor could warp if liquids were spilled on the hard court, a hypothetical situation that would have required large quantities of liquids to be spilled and ignored for hours to cause severe damage, while mostly majoritarian patrons who attended basketball games and served beverages in the same location were never a subject of concern. Therefore, a tarp was to cover the basketball court to protect the flooring. Food safety aside, the campus once again stereotyped tribal peoples and their communities as both dirty and lazy, which left our advocates, students, and community allies angered and me suggesting that the event be moved off campus to “accommodate” a traditional tribal gathering; the campus relented on the meal and venue only because they wished to reap the benefits of the event's publicity (Participant Observation, 2010).

The logistical points aside, senior leadership expressed a personal burden to introduce the three sovereign nation dignitaries. As relayed to me, A3 did not want to introduce all three representatives. Hence the task was relegated to middle management—me. Rather

than adulation and an opportunity to understand the unique perspectives of the tribal communities, questions arose as to why they were invited while the education and preservation of cultures was disregarded (Participant Observation, 2010).

The day's events were not any better than the previous encounters. The campus rolled out the dusty, frayed tarps for the Native guests. The powwow tables were not set up, the lecture area was left unkempt, there was no sound check, and no signage was placed around campus to direct attendees to the building, the purview of Media Relations. Food service's tables, hot plates, drinks, linens, and setup were to occur an hour prior to the event's start, but were dumped into a large pile. Only after tracking them down did they return to complete their tasks, 10 minutes prior to the event's start time, while still managing to forget cups, a second, failed attempt to meet timelines for a tribal campus community event, (e.g., American Indian Day Experience (Participant Observation, 2010).

Upon C9's arrival, none of the executive leadership greeted and welcomed our guest. Only C10 and I were present. C9 and his party, along with C10 and I, entered the facilities, where we found A12 and introduced our guest to her. The blessing started half an hour late in order to accommodate travelers, which prompted A12 to say, "Just like Natives. They're always late to class." The blessing had 67 participants. Aside from the Frontier Project staff, two faculty members, F32 and F85 attended, the latter bringing her class and leaving the venue as soon as possible. F24, from the Exploration Center, also attended along with a majority of tribal community members and their students. The powwow began and F1 and F3 joined the group; again, the majority was not from the dominant group. Approximately three hours into the event, A3 made his appearance and greeted our keynote speaker with, "Are we the only two lawyers in the building?" C9 responded, "No, my Chief is also a lawyer." This person was standing right beside him—an individual A3 was supposed to build a relationship with. Native students and supporters nearby commented that A3's introduction

came off as pompous and displayed a lack of tribal leadership knowledge (Participant Observation, 2010).

The lecture and keynote speech drew the largest crowd: 80 attendees. A3, A10, and A12 attended—A13 did not. And no more than 10-15 faculty members attended, but that was the group's largest collection of bodies, as it fit into their "traditional" lecture format, viewed as more legitimate than the precursor cultural blessing and powwow that lasted for four hours. C9, C14, and C25 discussed issues of historical and contemporary institutional racism, dispossessions of lands, boarding schools, stereotypes, curriculum, and how these factors have influenced native communities and students, information that would have informed the campus. Rather, A10 and A12 were seen texting or browsing the internet on their phones and left early, while a faculty member sitting next to A3 was seen sleeping. During the Q&A, A3 asked how things might be different 25 years out for Native Americans (e.g., Supreme Court). A6 asked a rhetorical question, "lawyer-to-lawyer," as to how things were 25 years back or even 50 years back to place the conversation in historical context. Things had changed, but many issues need correcting. As the lecture commenced, A3 thanked the members and quickly left, one faculty member took the time to meet and welcome the panelists, with the majority of tribal members and their students remaining to say thank you. No administrator completed a survey, and only four faculty members did, with F83 writing, "Native communities care about education too. . . . they face the same issues as first generation students" missing the very essence of the lecture and whose epiphany was that Native Americans could and did value education (Participant Observation, 2010).

After the event, S6 noted, "I was embarrassed by the lecture series. The University disrespected us. A3 did not show [up] and engage the community members, ignored our Chief and C6. [Then] they placed C6 in the basement of A3's house, according to his wife."

C10 added, “It smelled bad down in the basement. C6 and his wife were embarrassed and there was no way they were going to stay overnight on that premises.”

The extent to which Aboriginal cultures were celebrated on campus tended to be very limited. S7 emphasized a heavier campus focus on mainstream holidays and white culture, “We get Columbus Day, Martin Luther King Day, Memorial Day; I see African American, Latin American, and Gay and Lesbian Months celebrated. November is Native American Heritage Month, but nothing is done” to recognize that cultural month. S7 was largely correct. Aside from the Frontier Project and American Indians Student Association members, the campus would not have celebrated Native American Heritage Month. S8 pointed out, “We’ve had [the] American Indian Day Experience [and] I’ve seen the Ash-Birch Garden. However, the American Indian Day Experience was not an Institutional inclusion effort. The American Indians Student Association hosted the event and received auxiliary support from the Frontier Project. As the institution noted, the American Indians Student Association’s President, A1 (at the time), “was instrumental in organizing the American Indian Day Experience” (Participant Observation, 2010).

The Native American Day Experience celebration faced Institutional barriers, especially when the American Indian Student Association sought to host a competition powwow as a means to entice more participants to attend and participate. The American Indian Student Association’s event ran into a senior level impediment. After A13 had promised to approve the award prizes for the competition powwow through the Frontier Project budget, he refused to follow through in a timely manner. When S7 and F13 followed up with A13 to discuss the matter, the senior leader not only gave the staffer a hard time but also stated, “I don’t know why Natives have to be so different from everybody else when it comes to events.” S7 noted A13’s abrasive demeanor. As to the delay, A13 intimated that A16 attempted to block powwow cash awards in order to prevent the purchase of alcohol and

this belief was stated before Student Senate (Participant Observation, 2011). In addition, A12, who supervised A16, noted in an email to me, “Cash awards seem a bit excessive to me, but if this is the ‘traditional’ awards, then I guess I can approve” (Participant Observation, 2011) Conformity was what the campus expected as deviation from the norm was deviance (e.g., alcohol stereotype) or excessive (e.g., cash prize “handout”) and leadership shared these beliefs at times freely with both Native and non-Native students.

The classroom and curriculum were another area in which students voiced largely negative and mixed opinions. S11 opined, “The classes [that] I have taken definitely don’t acknowledge or celebrate our cultures and histories. I’d like to see more Native American history in our history classes—more than a brief section in a textbook.” S5 echoed a similar feeling, “It would be nice to have more, but other cultures don’t get more than a day.” Student’s anticipated this neglect, especially towards their vibrant cultures. Some were outraged, while others tended to accept this known fact.

In mid-2011, I witnessed in the Native Cultural Center how race and racism were influencing two students who shared a social science course. They entered the area perturbed and ready to vent. They were discussing the topic of race in society and the Professor, F94, noted, “Race was based on color, but you shouldn’t assume things based on color alone,” which did not anger the students. Rather, it was her initial next statement, “because us white women” looking straight at S39, that caused S12 and S39 to be taken aback when S39 replied, “I’m sorry. I’m Native American.”

F94 was “teaching us about stereotypes, but at the same time stereotyping some of us based on our skin color.” The classroom felt tense, recalled S39, “because the professor and class just stared us down.” It was so quiet that you could hear S12’s Lifesaver being crunched. F94 noted aloud the tension in the room and continued onward. Yet soon after, F94 noted how “black women straighten their hair to be white. They want white people’s hair

because white is right” (S39). S12 replied, “They do that because white is right. Correct?” That is when F94 sat down and pulled out a game and pointed out a face to us. She was up there talking about stereotyping and then she’s going to play a game where the whole class guesses what race someone is based on phenotype? C25 stated, “That’s a difficult game because we are judging individuals” based on their assumed race. S12 agreed, “And that’s what I am saying, you don’t know what their bloodline is, so you can’t sit there and assume. That’s why I couldn’t understand why she wanted us to sit down and play a game where we assume” someone’s traits and identity. Furthermore, when it came down to discussing descriptors about us, S12 added as a joke, “We’re all on welfare!” and S39 chimed in, “Don’t forget drunks!” S39 noted that F94 “kept adding to the list and then named off a bunch of shit, about other groups, that was racist.” S12 and S39 turned the tables on the professor who focused on minority stereotypes only and noted, “What we say about white people is that they’re controlling. They have to be above all of us because ‘White is right!’” as F94 appeared to add that defining comment after each point (Participant Observation, 2011).

Racist faculty displays were not abnormal as some faculty recounted racialized occurrences as normal everyday classroom events. In First-Year Learning Communities partially funded by the Frontier Project, expectations were that Native American student participation would improve her/his academic performance and encourage the student to proceed to the second year of college and eventually graduate (Frontier Project, 2011b). However, some failed to take into account who would instruct the courses. During late 2010, Professor’s F32, F83, F18, and I discussed faculty frustrations with our Native American students enrolled in their learning community classes. F83 noted,

S20 just walks out of class when he is frustrated. In one class, we were handling minerals. I handed him a material and said, “As a Native American [you] would be familiar with the texture and mineral.” S20 looked at me and

said that, “I was racist to assume he would know the material because of his race/ethnicity.” I said, “My grandparents were in the war, and some of their items were around the house, and there was some familiarity on my part because of them. It was a mineral that a tribal person would be familiar with because [his] grandparents would have handled the material.”

F18 and I just looked at each other as if to say, “Our students were not from the ‘stone age.’” Even F32 noted, “Maybe S20 felt that you were stereotyping him.” As one person’s stereotyping might have also been another’s assumption of more cultural continuity across the generations than was actually the case. F18 added, “Not all Indigenous peoples are familiar with the mineral and its usage or are connected to their tribal roots. To which F83 commented, “I guess? I don’t think it was racist.” At which point F32 and F83 promptly noted, “I don’t think race is an important issue. That shouldn’t be an issue.”

Although it was convenient to wish race as an issue away, another issue arose from the supposed learning communities. S3 noted,

In my English [Learning Community] class, several white students were talking and doing whatever they wanted, and F32 told them to “Calm down, try to be quieter.” She was soft spoken and kind. Then some Native American students on the other side of the classroom were talking, and she yells, “Be quiet or get out of the classroom. I don’t want to treat you like you’re in high school, but I will. [I’ll] kick you out for the remainder of the class.” I asked F32, “Why didn’t you speak to them same way you did with us?” F32 just said, “Because they don’t ever talk or disturb the classroom.” [But] this was [our] first time [being warned]. It was patronizing and dismissive at the same time. It’s a double standard.

And how did these classroom incidents resonate? As S3 reasoned,

We're not the norm; we're not white. They automatically assume, based on the way we look, that we're stupid. They already have their inborn assumptions based on my race. You can just feel it when a teacher looks at you like, "What? You came here just to fail? What's the point of you even being here?"

While it was convenient for some faculty to wash their hands of issues regarding race and stereotypes—racism—it grounded some faculty interpretations and beliefs, which influenced Indigenous classroom perceptions.

Many students reported being singled out or tokenized due to their race and ethnicity and although not all comments were racist in nature, some voiced mixed feelings about being a "cultural representative" for their community. For instance, S18 found that being singled out could be positive. "Yes, sometimes they will ask me questions because of my ethnicity. Most of the time, it is not history, but current events." S10 spoke about this point neutrally, though she supposed that such references may not always be appropriate, "like certain professors makes references, but they'll do it in a nice way though, not badly, 'Thanks to our Native peoples over here...' and [students in the class] just kind of look [our] way."

However, perceptions about being singled out differ dramatically among Native American students as illustrated by S9 and the reference to her and her classmate, S37, as Native Americans. According to S9,

S37 was quiet and she was mortified. S37 just retreated into herself. For me, I was proud and stuck my head up. In that sense we were singled out, [but] it depends on the individual and how he or she respond. What I perceived as a positive, S37 saw it as a negative.

The statement exhibited that not all Native Americans felt comfortable about being singled out in class, so when professors highlighted one's race or marginality, they took an unknown

risk at the expense of the student. Regardless of the level of sensitivity and/or an attempt to celebrate their cultural belonging, they could insult students and spoil their relationships with the class.

The current campus climate was not an environment for singling out and/or highlighting marginality. As S7 pointed out, he hated being singled out, since it was usually done inappropriately, “I have been singled out on several occasions. It was awful and related to my race.” Moreover, some felt in some cases it was done to simplify a task for students as though they were inept. S13 was singled out from other students and asked to prepare a report on the Ash-Birches, and noted that the teacher probably meant well, but it felt as though she was unable to prepare a report on any other topic. As S13 put it, “I can handle doing a project on a different topic, and I don’t always have to do the Native stuff.”

Being singled out sometimes was related to some faculty whom had not bothered to check their facts, as they have their own distorted images, and expressed them as “facts” to suit a purpose; stereotypic beliefs held by the dominant group led to many Indigenous students avoiding being singled out. As S14 stated, “They don’t take a real interest in my culture. I am just here. I come, go to class, and leave. I feel anxious in class. I hate feeling like I am locked up.”

Students did perceive a gradual change in the mindset of some faculty in the classroom. S16 noted that in Professor F6’s psychology class, Native American cultures were introduced into the classroom, but that was far from the norm. To hear and see her culture brought a smile to her face as she highlighted her professor’s actions. In F6’s grant proposal she noted, “When I began my work contributing to the Frontier Project, I knew little about the grant’s objectives and structure, and precious little about Native Americans themselves. For years my interest lay dormant. I was fascinated by Native history and culture, but lacked extra time or any real incentive.” However, once involved, she

completely revamped her curriculum and brought Native knowledge found on- and off-campus into the classroom. She recalled, “Both sections were privileged to hear Native guests: S5 and C19 from the Ash-Birch tribes. Both emphasized their personal experiences in their cultures (Frontier Project, 2010b). C19 discussed “education and healing” (Participant Observation, 2010) and “S5 expounded on Native stages of life” (Frontier Project, 2010b). Furthermore, Native “films, books, and journal articles were used to expand my own knowledge and framework from which to aid the students” (Frontier Project, 2010b, p. 4).

Professor F6 with Professor F3 and tribal elder C10 worked to found the Ash-Birch Garden as mentioned previously by S8. The Ash-Birch Garden space signified “the only outside area on campus, other than a flag [circle], that highlight local tribal knowledge and culture. The Ash-Birch Garden allowed for workshops and class instruction for those wishing to construct more culturally sensitive curricula and pedagogical approaches, [and] experiential knowledge in artisan work incorporating Native designs and methods, as the garden incorporates Indigenous herbs and plants.” The Ash-Birch Garden was an area of symbolic cultural inclusion and an opportunity to educate all visitors (Frontier Project, 2011b, p. 57). Professor F6’s actions were not the only ones taking place among the faculty.

Other faculty cultural inclusion efforts were pursued too. Professor F14 invited S5 to speak on the “difference between religion and spirituality” during their social work conference. S13 found F14’s social work classes refreshing “because that’s the only time that I ever open up and talk about my experiences and my culture.” And Professor F77 welcomed tribal elders C16 and C10 to explore the cultural importance of storytelling during her outdoor recreation course. Last, Professor F3 who sought continually to increase Indigenous culture awareness on campus, always included Native peoples in his curriculum, and demonstrated a visible appreciation for tribal peoples by working alongside them. S6,

S7, S10, S12, and S15 noted that his contributions were both profound and a rare campus commodity. Many students were able to obtain their voices and the courage to share who they were (e.g., S6, S10, S12, and S15). Faculty efforts to acknowledge and/or celebrate Native American cultures were limited to only a select few—F3, F6, F14, F36, F41 F77, C7, C8, and C25 (three being Ash-Birch lecturers), but those who made honest attempts were appreciated and had a positive impact on student. Native American community members and students were being validated.

In 2011, an Ash-Birch minor was planned as a new addition to the curriculum. Upper administrator A11 worked diligently to ensure that these classes provided a refreshing view. All noted, “The construction of an Ash-Birch Minor will help to ensure both academic and cultural support for Native students (as well as an additional program of study for non-Native students in English, History, Environmental Studies, as well as additional majors, with specific interests in Native language and culture) as well as serve as a model for future programs.” I knew personally that such efforts were resisted, but advanced, nonetheless, for the greater good. As S14 reported, there was now an opportunity for both Native and non-Native students to acquaint themselves with tribal resources and opportunities in the classroom, and “They offer tribal languages on campus.” S14 noted, “People are interested in the subject. Many were from the reservation, but several non-Natives were enrolled [in the class] and interested [to learn].” In addition, S4 recalled, “I actually enjoyed taking C8’s [language] classes because there were people from the [tribal] community that took the class.” There was a married couple who took multiple courses, and the woman became fluent in the Ash-Birch language after taking “three of C8’s classes. She just immersed herself into the Ash-Birch language. I’m just like, ‘Wow! If only more people were like her.’” Students recognized that the curriculum gave them pride and that it not only benefited them, but the

cultural classes had the potential to open the minds and hearts of students when they had and took the opportunity to explore tribal language, stories, and histories in the classroom.

Change had the potential to excite and bring about new awareness and appreciation when it occurred, but often it appeared incremental and slow to Native students. The reasons for frequent cultural failures were expressed by S9. “Native American cultures and histories to the Institution are akin to a ‘little bug.’ Either they are going to squash it or allow it to run around on its own. They aren’t going to focus on the tribes; the tribes have to call out for them and demand them to focus on us.” Borderland University was believed to have a binary reaction: either ignore the tribes with the hope that they would eventually disappear or actively pursue and end anything having to do with Native Americans. Therefore, the only way to a constructive resolution to the defined problem was to create a reciprocal approach to learning rather than their cultural domination. Moreover, S6 suggested using best practices to settle issues of cultural diversity successfully. This implied that senior leadership would need to commit to diversity and assist faculty in gaining the skills and knowledge to best serve unique student populations.

This cultural “commitment” was expressed vividly to me during a national education conference. During A10’s presentation, he noted, “I am airing our institutional ‘dirty laundry’ in relations to how it was before I arrived. We have pushed beyond issues of racism.” It was an attempt to create a mythological narrative of institutional change. At dinner with several partner colleges in attendance, A10 recalled, “I tried to connect with Native American students in the beginning of the Frontier Project.” He and American Indians had a major commonality—a “similar class background. [The Native American students] just looked at me strange. I was a white guy, and they did not buy it.” Moving beyond issues of racism appeared to be a campus fiction. He felt that because he had made some level of connection with a few black female students many years before in graduate

school, based on “socioeconomic status,” that race really did not matter (Participant Observation, 2010). In A10’s mind, he was progressive. He only saw class, regardless of the fact that this colorblind view maintained white power and privilege and obscured his own color-conscious behavior and the subsequent stereotyping effect, which contributed to a hostile campus climate for Native American students (Lewis, Chesler, & Foreman, 2000).

A racially privileged perspective not only informed A10’s worldview, it influenced campus curriculum and faculty culture due to his leadership role. The perspective held by him was this:

I am not an expert in diversity and multicultural studies. I find it hard to ask faculty to add diversity and multicultural components into the classroom.

They aren’t experts. They are trained in their fields. I don’t expect myself or my faculty to become experts, [to] change their curriculum or pedagogy.

(Participant Observation, 2010).

Thus, he, the faculty, and the curriculum were perceived as being unable to evolve or incorporate multiple voices into the materials taught, even when it meant the creation of an open and welcome environment that challenged students and faculty to higher levels of critical thinking. I responded, “Faculty can integrate diversity into their curriculum. Science classes can discuss the Tuskegee Experiments and center the discussion on racial issues and social justice. Advances in science can highlight the contributions of people of color and other marginalized groups. History courses and other social sciences and humanities programs can highlight non-majority narratives of individuals and groups.” A10’s last comment was, “We can’t force them to change.” That was symbolized by a 2008/2009 College of Arts & Sciences syllabi (N=146) analysis, excluding three Ash-Birch courses, only six mentioned Native Americans and none of which cited the State of New England or

Ash-Birch tribes—a majority of the faculty syllabi being non-adjunct (Participant Observation, 2010; Frontier Project, 2009).

Resistance

Phillip Deloria (2004) notes, the default representation of Native Americans is that they are acted upon but never seen as agentive actors. However, Native American students were not simply acted upon, they actively resisted oppression. In order to resist in a transformative manner, students needed to maintain awareness and/or an ability to critique the social oppressions that occurred on campus, and have motivation to seek justice (Giroux, 1983). As Solórzano and Solórzano (1995) suggested, perceived interactions were negotiated, struggled against, and meaning created at the individual and group level—which are interlaced throughout the above sections. However, they are important to reiterate as they informed American Indians strategies that were employed to challenge Borderland University and address their educational needs, which often took a personal toll on the individuals willing to fight for justice and acquire the tools and credentials to serve their tribal communities (Brayboy, 2005b).

The immediate critique of the environment centered on racism. Many Native Americans felt the racist atmosphere due to their relative under-representation and the scarcity of other minorities on campus. Minority students constituted approximately seven percent of the student body (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). As S3 noted, she saw only one African American teacher on campus, and too few Native Americans to speak about diversity. Taking into account the lack of minority representation on campus, S9 assumed that racism was present and resulted from the “level of ignorance and lack of understanding in regards to Native students and their culture.”

The core reason for racism on campus was the prevalence of certain stereotypes held by the dominant group about Native people. S1 explained stereotyping as follows:

They assume you're a certain type of person without ever getting to know you.

Let's say we went out to get a drink. You're automatically the person that's going to drink the most, get drunk and go crazy. Or you're not taken seriously. Let's take the college classroom for example. You're automatically not a good student. You're not somebody to look up to or emulate.

The above quotation exemplified that deeply ingrained and long-held stereotypes were the basis for much racism on campus. As S4 recognized, "People think that we get everything for free.... They try to separate you" from the rest of the campus community. S12 stated that racist stereotypes concerning Native American mental abilities are expressed as, "She can't comprehend this material.' [We] can't comprehend because we're Indians, wild Indians, savages. We shouldn't know anything." As S5 confided, "In today's society we're portrayed as bad and dirty people because we're not white. White is clean, brown is dirty." Although these comments were directed at the individual, they blanketed their entire Native American race and culture.

Racist stereotypes are not held only by people in the campus community. They were shared by the outside racial dominant local community. S6 spoke about the wider social reach of racism: "There is lot of conflict." it is the local community versus us. Even high school education can foster and develop racist attitudes before students arrive on campus. As S13 reported, "In high school, I was called 'wagon burner' because of what a student learned in their social studies class. Native students have that feeling that somebody always wants to express negative racist ideas about them, so students assume it's going to happen on campus too." Therefore, S9 recognized that racist views were aimed not at the individual, but rather the whole racial makeup of the Ash-Birches. "We're Native peoples, and when we're picked

out as a group, that's racist." Therefore, Native Americans' treatment on campus was a microcosm of wider social issues that remained unresolved and continued during their campus experiences and were perceived to be related not only to racism, but also colonialism.

A colonial concept was used by some students to critique the social oppression they felt on campus. S12 described the campus power dynamic in this way: "It has been like that time after time, generation after generation, since the beginning of time. White people feel that they need to take over.... They couldn't get rid of us, and then they couldn't assimilate us." therefore they created colonial conditions urging the Indigenous population to fit into those designated rules for survival and success in the dominant society. As S14 clarified, "We were forced to live by white rules, culture, and religion. Now we're required to follow their campus rules.... We are given only one path." Similarly, S3 pointed out that colonialism is expressed through dominance; Native populations are excluded from the educational framework because of their supposed poor knowledge of, and poor access to, mainstream learning.

S13 explained the colonial manifestation on campus. "It's very obvious that a very small population of Native people, and it's a direct reflection of what happened before....If it never happened, there would probably be more Native people" and more of us who speak our language. However, the educational system did not provide them with the means to retain their cultures. As S9 noted, regarding the campus ethic, "White is right to them.... Colonialism is racist." They literally attempted to strip "a group of peoples of their rights and [attempted to] turn them into whom they [thought they] should be." The dominant group could not succeed, so they stuck us "on reservations" in an attempt to "stick it to" us. Hence, a majority of students agreed that colonialism existed in society and on their campus; it was an expression of white dominance that influenced the ways in which whites viewed Indigenous peoples, their rights, and their place on campus, a type of racism and/or colonial

adaptation, which combined economic exploitation and the erasure of cultural differences (Wolfe, 2006).

S2 claimed that colonial manifestations had an even greater negative effect on campus attitudes pertaining to Native Americans. He noted,

I believe colonialism plays a bigger role than racism. Colonialism changes; it transforms into something different; a different form of neglect and disavowing the ‘Others’ perspective. It’s only one way of thinking, one way of doing things, and one way of defining who you are. They’re not necessarily forcing us to learn a different language or change who we are. It’s a conscious and unconscious act at work, which excludes us. Maybe they’re not aware of this process, but its taking place on this campus.

In many ways, colonialism encompassed racism as one of its manifestations. Colonialism, as with racism, was normative in the eyes of the students because the ways in which they thought of themselves and others—superior versus subordinate—were embedded into their existence whether the dominant group chose to realize or ignore the “other” reality. This colonialist mentality pervaded their authenticity. S2 agreed, due to the white privilege felt on campus. The members of the majoritarian group thinks they are entitled to anything built in their image; they “simply walk onto the campus and maintain their privileged status.” Thus, whites took their privilege for granted. They never doubted that they deserved it, nor did they questions who did not, which influences their attitudes and beliefs.

As S7 noted, the colonial ways of treating Native Americans were embodied into the modes of teaching at Borderland University. The faculty “is going to teach you what they want straight from the book no matter what anybody tells them. It’s their truth. Colonialism still takes place in the classroom.” According to S1, “Colonial imagery from the past is carried over into the present. Society doesn’t know much about contemporary Native

American issues or us. They may know that tribal communities are small and segregated from the public—those who live on the reservation.” Consequently, the images of colonialism, though coming from a distant past, persisted and shaped relationships and mutual perceptions of white and Indigenous students.

The oppression felt by Native American students on campus could not help being compared to the past unfortunate experience of residential boarding schools. Therefore, many students found further connections between the past and present oppressive, limiting methods of teaching Native students. S1 explained, “You’re learning what they want you to learn, like their history, but I didn’t take U.S. history.” S3 provided a more comprehensive explanation of the similarities between the past and present in education:

I’d say the negative campus environment is similar to the boarding school period in some ways. We can’t talk our language in the classroom. In college you have to do things their way. No other way is acceptable. White is right. In the boarding schools, you got physically and verbally punished. Today they’re not going to hit you, but they’ll smack you verbally to make you conform. Or they’ll mark your grade down because you didn’t do it right or you did something wrong in class two weeks ago.

S9 compared this predominantly white education with a box into which Native Americans were forced to fit, though unsuccessfully. S9 recalled, “Things don’t have to be done one way. We still need guidelines, but there also needs to be flexibility.” Nevertheless, this white box can create “a sense of fear because we have not been accepted into a lot of places. Over the generations, we have had to fight for things. We need to stand up and say something. We can be democratic, persuasive, factual, and use those tools.” However, standing up to the education system is difficult due to the similarity between “modern”

educational establishments and boarding schools. No Native American students should ever feel that they have to give up their culture.

Nevertheless, the manifestations of oppression frequently found on campus urges assimilation and forced compliance. As confided by S14,

I feel pressured to be like the majority. We are treated like children, unless we act as they do. In the classroom, we have to think one way in order to succeed. You don't question the professor for the most part. Some faculty you can, but not all.

Such pressures were felt in the rejection of Native traditions and perpetuation of white traditions, festivities, and culture, as a case reported by S18 with regard to celebrating Columbus Day. "I was put in my place and told to respect their view." And the campus administration has always "attempted to inhibit [the American Indian Student Association's] ability to share our culture with the campus." Therefore, the campus forces you into their box and "it will devastate you and you will hate yourself" if you succumb to the assimilation pressures (Interview, S9).

Such pressures were so persistent and comprehensive on campus that they made Native American students believe that conformity was their best option because it would make their lives on campus easier, which was voiced by S1. He never fell into that trap, but noted that the University reinforced oppression and pressure to maintain the status quo, while limiting opportunities for those sticking to their own culture and disregarding the white society's norms, "They dictate their ways through their own ideas of what level of success we should obtain, and restrict us to certain levels." Resistance could lead to lower grades and the risk of dropping out of college (Interview, S18).

Some students, such as S6 saw little connection between Borderland University's education and the modes of teaching in residential boarding schools, since it occurred in the

distant past, “It’s so far back...it’s happened a while ago, but the ways that were taught is based on” the dominant groups “culture and history.” Although unnoticed by the student, her comments indicated that a majoritarian vantage point still held its grip on learning the right culture and history. S1 noted this psychological pressure, “We aren’t forced to cut our hair or dress in their clothes, but we’re still worthless to them,” While S7 mentioned a more radical perception of college participation requirements:

If I were to play sports, they would want me to cut my hair. I only cut it when there was a death in the family or when I married my wife; I was supposed to braid my hair and present it to her. Borderland University tried to suspend me for not cutting my hair. I asked ‘if they had ever heard of racism. Would they make Jesus cut his hair?’ The residential school beliefs appear to still be in place.

Therefore, as the presented citations suggest, Native American students felt that education had changed to a certain extent (e.g., colonialism, boarding schools); oppression was still evident in linguistic and instructional modes of domination. Native students were not punished physically for non-conformity, but their opportunities on campus were limited by Borderland University’s level of acceptance and its dominant culture and rules.

Not all students noted or saw racism, colonialism, and/or residential boarding school manifestations on campus. For instance, S14 noted, “I haven’t actually seen it on campus, so I wouldn’t know.” He pointed out, “I can’t really see that playing out on campus. I mean, maybe with some of the instructors, [but] not as far as your peers.” Therefore, the extent to which colonialism is pronounced on campus was likely due to the extent of historical awareness surrounding white-Indigenous relationships.

All but two students acknowledged the pervasive impact that racial, colonial, and residential boarding school manifestations had on their campus. Most students simply stated

that these cultural issues affected their campus experiences significantly, while S5 explained her impressions as follows:

Yes, whether the campus believes it or not, whether they want to see it or not.

Their testing—they couldn't believe that I had a hard time with their tests.

They're telling me that something is wrong because their textbook says it's

right. Again, my values may differ from the textbook values [on] which they

base their learning. I had difficulty trying to understand their learning process.

Even students who did not personally experience these effects still acknowledged that their situation could be individually shaped, and agreed that Native Americans in general tended to experience negative campus cultural pressure. As stated by S10, "I am sure it does for some people more than others. For me, I don't really let it bother me, or I find ways around it, I guess. But I'm sure some people have a hard time." The two students who did not acknowledge the impact of boarding schools, colonialism, and racism on them or other Native students' experiences, stated that the situation might have changed recently, and that their campus was not racist. Therefore, Borderland University's racism, colonialism, and/or boarding schools behaviors and attitudes were acknowledged almost unanimously, as were their negative impacts.

Combat Strategies

Native American students had an understanding of the type of campus environment they encountered on a reoccurring basis. Therefore, survival and resilience depended upon perceived effective and successful strategies for both them and future tribal community members in order to stave off a hostile campus and to persist on their own terms.

Social support and striving to communicate were among the recommendations for Native American newcomers. S14 pointed out, "Get familiarized with the campus. Talk to

other [Native] students who have been in college and be selective of the instructors who teach the classes. Take the opportunity to explain to others what has happened to us and our peoples.” Early support network reliance to remain proactive and avoid problematic faculty was important as well as finding one’s voice to educate others. Native students who paired those initial steps with time management—balancing family, children, work, and college—might avoid dropping out (Interview, S5). As S16 recommended, an ability to “find people [you] can go to so they don’t feel alone” was significant. Community support was of central importance for Native American students, individuals who had strong values and/or a deep appreciation for their tribal cultures. Hence, S13 confided, “Having my community know what I’m doing and backing me [has] kept me going because at first I had no one” on campus.

Most students combating racism chose to follow some mainstream rules to avoid problems, but also maintained their dignity. For instance, S10 envisioned this coping strategy:

Some days I just feel like slapping them upside their head[s] and saying, “Look, we’re here, and we’re here to stay, whether you like it or not. Whether we’re rocking the boat or not, you people have to realize that there’s more to us than just the money you get from our students. They need to listen to us and our students.” They have to try to accommodate Native peoples, just as we’ve attempted to accommodate them all these years. We’ve put up with them for all these years now it’s time for them to reciprocate.

For S10, reciprocation meant for the dominant group to engage, ask questions, and enter into a civil dialog that would allow them to learn from Native Americans, as they were willing to do with whites. As Indigenous students, “You just have to do things whether you like it or not, the way they want and/or expect you to do it. Go forth and learn their ways so that you

can beat them at their own game.” Doing things majoritarian faculty, staff, and administration wanted and/or expected them to do was not assimilation. Rather, attend class, complete assignments, and earn good grades to aid themselves and their community. Following that philosophy, Native Americans believed that adapting and using the best cultural practices and knowledges would grant them some form of protection, while disproving racism. Both S1 and S5 agreed, and although they never discounted the suffering of traumatic encounters with representatives of a hostile culture, they too recommended using the best of both worlds to remain focused on education and motivational goals to pursue graduate degrees that would gain them access to areas that were often closed off to them in mainstream society.

Students acknowledged that subordination to the mainstream culture was a basis for precondition of mainstream education. S10 confided, “In order to progress or succeed,” at times there is a trade off. “You gotta make little sacrifices because we’re not on reservation.” That powerful stimulus made some “pause” certain cultural principles for a short period of time to obtain an educational degree and career prospects, despite ongoing campus racism. Internal motivation to persist and make small sacrifices was different for some students, the educational experience (or its absence) of parents (e.g., S2), for others, or the desire to be role models for their children and/or grandchildren (e.g., S9). S6’s motivation was her own children; as the student pointed out, “I have kids; I don’t want them to grow up dealing with the pressure that I have faced. I want to be able to push kids over here, to go, say to Borderland University. That’s one reason why I’ve been working with the Frontier Project, [to make it] a better campus for Native students.” The majority of interviewees reported having a strong motivation to pursue their studies for their own benefit, for their families, careers, etc. As S16 explained, “I am not going to stop. I’m proving something to myself and my kids.” Hence, the task of obtaining the education they

are entitled to was accepted as a challenge by many Native Americans, and each of the interviewees found their own methods for dealing with the unwelcoming climate on campus in order to achieve those goals. The notion that students felt that higher education could be a positive vehicle for individual, family, and community success despite their own campus experiences exhibited hope.

Seeking educational support or maintaining hope was not always easy when considering the campus climate. However, S17 recommended that Native American students “stay in full contact with [their] professors and advisor and take every advantage that you have on campus” to obtain your goals. S14 also reported much educational support from professors. “I think talking to some professors helped me out. Taking time to express your view is important for them to know you and for you to know them.” S15 acknowledged the contribution of Professor F89 who helped her to adjust to campus life. She pointed out that she wished more faculty members took a keen interest, as most had become the tools of oppression. S3 recommended to students,

Talk to your professors ahead of time. No faculty member has the right to bully a student, especially because of their race. If that doesn't work, talk to somebody else. Tell somebody. I went to the Native Cultural Center and spoke with F18 and you because of my instructor. Talk to somebody you trust and see what they can do to help you.

The point was that students needed to bring to the offender's attention how their racialized bullying and mistreatment was discriminatory and highly inappropriate. Educate them regarding their actions. If your concerns are ignored and hostilities persist, take action and trust culturally appropriate resources to get involved and assist you as a way to eliminate racialized attitudes and behaviors.

Native American “passive” strategies to discourage racial stereotyping were actually methodical and active by means of their intended outcomes. This denoted that attempts to avoid confrontation were not due to fear, but in relation to defusing the image of Native Americans as troublemakers, aggressive, etc. According to S10, “Don’t buy into” their ploys and attempts to anger you. “Don’t become their stereotype. Step above it.” For some students, it was knowing their personal limitations. S13 noted that she held back when flagrant comments were made because her temperament would start to crumble. It was not easy to remain quiet as some attitudes expressed constituted fighting words, “but at the same time, I know they’re just ignorant [racists] and [they don’t] know what they’re talking about most of the time.” S13 was not the only Native holding back as she “could see ears [turn] red.” A verbal fight, or a physical altercation, would only strengthen racial stereotypes and incur problems with the University’s administration. This selective behavior of “inaction” did not always imply silence.

Native students would and did push back. According to S12, “It’s important to say if you feel that you’ve been wronged. Speak up and say, ‘That wasn’t right’ because people don’t know or realize what they can say is hurtful.” Tact was implied. Even in cases that were highly offensive, S18 explained, “I am not going to make a scene, unless it is extremely derogatory [and] depending on whom” the offender was. Rather than have “the attention focused on [her]” she sought to deal with the larger issue and at the same time “portray [her]self as strong and able to deal with those issues.”

Other students took it a step further and used race-laced encounters as an opportunity to critique preconceived notions, exhibit the ignorance behind stereotypic beliefs and attitudes, and educate faculty members despite the emotional weight that accompanied these occurrences. S5 recalled,

[Professor] F39, when [discussing] annotating home visits, noted the people as “Acting like wild animals, you know, like wild Indians” and looked at the only two Native students in the classroom. S23 and I turned and just looked at each other in horror. We couldn’t believe what she just said. Then the other students started laughing because they thought it was hilarious. When the class was over, I left immediately, but turned around halfway down the hallway and came back. I went up to the professor and said, “[Professor] F39, I’m very disappointed in what you just said in our class today. You insulted me and my people.”

The student’s experience was in some ways similar to others who, as a people, were linked to being dirty, savage, and animals; wild Indians/animals were equated as a normative insult that unconsciously reinforced white superiority that could accompany the oppressive physically being looked down upon as “inferior” in conjunction with racist illustrations. In addition, majoritarian students found the connection humorous; a faculty member in a position of power had validated a stereotype and subjected the two Indigenous students to ridicule. Horrified, S5 initially sought safety by fleeing the racial epicenter, but gathered herself and faced the perpetrator as it had a deleterious impact on her and a peer. Disappointment was voiced; the faculty member was supposed to be educated. After all, these were potential social workers. Rather than deal with the racial issue and take ownership of the incident, the faculty member blamed governmental election stressors. S5 could have given her a pass, but resisted. F29’s excuse was insufficient; Native students exhibited the courage to resist, educate, and transform knowledge and assumptions both in- and outside of the classroom.

Although some American Indian students chose to avoid the tuition waiver issue, others took a stand and countered the majoritarian free ride or reverse discrimination label.

S7 noted this racially-charged white perception and how he sought to educate and transform opinions:

The [tuition] waiver was an opportunity for the State to give back. However, students say, “I was not part of that decision.” No, but it was their culture that decided that for our culture, and we continue to live with those decisions today. The [tuition] waiver is a small compensation. I am still under the same academic and financial standards as is everybody else. People are just ignorant and too lazy to understand. It is not a free ride. My people and I have made sacrifices for the waiver.

Some students understood the historical significance of the tuition waiver and the purpose to advance diversity where access had been limited among the tribes. This Native history was not widely known by many non-tribal members; therefore, the added context brought greater understanding and a degree of acceptance from others, while for most students, the message was lost in its entirety—the past was the past regardless of its persistent legacies.

Great internal support came to Native American students from their own cultures. S8 noted, when “combating [the campus], the best things that you can do is to hold on to what you have.” She is not currently living on the reservation, but “I still have my culture.” it was part of her, and she refused to let it “be wiped clean off the slate.” To retain that cultural connection for those away or even near their tribal communities, S4 recommended maintaining one’s cultural awareness. “Take classes that are important and respect your culture. Enroll in an Ash-Birch language or Native courses.” One’s culture could lead to positive changes, as S5 reported. “I performed ceremonies and tried to incorporate my culture. I celebrated my culture and [the] students and faculty enjoyed my presentations.” Maintaining one’s culture made resistance easier for some because they had their “culture to fall back on” (Interview, S9). Native pride, community, culture, Indigenous studies all

played a role in preserving one's sense of identity while providing them with the strength to persevere (Okagaki, Helling, & Bingham, 2009). Together with "passive" resistance and/or "active" resistance strategies, the intent was to make the campus more palatable and favorable for Native Americans. S7 recommended,

If you need them to be more understanding then you have to work even harder to show them. Talk to the campus [community]. Let them know [that] it's Native Appreciation Month. Ask them why they are not doing anything for the celebration. Make them aware.

Raising awareness in this way provided some fruitful results. S7 reported that classroom cultural engagement via a PowerPoint Ash-Birch presentation showed pictures of his reservation and explained who the community members were and what they performed. His presentation challenged majoritarian perceptions that led to a vibrant discussion. Moreover, the American Indian Day Experience celebration was visited by some of his peers—Native and non-tribal—which indicated to him that some positive inroads to increased cultural awareness and respect toward Native Americans could be made. As S2 claimed, "I think it would be wrong to think that [white] attitudes can never change; they can change for the better."

Native American students voiced optimism that the situation on campus would eventually change for the better, since they noticed some recent positive changes and expected even larger Institutional transformation. S14 pointed out,

Their ignorance doesn't see you. They don't want to learn about you. They need to come to a deeper understanding. I think the [campus] will come to a positive conclusion [as] some [have]. They need to take the opportunity to learn and grow.

Students had managed to involve some white classmates into a journey of cultural inquiry. As S5, a fluent Native speaker stated, “I’m not going mainstream because that’s not who I am. I stood my ground. I wasn’t ashamed to drum and speak my language” in and outside the classroom (Participant Observation, 2011). Cultural expression helped S5 to attract and educate some dominant group members to pay attention to her culture.

Despite a range of techniques and methods, Native American students enacted to counter racism and colonialism, they were still unable to avoid the painful impact of insults and pejorative expressions towards them. Regardless of the active or passive path selected, most students sought communication and community with people similar to them once outside of the academic combat zone, which was not unusual as Native students have historically developed group and/or community defense mechanisms that at present can be bolstered by culturally competent campus support structures. As S5 and S12 pointed out, Native American students needed to unite and anchor each other, which supported them collectively to resist the white imposition of racial inferiority on campus. Hence, to seek out an atmosphere that was free of constant emotional and psychological tension and a place one could be oneself and “do what [we] need to do to continue on” was imperative (Interview, S4).

Agency Deployment

The Native Cultural Center (a Frontier Project initiative) and American Indian Student Association at Borderland University provided unity and served to advance sociocultural networks and develop cultural safe havens. The “Native Cultural Center supported Native student persistence and graduation, provided personalized academic advising, tuition waiver assistance, and a study lounge and computer lab” and was supported by F13, F18, C10, and I (Ruiz, 2010). The American Indian Student Association was founded during the Frontier

Project planning year in collaboration with tribal elder C7 and Indigenous students (Frontier Project, 2007). “The American Student Association promoted native awareness within and outside the institution and provided Native students the support to facilitate personal, traditional, and academic success” (Ruiz, 2010). These two campus components worked collaboratively towards transformative resistance as a collective or community to aid Native American student success.

Most participants, in an attempt to counteract daily racist attacks and deficit theory, formed safe havens both on- and off-campus to develop support networks that provided a secure environment, and allowed individuals to vent their frustrations in order to survive academically and socially. The Native Cultural Center become that safe haven for many as its environment intentionally sought to create a sense of community, a counterspace, and “home” within the university (Wright, 1985, 1991; Reyhner, 1997). S9 affirmed the perspective of her peers:

It’s easier to ask for help from others who understand your situation. The Center is a place you can go to. Everybody needs encouragement, and this is where we receive our support now. I wish it existed my first time around in college; I would have never dropped out.

The Native Cultural Center intentionally addressed mainstream higher education issues by taking into account the academic, sociocultural, and psychological needs of tribal students. A “Family Education Model” created a family-like environment by making family and tribal members an integral component of the educational process and gave students an education that was relevant and appropriate to their cultural background (HeavyRunner & DeCelles, 2002; Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). As S1 noted,

[I feel] most appreciated in the Native Cultural Center. I feel like we’re a family. Being at the Native Cultural Center never feels forced. It’s not just

that that we get along with each other; we understand one another. You don't have to think twice about being in the Center. I never felt like that before on campus.

Native Cultural Center's success suggested that our systematic approach could benefit student success, tribal recruitment and engagement, cultural events, and program development that celebrates differences and supports unique student needs. This Native Cultural Center framework advocated for tribal student and community success and became a site for cultural learning.

The Native Cultural Center's success was measurable. The Frontier Project (2011b) noted that the Center had surpassed the goal of 25 contacts per week. From January to April 2010, the location had "recorded 164, 144, 124, and 160 visits per month for an average of 54.81 contacts per week, of which 40, 27, 30, and 50 were distinct visitors per month. The total monthly average stay was 1.11, 1.28, 1.14, and 1.4 hours per visit" that caused its detractors to insinuate that Native students were intentionally missing class to hang out in the Center; a complete fabrication as the data was intentionally collected and compared against class schedules (Participant Observation, 2010). The Native Cultural Center, in essence, was an inviting room, but it was the students, staff, tribal community members, and advocates that made it a home and a launching place to recharge, resist, and transform the campus. As S5 stated, "We finally have a place to go. I see the Native Cultural Center as a positive academic and social support," as cultural knowledge was a valuable college resource that empowered students to contest racist educational practices (Yosso, 2005).

The Native Cultural Center was also home for the American Indian Student Association, which emphasized communal transformative resistance. As S3 stated, the "Native Cultural Center and American Indian Student Association incorporate our ways and get to know us," and that was worth the fight.

The American Indian Student Association, since its inception, has promoted cultural awareness and supported personal, traditional, and academic success. However, it was not until it had a home—the Native Cultural Center—that it took flight. Previous meetings were spotty, but with time, membership, and active participation, it grew from the low single digits to mid-teens as did its campus activities (Ruiz, 2011).

S12 described the American Indian Student Association as “an awesome student organization.” The strength of the Native American community was its unity. S12 relayed that, “The American Indian Student Association is important because we may all be from different tribes, but we have some cultural similarities and can relate to each other. You can’t talk to anybody else about ceremonies.” S18 noted, it is a “group you can talk to that can mediate and/or advocate for you. [They have] the same experiences and [can] provide the tools to succeed.” And S6 stated, you can talk with other Native students and avoid bullying from white students. The student organization provided an avenue of support. Native American students were able to find emotional, social, psychological, and motivational support to handle racial oppressions and kept their studies going.

The American Indian Student Association was characterized positively by students. S39 said it succinctly. “The American Indian Student Association allows you to work with and talk to other tribal students. We try to develop collective strategies for institutional change and to educate non-Indigenous peoples who fuel racial attitudes. We work at it as a group; you’re not alone.” The American Indian Student Association’s transformative resistance was viewed through two initiatives: The American Indian Day Experience and PRIDE mentoring. For all of the racial oppression and opposition thrown at Native students, they still wanted to educate the campus and graduate with a college degree.

The American Indian Student Association’s American Indian Day Experience (powwow) was a cultural celebration open to tribal members, community, and campus

participants; it was free and open to all. This signature event was a collaborative. As S1 intimated, this was the one time a year where their cultures and histories were celebrated, an event led by the student organization. The American Indian Day Experience “brought many Native American families to campus, and we were able to experience firsthand the importance of family in Native American culture. Native presenters helped [those in attendance] deepen [their] understanding of Native cultures and experiences” (Frontier Project, 2008c).

Yet students faced opposition in putting on the cultural experience. In 2011, S7 noted, “They sure know how to stick it to the [tribal] communities. I remember when F13 and I went in to speak with senior administrator A10 about the event and we brought up the idea of a powwow competition. He just said, “What money? You are not getting any monies.” And when I attempted to speak, he would cut me off, ignore me, or just act rude. I am the spokesperson for the group, but it did not matter, I was an Indian. So I just gave it back to him, cut him off, got my point across, and did not allow myself to be intimidated by some ignorant racist.”

Native American students viewed the American Indian Day Experience as a form of “powwow education” for Borderland University and an opportunity to express their cultural richness. Even faculty who had racially maligned Indigenous students were personally invited to attend this cultural event (Participant Observation, 2010). Ceremony, workshops, drumming and dancing, crafts, and food were all intertwined into the event. In 2011, morning presentations were done on basket making, storytelling, and traditional social dances. The afternoon and evening witnessed an opening blessing, grand entry, and powwow competition for senior, junior, teen, and tiny tot participants. And a sponsored dinner fed approximately 300 participants and attendees (Ruiz, 2011).

Native student members were out in force. S6, S7, S9, S11, S12, S13, S19, S20, S21, S39, and S45 volunteered for baking, raffling items, planning, cleaning up, judging, and setting up. Their numbers were larger than the previous year; the American Indian Student Association had a beneficial influence on student engagement. The powwow competition implementation was successful: more vendors, dancers, drummers, and people attended regardless of limited campus publicity from the institution, omission from “diversity” event posters, and pushback from senior leadership (A12, A13), A3’s quick three-minute pass through, where community members and the Native American student hosts were avoided at all cost; A12’s statuesque position in the corner of the room, disengaged from the tribal communities; fliers placed in the dorms and in other campus locations were promptly defaced or torn down and thrown in the garbage (Borderland University, 2011; Participant Observation, 2011; Interview, S18).

The American Indian “Powwow Education” Experience reflected that Native students were willing to take on Borderland University. Scant majoritarian administrative, faculty, staff, and student support did not appear to weigh on the student members as their tribal cultures took center stage—powwow was their cultural curriculum (Participant Observation, 2011). As S5 stated, “We get teachings from our elders. That’s our school of life. Non-Natives learn from textbooks, from what is concrete. Our language encompasses tradition and values I got from my parents” (Alias, 2010). American Indian Student Association actions facilitated a cultural exchange and provided a welcome environment and an opportunity to teach the dominant group, and counter stereotypes, while making their presence known on campus; Native Americans refused to remain in isolation. Conversely, whites in attendance exhibited the courage to listen and reflect on the cultural diversity around them both on- and off-campus. As one majoritarian student wrote concerning the previous year’s annual event,

I enjoyed the morning blessing and opening ceremony and [hearing] about their culture and the interrelatedness of all aspects of life: earth, wind, water, parents, children, grandchildren, etc. It was an amazing and powerful experience to witness this cultural practice; it was something I had never experienced before.

This cultural event provided non-tribal community members a unique experience.

Indigenous venues such as this provided an opportunity to construct an inclusive campus that acknowledged, welcomed, and educated others regarding the importance of cultural and racial diversity. In addition, while educational celebrations were powerful, so were the efforts to support group members in one-on-one and community levels through peer-to-peer mentoring.

American Indian Student Association students were aware of this historic high attrition rate of their community peers who attended Borderland University. They sought to end this trend through the formation of a peer-peer mentor program for Indigenous retention, development, and empowerment. The organization's proposal noted:

Indigenous students who enter college, [they] often encounter limited academic support structures. Services that can increase academic and career development are missing and/or not communicated to students. This reality exists on our own campus accompanied by low teen percentage graduation rates. The peer-peer mentor program's goal is to support the [Native Cultural] Center with student retention through a mentoring program that will guide peers through their first academic year, where dropout rates are among the highest.

Five American Indian Student Association members would serve as mentors: S7, S9, S11, S12, and S13. Peer mentors were expected to assist eight, first-year, tribally enrolled students

during the spring semester. Mentees were required to attend mentor/mentee and student organization meetings (Frontier Project, 2011a). Native American students were intimately aware of campus issues and their various forms and sought to provide new students protection through guidance and cultural resilience, a mentor program that would find its way into first-year learning communities and potentially orientation (Frontier Project, 2011b).

Native peer-peer mentors introduced their mentees to campus resources, programs, and services available to undergraduates. Those resources included The American Indian Student Association, Native Cultural Center, Writing and Tutoring Center, Financial Aid and Business offices. New mentees were made aware of the current campus racial environment, its issues, hotspots, and support structures to prepare them in advance (Frontier Project, 2011a; Participant Observation, 2011). S12 noted that the situation is different for each Native American student. “I’ve seen Native American students who have thrived. I feel inspired by them. Then I see others who [don’t], which makes me upset” as the campus may have contributed to this outcome. That discrepancy may have been attributable to individual differences of positioning oneself on campus or the attitudes and behaviors encountered. However, peer mentors strove for change and shared their first-hand knowledge as first-generation students, stop outs, parents, and tribal members who understand the campus’ social environment and its complications, but also the tools that can contribute to academic success (Frontier Project, 2011a; Participant Observation, 2011). As S9 noted, “Mentoring allows me to give back to my peers. I advertise the group and our resources in class and seek to be an ambassador for the program” (Participant Observation, 2011).

The American Indian Student Association and Native Cultural Center support structures were not unique on their own, but agency—the power to effect change—was implemented at a community level that included both Native and non-tribal members. The greatest transformational resistance occurred as a collective group that empowered each

member to fight back, educate, and carve out a niche within the Borderland University compound. Thus, the Native Cultural Center and American Indian Student Association became sources of comfort, support, and transformative resistance.

Perhaps tribal elder C10's synopsis during an out-of-state conference best contextualized the nature of student transformative resistance:

It's about building relationships. When they come to our communities wearing suits and ties to the reservation, we don't trust them because it resembles a miniature Indian Affairs. They seek control. I feel sorry for the Native students. Borderland University does not provide support. Our Native Cultural Center is a safe haven. (Participant Observation, 2010).

In essence, only when educators and practitioners acknowledge, appreciate, focus on, and view distinct cultural wealth as a critical ingredient in education, then, and only then will Native American students fully benefit from the white education system that is represented by Borderland University.

Conclusion

As my critical ethnography began with an ethical responsibility to address processes of injustice within a lived domain, it was vital that I dig beneath the surface to disrupt the status quo and provide clarity to the obscure operations of power and control, and challenge Borderland University's social practices that limited, constrained, and denigrated Native American students and, by extension, their tribal communities. Thus, I am compelled to contribute to emancipator knowledge and discourses related to student experiences whose stories would otherwise be restrained and out of reach of most (Madison, 2005, p. 5).

Within the process of analyzing the Institutional documents and personal observations I collected during a two-year period regarding campus racial climate, I came to understand

that winning a nearly \$1 million grant, which funded the Frontier Project and its initiatives, became a turning point in the treatment of Native Americans at Borderland University. The influx of a large sum of money to the campus' budget was a positive contribution, and aided the grant's philosophy and strategic goals to ensure annual funding until they ran dry. This grant's impact changed and highlighted underlying racial attitudes and behaviors in relation to some Institutional documents, observations, interviews, and efforts, but immediately detected was the persistence of racism and prejudice towards Native Americans among staff, faculty, students, and the administration. These negative attitudes, despite the formal and positive effort towards inclusion, were clearly felt in many letters, in lack of respect towards diversity committee meetings, attendance at significant cultural events, etc. in spite of persistent Borderland University pejorative and racially-colored attitudes and behaviors towards Native Americans, the Frontier Project gained access to powerful instruments (e.g., American Indian Student Association) that secured and improved the position of Native American students, which, in turn, increased diversity, fostered inclusion, and paid tribute to Indigenous cultures and sovereign nations.

Despite the fact that a culture of racism, segregation, and exclusion pervaded many campus aspects, one has to recognize the important positive impacts the grant had on the campus environment. Indigenous students finally obtained safe havens in which they felt comfortable and empowered, such as the Native Cultural Center, American Indian Student Association, as well as the Ash-Birch minor, full-time staff advocates, etc. Campus advocates put enormous effort into promoting a Native American presence, celebrating cultural celebrations, and combating racism and exclusion, while working alongside our students. Therefore, there was a powerful and growing network of Native American community advocates, and the campus community witnessed a wider and more frequent recognition of Native American cultures.

Although I doubt that being awarded the Frontier Project grant will indelibly change the establishment's profile and scope of activities, and even despite a considerable amount of resistance and racism visible from all Institutional levels, Native American students, their tribal communities, and the Frontier Project still opened a new stage of tribal representation on campus. The Frontier Project's introduction was a logical continuation of a long-standing legal process of expanding social, educational, and other domains for the first peoples of the New England State.

Some faculty and staff members involved both directly and indirectly in the grant began to apply their expertise with enthusiasm. Their efforts were directed at developing alternative solutions to funding, countering tuition waiver resistance, creating cultural gardens, inviting local and national tribal members to be guest speakers, writing grants, changing their curriculum, founding first-year learning communities, introducing a culturally relevant minor, and initiating relationships with Native students and their communities (Frontier Project, 2008a, 2009, 2010a, 2011b). The grant also provided funds to add a volunteer tribal elder to our staff who proved to be a critical link to building relationships with seven sovereign nations. Therefore, powerful systems of advocacy had been developed regarding Native students.

Native advocates also combated the unfair accusations of faculty and staff, while they faced strong resistance within the dominant framework. Any deviation from that white norm, such as empowerment of minorities, was automatically regarded as disenfranchisement of white students, symbolizing the acceptance of only one type of equality—white supremacy. Despite the extensive and dedicated effort of some advocates, and Native students and community members deeply involved in the Frontier Project initiative, there remained much to do to combat the atmosphere of disrespect, ignorance, and negligence towards the Native American culture on the Borderland University campus.

The Frontier Project advisory board consisted of both Native American advocates (tribal and non-tribal members) and opponents, which created a certain tension during meetings. In 2007, Frontier Project representatives recognized the reason for poor Native American retention in a lack of knowledge on best practices of inclusive and diverse teaching, as well as a lack of data on best retention strategies. Organization of the American Indian Day Experience, Native American Heritage Month, and other explicit ways of integrating and celebrating the Native culture on campus were among the intended priorities that year (Frontier Project, 2009). In 2008, advisory board members worked to conceive a Student Support Center, obtain funds for Native American student involvement in math and science summer programs, increase faculty cultural awareness, develop a blueprint for stimulating a more welcoming and inclusive environment for Native students, and initiate stronger ties to two local tribes (Frontier Project, 2009). Unfortunately very little arose from their best-laid “paper” plans.

The one fundamental assumption that symbolically broke the grant arose during a Frontier Project Tribal Elders’ Dinner. The elders made one request: “[Borderland University’s] recognition that prejudicial attitudes toward Native Americans exist and need to be addressed” (Frontier Project, 2008b). Only by acknowledging a specific type of racism directed at Native Americans, could the administration take effective measures to address and mitigate hatred and provide the means for each party to heal, a request that was never taken into consideration (Kroskrity 2013). In addition, who would expect the campus and its leadership to take this action when most felt that “Native peoples are wards of the state. They take handouts, they’re lazy, they’re drunks, they never were ambitious, they never did anything with the land, and they want things from society” (Interview, F3). Inferiors should be grateful just to be at the table, let alone make a request. On the other hand, as A7, one of my predecessors, stated during a large advisory board meeting, “We [don’t] need to talk

about treaties and sovereignty and the hurtful past. We won the war and they need to get over it” (Interview, F1). Racism, war, and the past, created negative images, and the predominately white institution needed to control its image and narrative.

Summary of Findings

As my research findings suggest, the Borderland University climate was highly conducive to racism perpetuated and sustained at all levels of the Institutional hierarchy. Racism starts at the top, as both theory and practice imply, and the campus leadership culture made a significant contribution to the persistence of a hostile, unwelcoming campus climate for Native American students. The initial motive behind the non-acceptance of Native students at the University was the financial burden of educating Native Americans. Senior leadership was compelled to freely express their racialized attitudes and behaviors to the neighboring tribal communities and their representatives studying at their campus. These attitudes were passed down to lower levels of the hierarchy, such as mid-level administration, faculty, staff, and students; professors hurled and insinuated prejudiced remarks towards Native students and business, financial aid, and admissions staff among others, ignored Indigenous students’ needs and made it more and more challenging for them to persist and complete their degree because of their race—a path towards sovereignty, self-sufficiency, and self-determination, while majoritarian students verbally challenged and denigrated tribal members who attended college because they were viewed as inferior.

Undoubtedly, this campus atmosphere influenced the ways in which Native students perceived the campus racial climate, as well as their ideas of American education. Indigenous students felt largely unwelcomed on campus, and reported pressures to assimilate, hide their identity, and question their place in society. If they failed to conform to mainstream norms, they become outcasts, and attitudes toward them worsened. Native racial

experiences were often aggravated by the fact that their cultures were tokenized at best on the surface, while the underlying attitudes of ignorance and disinterest bubbled upward. Would they every truly have been seen as equals if they did assimilate?

Positive changes towards inclusion and diversity were made with the Frontier Project, which enabled the creation of the Native Cultural Center, American Indian Student Association, and the Ash-Birch minor and garden that helped Native students feel understood and appreciated. The majority of students reported that an in-depth, pervasive feeling of being misunderstood and undervalued worsens their educational experiences and campus life, while visiting the Center designed specifically for Native students (and any who wished to learn more about their cultures) empowered them to resist and gave them a place to share, recharge, and strategize. Therefore, Frontier Project's advocates—faculty, staff, students, and tribal community members—improved the place and status of Native students, in light of the force and rigor with which modern mainstream education institutions attempted to maintain their white privilege.

Native students employed combat strategies and agency to survive, protect their interests, and claim respect for their needs and problems at Borderland University. Collective/community agency dedicated their efforts and power to help Native students address racism and oppression, sometimes expressed in overt aggression, from non-Native students, teachers, staff, and senior leadership.

Chapter V

Discussion

According to Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen (1999), the campus racial climate framework provides useful insights into campus culture, American Indian student experiences, and perceptions. Primary attention was given to five factors: compositional diversity; psychological climate; behavioral climate; an institution's history and legacy of inclusion or exclusion; and structural diversity (Milem et al., 2005). It is a convergence of histories and traditions, programs and curriculum, values and standards (Clark, 1972; Hurtado, Carter, & Kardia, 1998). This campus context influences participant attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, and expectations regarding race and significantly affects student development, college experiences, and success (Hurtado et al., 1999; Owens, 1998). Only consideration of these factors and the external forces of government policy and social historic contexts can provide a clear, comprehensive image of Borderland University, which can explain the contemporary experiences and perceptions of Native American students on campus. Despite the campus's racial climate framework's limitations, our knowledge of internal institutional forces has provided a means to understand environmental influences. Judging from this campus climate framework, as seen through a critical theory lens, I formulated the following research questions for this study: How did Ash-Birch students perceive campus climate? How did Ash-Birch students employ agency to resist campus climate oppression?

The present study aimed to examine Borderland University's culture and Indigenous students' campus climate perceptions. Answering these two research questions also enabled me

to uncover potential racial/colonial tethers who may have persisted and influenced the campus climate, resulting into a contemporary campus climate of racialized colonial manifestations.

Summary of Findings

As the present study's results suggest, there are many issues related to racism, colonialism, and social inequality on the campus of the Borderland University. These concerns are noted not only by Native American students but also by faculty and staff members involved in works with the Native community both on- and off-campus. Historically, Borderland University is located in a place where the white and Indigenous communities have clashed due to tribal dispossession of lands and resources (Alias, 2001; Alias, 2005), and their depressed standard of living and education opportunities, often at the hands of the dominant group (Alias Foundation, 2009). Therefore, cross-cultural interactions are often unfriendly, uncooperative, and uneven in nature. Borderland University has attempted to partner with the tribal communities at times, but its environment and historical context has caused most, if not all, campus initiatives to falter; specifically the incorporation of "others" into the university culture, largely due to the perceived lack of value—cultural and financial (McAfee, 1997; Jackson & Smith, 2001; Thomason & Thurber, 1999).

As is evident from both informants' and students' interviews, the University is "publicly" positioned as an establishment striving to develop close cooperation with Native Americans. Institutional efforts signifying those intentions include the Frontier Project (a grant that sought them out rather than the inverse), which founded the Native Cultural Center, American Indian Student Association, and other cultural initiatives (Frontier Project, 2008a, 2009, 2010a, 2011b). However, alongside the official striving for cooperation, perceived campus issues in relation to

Native student tuition waivers in support of access and diversity came to the fore when initiatives were applied to practice (Waiver Advisory Group, 2010; University System, 2011). Thus, the administration is unwilling to provide waivers and grants for Native students believing that they create too much of a strain on the university's economic resources, while the majoritarian students' community blames Native Americans for occupying a privileged position and getting everything for free, thereby creating a highly unfavorable environment for Native students on campus. The present findings are in full compliance with previous research of Jenkins (1999), Wells (1997), and other researchers who point out insufficient financial assistance of educational establishments in fulfilling students' educational and personal needs.

The financial (or cultural value added) question intensified the hostility and chill Native students experience at the Borderland University, and the reason the tuition waiver was ingrained with deep stereotypes and beliefs regarding Native Americans. The "Indian" problem of a "free" education was an issue in the eyes of the dominant group, a squandered economic resource that they coveted, and a privilege unworthy of "others." The stereotyping of the "other" was an entrenched trope that had persisted since contact, a weapon of the colonizer used against the colonized to sustain white privilege (Connolly, 2000; Fryberg et al., 2008; Baca, 2004; Deyhle & Swisher, 1997; Spring, 1996). The situation was further aggravated by the accumulation of white hostility towards tribal communities with whom they have lived side by side geographically for centuries. Coexistence had resulted in a realm of problems and communication breakdowns, making the local community another source of hostility and racism that Native students experience on campus (Hurtado, 1992; Peterson & Spencer, 1990; James, 2004; Marker, 2000).

Another aspect discussed by both students and informants was the unwillingness of the campus to take reasonable and practical efforts to get closer and understand the Native American

culture as evidence by the attitudes and behaviors of students, staff, faculty, and administration. Native issues were raised in classrooms, but faculty were largely uninformed and/or unconscious of their racial prejudices and majoritarian students' revealed a disinterested attitude and even despise towards Native students who were made to feel unwelcome on campus (Cook-Lynn, 2001; Reyhner, 1997; Bennett et al., 1991; West, 1988; Sanchez, 2000). Furthermore, the administration made no effort to build relationships with the tribal communities and incorporate their perspectives into the teaching process, which sustained the gap between the parties (Hurtado & Iverson, 2001).

Many student participants reported racism on campus, and its expression was noted as coming from both white students and faculty. Some professors were characterized as being openly hostile, forcing dominant worldviews, and unwilling to allow cultural and personal expressions (Concoran & Thompson, 2004; Feagin et al., 1996). The present problem was assessed as grave, since well-educated professors served as role models for students, and their expressed racist attitudes and behaviors may provide an unwritten approval for mainstream students to intensify racial discrimination against minority students.

Colonial tenets were observed as a pervasive phenomenon penetrating to most communication and relationship aspects on campus—at all levels of the hierarchy. This colonial heritage was strongly felt in the ways of addressing curriculum, students' personal problems and financial aid issues, as well as the presentation of tribes and their students on campus.

Colonialism aspects were mostly manifested in the unequal distribution and modification of resources; the university exploits human capital resources (by means of implementing the tuition instrument) to assimilate and modify the Native American students (Szasz, 1998). Colonialism was shaped more mildly and covertly than in the times of land theft, conquest, and open

violence. Nevertheless, even when college was presented as an open, voluntary choice (for Native Americans to study in mainstream higher educational establishments), it is still nothing of a choice—Native Americans are pressured to assimilate and bury their culture to survive and to play by Borderland University’s rules if they want to study and persist. Otherwise, Native students may lose their tuition waivers and be pushed out of their educational opportunities—the only campus (economic) resource available to change and improve their lives and that of their sovereign communities.

Borderland University has institutionalized the colonial position of white superiority in the form of Native communities’ representation on campus and among the campus majority. As my observations substantiated, there were no racial minorities among student orientation advisors or student senate beyond one or two minority females; Native American administration (none), tenured and tenure-track faculty (none), and professional staff (one). And Borderland University’s *Unity through Diversity*’s (2010b) list of full-time professional and non-professional staff documented one whole Hispanic (me) and a fraction of a black person. By curbing minority access to such campus forms of power, Borderland University perpetuated the association of whiteness with success, established whiteness as an accepted norm, and taught a largely white curriculum. The only true unity was through whiteness, while all other racial color was devoid of factual equity, recognition, and voice (McClellan, Tippeconnic, & Lowe, 2005). Moreover, observations regarding official preparations for institutional holidays and celebrations of tribal cultures and histories frequently rested on the assumption of a mono-cultural representation embodying the principles of white hegemony and giving no right for equal representation to any minority.

As repeatedly noted by Borderland University's leaders and administration and other layers of the institutional strata, paying respect and attention to Native culture alarmed dominant group members to the potential of giving some fraction of their privilege over to minorities that somehow always posed a threat to their supremacy. Hence, by ignoring Native American holidays, paying insufficient attention to their cultural and historical celebrations and meaningful events, and denying them access to institutional power structures at Borderland University, its administration attempted to preserve the colonial structure of Great White Father's rule over the Native savage, under the auspices of taking responsibility for their "children's" education. The structure of financial aid was also a manifestation of colonialism, as the tuition waiver becomes an official instrument of manipulation, and an additional urge for assimilation in case of disobedience, of which, Native Americans may be deprived: scarce educational resources they have been granted (Reyes, 2000).

The present study has proven the findings of previous studies that white and Indigenous students perceive the campus climate differently (Hurtado, 1992; Hughes et al., 1996; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Chang, 2003; Pewewardy & Frey, 2004; Rankin & Reason, 2005). The reason for this may be concealed in the persistent white supremacy model, making white students feel more confident in the mainstream educational institutions, and creating the hostile and unwelcoming climate for minorities as a constant reminder of their minority status (Rendón, Jalomo & Nora, 2000; Diver-Stammes & LoMascolo, 2001). Unfortunately, because of such experiences, Native students often face stereotyping, but also marginalization and erasure leading to their alienation, which may also negatively affect their academic performance and self-esteem (Lin, LaCounte & Eder, 1988; Cabrera & Nora, 1994; Gloria & Ho, 2003; Taylor, 2000).

Native American culture was increasingly celebrated on campus, which is largely attributed to the Native students, Frontier Project, and advocates who had direct and/or close contact with the Indigenous community and promoted tribal cultures on campus. The American Indian Day Experience and Native American Heritage Month (federally-designated month) celebrations occurred, but students complained of the scant institutional effort made to publicize such cultural events as a way to attract a larger audience and educate the dominant group about their culture. The majority of respondents stated that racism came from ignorance and misunderstanding of the Native community, so they voiced a hope that educating people and communicating Native values, traditions, and modes of living was the surest way to improve the position of Native students on campus, and build closer ties for furthering cross-cultural cooperation at the Borderland University.

Ash-Birch Students' Perceptions of Campus Climate

There was a perception that changes with regards to the campus climate for Native American students were occurring, but were oftentimes tamped down by the overall campus environment. Obviously, the history of residential boarding schools and forced assimilation, legal enforcement of education, and forced separation of students from their families ended several generations ago, but those memories of past wrongs and ineffective methods of mandatory Indian education still existed in the lived experience of Indigenous peoples (Whitebeck, Adams, Hoyt & Xiaojin, 2004; Deschenie, (2006). Therefore, there remained some tribal community resistance towards the contemporary education of Native American students in predominantly white educational establishments so as not to expose future generations to traumatic experiences of cultural assimilation and evisceration (Adams, 1995; Child, 2000;

Churchill, 2004). The internal trauma of educational enforcement is a part of the Native American history, and there is a need on the side of mainstream educational establishments to take mutual steps towards destroying such an image of education in the minds of Native Americans (Trafzer, Keller & Sisquoc, 2006).

As numerous student interviews reflected, they oftentimes encounter a chilly and unwelcoming environment at Borderland University, which predominantly results from the unequal (from the white people's perspective) allocation of specific tuition waivers. The majority of interviewees pointed out that they received the major portion of racist and unwelcome remarks and attitudes in such offices as the Admissions, Financial Aid, and Business—the institutional mechanisms directed at accumulating and dispensing monies. Therefore, Native Americans were often envisioned as the white man's University burden that maintained a collective and negative stereotypic attitude toward Native Americans as lazy, trouble makers, and uneducated. Native students who were passionate about earning an education to improve the personal and community goals once they completed their degrees, had to constantly engage in a covert and overt struggle for respect, recognition, and consideration from most who failed to see their humanity or place on campus.

Unfortunately, another source of discomfort and the feeling of isolation that Native students feel on campus are the educational staff and administration whose efforts are directed at sustaining their white privilege, the mainstream course of Borderland University's functioning, etc. The commonly accepted policy is to ignore instances of racism and colonialism at Borderland University because acknowledging them may spoil the university's reputation. Therefore, Borderland University administration, together with praising and celebrating the achievements of grants, the Frontier Project, and other Native culture-focused initiatives, at the

same time want to have nothing in common with those initiatives, and fear giving too much attention to minorities because a striving for equality (in case it is successful) may cause a feeling of disenfranchisement in majoritarian students, though it will literally be the sense of losing dominance.

The present findings are consonant with earlier writings of Rains, et al. (2000), Yellow Bird (2005), Williams (1990), Jordan (1974), and Stein (1997) who claimed that since the times of Natives' colonization by Europeans, the white man viewed education of Natives as a necessary burden. Europeans, whose culture differed profoundly from the Native American cultures, were quick to deem them as barbarians and savages, imposing the only norm—the white civilized culture. Instead of initially fostering cultural diversity after coming to the American continent, white's decided to share their “right” culture with Indians, and to eliminate their “wrong” culture for the sake of a better, a more innovative, civilized, and suitable culture of the Western world. These cultural impositions are still felt on the Borderland University campus when Native American students complain of teachers' imposition of their intellectual and cultural rules and norms on them, and the absence of a wish to foster students' individuality. In the classroom where a dominant group's member and a Native person are having an argument, it is the white person who wins not because s/he is right, but because “white is right,” as was confided by two student interviewees. These observations coincided with the ideas of Yellow Bird (2005), Wilson and Yellow Bird (2005), Churchill (1981), Stein (1997), and others about the unidirectional progress and educational process that has always been the only accepted option for the colonizer; they had nothing to learn from Native peoples, but had much to offer to them (Deloria, 1999).

During my time, Borderland University was an institution indeed striving for cultural diversity and inclusion, mostly because of law and grant mandates. However, Native students felt the lack of campus's involvement and the disinterest of students who had been raised with what Said (1993) called the Anglo-European white supremacy, thus the image of a white person as educator and enlightener of "others." Unfortunately, the contemporary educators and campus administrators failed to acknowledge that inclusion and diversity implied acceptance and a mutual process of sharing, cultural exchange, and enrichment, during which both cultures have to be open to borrowing cultural wealth and multiplying it (Yosso, 2005). The present chilly feeling of being unwelcomed communicated by virtually all interviewed students may stem from the lack of cultural curiosity and the absence of a need to listen, to share, and to learn as evident from majoritarian efforts, despite the fact that they officially strove for unification of Native American cultures and peoples (Tierney, 1992b).

The campus climate observations may be explained by the ideas voiced by Stein (1999), Monette (1995), Boyer (1997), and other researchers who noted that the American educational institutions, no matter how strongly they are engaged in fostering diversity, fail to accommodate Native students and to give them freedom of self-expression, recognition, and the fair respect they deserve as people. The absence of interest in Native American spiritual traditions, and even sincere cases of their misinterpretation and understanding of spirituality as a lack of intelligence and literacy, show that whites at Borderland University lacked any cultural sensitivity and awareness that would enable them not only to comprehend Native Americans and their rituals and traditions, but also to evaluate their significance for the body, mind, and spirit of all people regardless of race and culture (Rhodes, 1988; Martin, 2005).

As it has been noted by me at the beginning of this dissertation, Native Americans have a fundamentally different approach to studying, and they feel an indispensable need to learn through connections with nature, hands-on practices, and storytelling, which are not practiced at Borderland University (Sanchez, 2000; Aragon, 2002, 2004; Pewewardy, 2002; Saggio, 2003). The ultimate goal of Native students who came to Borderland University was to become a contributing member of their tribal community, to make their tribe's life better, so it is of vital significance to locate Native students' learning experiences within their communities (Lomawaima, 2000). The lack of such practices and cultural ignorance from both faculty and students often made Native students feel awkward during their spiritual rituals, or in the classrooms, which made their educational experiences unpleasant and discomforting.

Therefore, solving the problem of a chilly and unwelcoming racial environment in the classroom was possible by using the model of campus climate proposed by Hurtado (1992) and Milem et al (2005). This researcher pointed out that the institution's readiness for a demographic change in enrolment inevitably accompanying a change towards diversity was a vital component of campus climate. Students more frequently reported racial issues in the institutions supporting initiatives directed at sustaining white dominance, and having little concern about individual students. Being less cared for always made students suspect a racial motivation for the problem, so as Borderland University embarked on an (honest) mission of fostering inclusion, it should have striven to eliminate any selectivity policies both on- and off-campus. To prepare the institution's staff and students for inclusion and diversity, Borderland University should have followed the advice of Hurtado and Ruiz (2012) about including the pluralistic orientation courses into the educational curriculum. Pluralistic orientation stands for the extent of preparedness for working in a multi-cultural, multi-racial, and diverse workforce. According to

the researchers' observations, institutions with a strong pluralistic orientation had many fewer racial issues than the institutions that did not explicitly focus on pluralism in their educational and campus policies.

However, Borderland University's policies were a relic of the past that remained in a latent manifestation. Multicultural measures to create an environment that was open and non-hostile remained a myth for many American Indians students because the dominant group had created higher learning and retained its control. Within the campus structure, the colonizers' power and ideology lay, paralleling what some participants saw as reflective of the boarding school era. When Indigenous students left their communities and entered into a foreign environment where few if any native faculty, staff, and/or mentors existed, they were institutionally "isolated" from their roots because only a handful of cultural courses existed. Many of the classes they had to enroll in were dominated by Western thought. Few majoritarian members saw fit to celebrate anything beyond their own dominant culture and heritage. The "victors" had written their history and perpetuated an oppressive curriculum and climate for anyone outside of the color line, which marginalized, dismissed, and stereotyped Native peoples and caused Indigenous students to flee or resist domination.

Agency in Resistance to Oppression

Despite the manifestations of racial and colonial elements perceived as a normative component of campus attitudes, there was still a strong agent of change that emerged from the Institution. Transformative resistance consisted of the Native American strategies employed to challenge and push the University to address their educational and cultural needs. Indigenous students, with the support of advocates both on- and off-campus, sought to liberate and empower

students (each other), and by extension their sovereign nations; a necessary step towards self-sufficiency, self-determination, and sovereignty, yet one that exacted a psychological toll on the individual and group (Brayboy, 2005b). Racism, boarding schools, colonialism, and other social oppressions informed student interpretations that initiated combat and resistance strategies.

Native American students actively resist oppression, to maintain awareness, and to seek justice at an individual and group level (Giroux, 1983; Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995). Taking into account the lack of minority campus representation and the prevalence of dominant stereotypes that blanketed the tribes and their students, racism was a common interpretation. Colonial concepts persisted as assimilation pressures existed and while the Institution could not visibly rid itself of the perceived Indian problem, the subordinate group was given only the white path. As S9 noted, racism was a colonial tool used to strip them of their rights. Moreover, S1 reflected that the colonial imagery of the past (stereotypes) made their way into contemporary campus settings. Residential boarding schools of the late 1800s and 1900s helped students to interrogate that campus ethos. The white box (campus) they resided in was inflexible and caused fear as it failed to accept, let alone accommodate, their histories and cultures. Native students were treated like children, told to accept and respect dominants' views regardless of the celebration (e.g., Columbus Day), and embrace a largely monocultural curriculum. Of the 18 interviewees, 16 acknowledged the pervasive impact that racial, colonial, and residential boarding school manifestations had on Borderland University.

As Deyhle (1995) points out, the maintenance of culture and sovereignty can sustain a student's place in their tribal community and allow them to succeed in the white world of education. Native American students can use Western education as a tool to resist hegemony, assimilation, and cultural eradication, and assert tribal sovereignty and self-determination as they

acquire the tools and credentials to serve their Indigenous communities (Brayboy, 2005b). Ash-Birch student survival and resilience depended upon perceived effective and successful strategies for both them and future tribal community members to stave off a hostile campus and to persist on their own terms. Indigenous students utilized cultural accommodations rather than assimilation to adapt to their campus environment. As Brayboy (2004) and Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) acknowledge, this cultural elasticity can be a political and/or strategic act of agency, power, and resistance against assimilation. Furthermore, individual choice can be empowering as they maintain the power to allow or deny specific accommodations (Turner, 1977). Students could select when to explain what has historically happened to their peoples, refuse or address racism both in and outside of the classroom, avoid problematic campus members, reject the dominant curriculum or accommodate it to achieve academic and professional goals. As S10 confided, “At times there is a trade-off. You make little sacrifices because the campus is not the reservation.”

Internal strength came from one’s culture. Regardless of what happened on campus, as S8 recalled, when combating the campus, the best thing you can hold close to you is your culture. They can take everything away from you, but they can never take who you are away from you. Efforts to maintain this cultural integrity resulted from tribal language and history courses, participation in ceremonies, and for those, for whom it was feasible, to live on the reservation while attending college to remain grounded (Wright, 1985; Rindone, 1988; Deyhle, 1995; Huffman, 2003; Pewewardy & Frey, 2004).

The Native Cultural Center and American Indian Student Association at the Borderland University provided unity, the acknowledgement of the vital necessity of culture, advanced sociocultural networks, and developed cultural safe havens. These outlets worked

collaboratively towards transformative resistance and, unlike previous research, focused on individual efforts and their culture from within. As a result, a collective or community resistance occurred—an academic hybrid “tribal community” coalesced to assist Native American group success.

The Native Cultural Center (a collection of people) was a safe haven to counteract daily racist attacks and deficit theory and allowed individuals to vent their frustrations and to survive academically and socially (Wright, 1985, 1991; Reyhner, 1997). A Family Education Model created a family-like environment that created a surrogate family was an integral component in the educational process (HeavyRunner & DeCelles, 2002; Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). The inclusion of community and family members strengthened efforts, created a sense of belonging and awareness of campus. The Native Cultural Center was its student, staff, tribal community members, and advocates that made it a home to recharge, resist, and transform the campus. This collective resource empowered Native students to contest racist educational practices (Yosso, 2005).

The American Indian Student Association was vital, as S12 stated. They may be from different tribes, but they had cultural similarities that allowed them to relate to each other. The group mediated and advocated for one another, which aided their emotional, social, psychological, and motivational stamina. As S39 stated, “The organization developed collective strategies for Institutional change and devised ways to educate non-Indigenous peoples who fueled racial attitudes” (Participant Observation, 2011). The American Indian Student Association’s transformative resistance and visual materialization was in its American Indian Day Experience and PRIDE mentoring program. Rather than be subsumed by racial oppression, they fought to educate the campus.

American Indian Day experience (powwow) was a signature cultural event hosted through collaborative efforts. Students faced opposition, but remained resilient and even intentionally invited those whom had wronged them or others due to their race. The powwow was their cultural curriculum for a hostile campus. The American Indian Student Association's powwow actions facilitated cultural exchange, a temporary welcoming environment, and educated those who would listen; Native Americans had refused to remain silent. Likewise, their PRIDE peer-to-peer mentor program sought to resist extreme attrition rates among tribal members. In face of opposition, they remained steadfast in their efforts to retain, develop, and empower future students. Mentoring gave students the opportunity to give back to their support networks, advocates, and tribal members.

The American Indian Student Association and Native Cultural Center were not unique on their own; rather they were a collective (cultural) agency that empowered students to resist in a transformative manner the Institution, a historical hallmark that resonated with past generations who attended residential boarding schools (Hertzberg, 1972; Bloom, 1996, 2000; Child, 2000; Trafzer, Keller & Sisquoc, 2006).

With Borderland University receiving the Frontier Project grant, much changed on campus, as the urge towards diversity and inclusion of Native Americans (as well as other minorities) into the institutional landscape became more "formalized." Various initiatives under the auspices of the Frontier Project, including the Native Cultural Center, American Indian Student Association, and creation of Ash-Birch courses, and their inclusion into general curriculum, and other programs proved an effective means to build upon student confidence and pride of their cultural and tribal identity on campus. The essential step towards realistic inclusion and respect of Native American students emerged from strong campus advocates who

possessed a certain amount of power and perseverance to amplify their needs. They also contributed to reclaiming Native students' rights, which was often treacherous due to campus backlash. The Frontier Project catalyst worked in close collaboration with the tribal community (F2, F3, F1, F18, etc.), and Native American students grew aware that there is not only one way of surviving on campus (assimilation), and that resistance also works for those who do not want to endure deprivation and discrimination. Hence, Frontier Project employees and engaged staff and faculty marked a new stage in the cultural structure of Borderland University.

Towards a New Colonial Theory

The implementation of American Indian education, history, racism, and colonialism, guided by critical social science theory, provides a complementary lens to assess campus climate. Reflecting on the past and present allows us to search for commonalities, as well as differences, and to establish the current position of American Indians in mainstream education. Previous scholars who studied American Indian education often examine colonial colleges, boarding schools, and the present-day education system as separate and distinct entities, rather than as occupying a single continuum. Wilson (1998) noted that American education and its social engineering design crippled Indigenous communities. “[S]ubjects were systematically taught to despise everything they loved—parents, relations and culture...and to believe that their only hope lay in being made over into replicas of the conquerors.” Native American students came to despise “both the ‘savage’ and ‘civilized’” and, above all else, themselves.

Such an intermediate position of the need to reject the loved, and the forced imposition of values they detested, left Native Americans stuck in the middle between losing their Native heritage and obtaining the American one. Neither of the variants has appeared acceptable for the

Indigenous nations in the USA so far, so there is a need to look for alternative solutions that will allow Native Americans to celebrate their Nativity but at the same time not reject the white man's heritage. "American Indians were caught between competing worldviews as they were neither fully tribal nor mainstream members causing thousands to sink into apathy, alcoholism, and despair" and creating a "cycle of abuse, dependency and self-destructive behavior that still haunts Native American communities today" (Wilson, 1998, p. 321). This vicious cycle can be destroyed only under the precondition of a culturally sensitive and historically informed search for a new theory of explaining the inter-racial relationships of Native Americans and white Americans, as well as searching for new culturally inclusive modes of interaction.

Internal and external domains influence campus climate. Feagin and Feagin (2003) noted that mainstream-oriented universities are problematic because Native Americans are expected to conform to Eurocentric college environments. Historically, white institutions do not change significantly enough to reflect the cultures and needs of American Indians. At all levels, they face assimilation pressures. By denying the existence of viable and enduring Native American communities, whites ignore their Native American neighbors and the persistent problems rooted in colonialism. The strongest argument for the continuing relevance of a colonialism model can be found in Native American political participation, income, employment, housing, and education, which reflects the tenets of the Critical Race Theory (p. 156).

In connection with this evidence, I have turned to the development and expansion of the currently existing theories of racial relationships and racial oppression to make them more relevant to the present-day situation with recognition and celebration of Indigenous culture in the domains traditionally characterized as predominantly white. The legacies of "race and racism in the United States are inseparably linked to the history of conquest and colonialism" (Tsosie,

2000, p. 1655). As a result, there is a need to work extensively on the adoption of a new, more comprehensive, and more multi-dimensional theory to guide the development of Native-white relationships. To succeed, this theory should acknowledge the existence of both racism and colonialism in the modern interaction of these communities. At the same time, the reclamation of the resources Indians were deprived of needs to be addressed along with the positive transformation of American culture as a whole. This must be done without one side failing in order for the other to win. Construction of such a theory is possible on the basis of theories particularly related to tribal relationships with the mainstream white culture (CRT and TribalCrit), with an addition of a more modern component such as Tsosie's tribal cultural sovereignty theory and Holm's peoplehood concept, along with a dynamic element of historical perspective on the relationships between majoritarian and Indigenous peoples. In order for the theory not to be confined only to analysis but also to provide feasible, realistic solutions to the current crisis in Native-white interactions, it should also draw data from the transformative resistance theory of Giroux who offers practical ways of action for change. All elements of the new theory (neo colonial perspective a Native American educational representation) will be presented below with contextual details for the discussed situation.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) Component. The basis for such a theory should obviously be found in the Critical Race Theory (CRT), as this theory particularly targets identifying, analyzing, and changing the structures of unequal access of minorities to educational, cultural, and other resources, which serve as a means to maintain minorities' inferiority status. Such efforts have long been implemented by Anglo-American colonizers to preserve the subordination of the conquered nations, so the modern urge of CRT is to counter white hegemony and privilege, and improve the living conditions of minority communities by granting them equal

access to basic resources that the white community have enjoyed for centuries (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Solórzano, 1998; Taylor, 1998; Tollefson, 2006).

Looking at the tenets of CRT, the specific branch of critical theory addressing the mechanisms through which social inequality is produced and maintained, one may admit that the new theory should be based on the critical theory's fundamentals. The reason for including CRT and making it central in the considerations of Native Americans' representation at Borderland University is that Borderland University administration was detected (both by staff and by students) to employ a range of leverages and triggers in order to maintain the mainstream direction of Borderland University. By limiting the introduction of diversity on campus and in the curriculum, the university avoided raising worries among whites about losing dominance. Some of these mechanisms were related to the fee waiver. By making the conditions challenging to or non-accomplishable by Native students, many gave up and dropped out of Borderland University. The neglect of Native American celebrations, the unwillingness to display the Native American culture at official celebrations, such as graduation and homecoming, reinforced the sense of neglect of Native culture. This attitude was also seen in the treatment of Native tutors and instructors and the officially-voiced but never fulfilled claim that the university desired to hire more Native staff in order to increase the Native students level of comfort. Looking at those mechanisms of influence, one may clearly point out that absence of Native Americans in the educational leadership, according to the CRT principles, limits Native people's access to vital educational resources, and makes them struggle with the powerful white mainstream educational system in order to obtain a degree without losing their identity.

TribalCrit Component. In this context, the discussion of a narrower subdivision of CRT is also topical, since Brayboy's (2002, 2005a) TribalCrit theory is even more relevant for

the design of a new theoretical framework attempted in the present work. While CRT presents the dichotomy of inter-racial struggle between any minority communities with the mainstream majoritarian society controlling access to educational resources, TribalCrit is more specifically focused on the colonial manifestations in the educational processes and events. Since Native Americans had been residing on the American continent and were conquered by European settlers, the historical discontent and trauma resulting from the loss of land, autonomy, and free, independent identity pervades every aspect of Native Americans' functioning within American society. The fear of losing identity is very strong, since the U.S. mainstream culture is fundamentally different from that of the tribal culture; Americans are more theoretically directed in education; they rely on detached statewide standards, and work without spirituality in the educational field.

Because they are highly practical and very spiritual people, Native Americans' modes of learning and teaching are completely different from those of the mainstream culture. Nevertheless, U.S. mainstream education is the only formal and accepted way for Native Americans to advance their lives, to obtain better career prospects, a decent salary, and to become role models for their families and communities. Therefore, Native Americans integrate into the U.S. educational system for their own benefit, and they should seek social change through moving away from colonization and assimilation towards a distinct focus on self-determination and sovereignty. Once the traumas of colonization stop looming in the Native Americans' collective conscious and unconscious, they will be able to become equal, self-determined, and self-confident participants in the U.S. educational process. Only under the condition of becoming a sovereign community can Native peoples explain and impose their

vision of inclusive, diverse, and culturally sensitive education, and make feasible steps towards its practical implementation (Brayboy, 2005a).

Tsosie's Tribal Sovereignty Component. One should note that the concept of sovereignty is of much importance for the new theory's development; it has become the central point in Tsosie's (2001; 2003; 2007; 2009; 2012; 2013) writings about the new directions of tribal sovereignty development. Tsosie (2001) pointed out the need to rely on cultural pluralism when speaking about the present and future of Native communities' development, as the dichotomy (us versus them) of the CRT does not allow any options for a harmonious resolution of the long-standing inter-racial conflict in the U.S. territory. Thus, with the focus on cultural pluralism, democratic approaches to redistribution of power and cultural representation may be found, satisfying the ambitions of both white people and Native Americans (Tsosie, 2001).

However, it is clear that the revival of the Native American culture is impossible without proper legal effort made to reimburse the Indigenous peoples for the previously stolen lands and resources. Unfortunately, the offense of ripping off the majority of vital resources proves an additional challenge to creating an open dialog between whites and Native Americans. Therefore, it is essential that the U.S. government make some significant steps towards reparations: returning some historical lands to Native Americans, celebrating and securing their culture, as well as fostering the development and representation of their communities in the overall cultural landscape of the USA (Tsosie, 2003). As Tsosie (2007) wisely noted, acknowledging the past will heal the future, and recognition of past mistakes will obviously aid in lessening the white-Native tension regarding resource possession, respect, and recognition.

For the full-fledged establishment of the Native cultural heritage as an independent component of the American culture, the heritage items and artifacts should also be transferred to

Native peoples, as a sign of good will, and as a symbol of empowerment. A nation's culture is in its cultural artifacts, and their possession has a deep symbolic and spiritual meaning of empowerment and wholeness. For this reason, Tsosie (2009) called the U.S. community to return art and artifacts to the Indigenous tribes, and to learn to appreciate that culture as it is, without the pervasive, ever-present white person's desire to transform and assimilate it within the commonly accepted norms. The survival of any nation depends on the prosperity of its culture, so the Native cultural heritage should also receive enough attention to sustain the cultures of Indigenous peoples and foster their future growth and development through practice.

The situation observed at Borderland University has highlighted one more significant element of sovereignty—the need to establish not only the formal political sovereignty of the Native American nation, but also to deepen it to the level of cultural sovereignty. Unfortunately, being granted political sovereignty is only the tip of the iceberg, and formal privileges and autonomies of Indigenous tribes cause nothing but irritation in the neighboring white communities. Unfortunately, the Native American tribal communities have become so isolated in some locations that they may be partly blamed for the persistence of stereotypes and untrue images of Native Americans among their closest members. Absence of a cultural exchange brings about cultural ignorance, and with it, comes rumor and dogma to fill the gaps in knowledge. Political sovereignty grants some formal rights to Native people for which they further have to fight, while cultural sovereignty signifies a new level of autonomy without isolation—an ability to speak out about one's Native origin and culture without being afraid of persecution.

Holm's Peoplehood Component. Despite the fact that the concept of tribal sovereignty introduced and researched by Tsosie is a highly valuable instrument in the discussion of Native

Americans' future in the American society, it is a rather static concept that is concerned mostly with the present and future, without paying tribute to the past of the Native American peoples and their relationships with Anglo-American colonizers. To expand the concept of sovereignty, Holm, Pearson, and Chavis (2003) proposed the concept of "peoplehood" as a more dynamic, inclusive, and accurate variable in the study of Native-white interactions. The advantage of peoplehood lies in its focus on the political and cultural relationships between native Americans and their homelands, relatives, clans, sacred history, etc. (Corntassel & Witmer, 2008).

Peoplehood gives a proper understanding of the whole history of the Native American people, and according to Corntassel (2003), it is the fundamental variable for the future of Indigenous nations' studies programs. The focus of nationhood studies is made on religion ("ceremonial cycles"), links of people with language, sacred history, and environment. Overall, the concept of peoplehood has been assessed highly by the research community working with Native American research, mainly because it acts as an explanatory, interdisciplinary tool for understanding the Indigenous identity from the historically predetermined evolutionary viewpoint. Moreover, Stratton and Washburn (2008) claimed that the peoplehood concept is valuable in general because it is widely applicable as a unifying theory for American Indian studies, despite great differences among tribes.

Applying the concept of peoplehood in the construction of a neo-colonial theory of Native-white relationships and access to education is essential because there is no future without awareness of the past. As long as ugly truth about the boarding and residential schools is intentionally avoided or neglected, the institution may not advance on towards inclusion and diversity. Only after acknowledging that prior efforts were wrong, can the policymakers and educational leaders work out alternative solutions targeted at not repeating mistakes of the past.

Moreover, the Native American community is highly spiritual, and has been developing spiritual links to their land, to rites and rituals, as well as their culture, for centuries before and after the arrival of Anglo-American people on the North American continent. Respect for the past is an indispensable aspect of cultural inclusion and development for Native American people, and as long as it is ignored by white people, the Indigenous community will have little confidence and optimism about the possibility of a positive change. Hence, application of the peoplehood matrix proposed by Holm, et al. (2003) is a perfectly flexible solution for devising an inclusive, dynamically structured theory encompassing both the traumatic boarding school and colonial experiences and the modern situation for working out more transformative cultural practices.

Resulting Theory & Giroux's Transformative Resistance. The resulting theory based on the concepts of tribal sovereignty and peoplehood proposes a range of strategies for Native American peoples to resist oppression and colonial manifestations in the educational sector. Taking Borderland University as a sample, one may note that the application of this neo-colonial theory helps to identify the historical development of Borderland University's position regarding minorities, to examine the policies and documentation of Borderland University administration related to diversity, and to identify the extent of willingness and readiness of the policymakers to be involved in the educational and cultural change on campus. An additional dimension of evaluation is a comparative analysis of the students' perceptions about the institutional and campus climate, and the official, theoretical vision created by Borderland University administration to improve the image of Borderland University in the eyes of the national educational society. These dimensions of analysis enable us to comprehend the history of tribal-white communities' relationships in that particular location, which may also open up certain additional insights into why oppression, discrimination, and disenfranchisement still take place at

Borderland University despite a seemingly active and fruitful policy of moving towards diversity and inclusion.

Inclusion of Giroux's transformative resistance into the framework of this theory is the final point contributing to its comprehensiveness and flexibility. According to Giroux (1983), transformative resistance is an effort of minority representatives towards critiquing social oppression and seeking the establishment of social and racial justice in a particular society. By means of employing transformative resistance, the minority community negotiates its relationships with the educational institution, and creates strategies for challenging the established dominance principles for the sake of addressing their educational needs more adequately (Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995). Such an effort, coming from Native Americans adds to the advocates' efforts, and creates a state of continuous awareness of the problem persisting among the establishment's policymakers, thus pushing the change forward as a complement to other transformative initiatives.

Conclusion

Racism and colonialism, despite the public image that nation-states want to project—social justice, democracy, and equality—are the crucible of internal racism. Neoliberal nation-states, despite their emphasis on rationality and consensus have what Habermas (2005) calls a “limited tolerance” for diversity, which maybe especially true of settler-colonial societies and their relationship to Indigenous groups, a unique spectrum of racism that exist (Balibar, 2013). Despite the fact that many national and international organizations struggle for equality and advocate for the rights and freedoms of underrepresented minorities, the struggle is far from finished, since too many institutional mechanisms persist in maintaining white supremacy.

Following the fundamentals of critical theory and critical race theory, one should acknowledge that the primary tools for racial discrimination, infringement, and oppression include the political, educational, and social spheres. By limiting access to basic resources, the dominant society makes minorities play according to its rules of conformity, assimilation, and compliance with white norms and rules.

Persistence of colonial heritage is one of the most humiliating manifestations of white supremacy in the USA, similarly to the slavery legacy looming in the anti-black racism in the contemporary America. The U.S. white population feels an internal need to maintain its mechanisms of dominance because of the threat of losing supremacy that it has been sustaining since the origin of the USA as a country. However, it is essential to keep in mind that Indigenous peoples were not conquered and subjugated by white people and there is no singular narrative. Some Native Americans were the victims of genocide, others the victims of political economic domination and state policies of assimilation and ethnocide. All were subject to the hegemony of Euro-American majority culture. Conquest is a part of the narrative for many groups. Therefore, the Native heritage is the one of voluntary refusal to assimilate, not conquest or slavery, thus requiring particular attention and respect. Native American legacy and culture has a much longer history in the USA than the U.S. culture itself has, so following the modern theories of tribal cultural sovereignty and peoplehood requires considering the white-Indigenous relationships in a retrospective, through the lens of time and evolution, to learn from the lessons of the past and construct a much more optimal and harmonious future.

Taking into account a long-standing history of isolation and mutual distrust between Indians living in reservations and white people, nobody should be surprised at witnessing so much racism and oppression in education, which may stem primarily from cultural ignorance,

and not a wish to insult people. As it comes from interviews with many respondents recollecting the instances of racism and microaggressions against Native Americans, the majority of teachers and students who conducted those acts of abuse did not mean to do so, and, after clarification were sincerely ashamed of the implications of their words or actions. These facts serve as additional evidence of the fact that racism sometimes stems from a lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity, while acquiring that sensitivity is possible only if appropriate action is taken to educate people towards cultural pluralism and acceptance.

Evidence presented in this work points out that racism and colonialism are the issues of the present, and not the past, as it is preferably stated by the official educational representatives. Hence, much has to be done to target the covert racial oppression persisting in various social domains. Following the narratives of interviewees and lengthy observations at Borderland University undertaken by me, the dialog starts with acknowledging the problem. Both the tribal community and the white society's educational representatives should agree that they have been hindering the process of diversity's achievement, though each of them has specific reasons for doing so. If white people wanted to maintain their supremacy over Native Americans, the latter were preserving their rich culture and heritage. Consequently, if both parties are able to forgo some part of the autonomy they have been trying to sustain for centuries, they will hear each other's concerns, and will move forward to a constructive resolution of their long-standing conflict.

Implications of Research

The present study stands out as a highly significant critical ethnographic endeavour of scholarly writing because it underlines the unity of historical influences and contemporary

experiences shaping the modern appearance of the cross-cultural dialog between whites and Native Americans. Despite the officially adopted and propagated vision of a fruitful dialog, increased recognition, and numerous subsidies and benefits for Native Americans, the real-life conditions in which they live, and access to vital social resources they have is much more challenged, at times even impossible. Those who dare to take what they deserve and are entitled to often face numerous bureaucratic challenges and further psychological pressure, which makes many of them drop out of educational institutions and fail their education. The present study uncovers the underlying structures of oppression, colonialism, and racism that lead to the described experiences of Native students, opening new avenues for designing effective change policies, and showing which assumptions, behaviours, and attitudes should be changed for more effective promotion of diversity.

Design of a new colonial theory also has numerous implications for the modern ethnographic research, as it provides effective, workable techniques for assessing the racial climate of modern educational institutions, and gives ideas on the ways of changing it. As it was proven in the theory's discussion, the CRT alone is obviously not applicable to the modern situation regarding the place of Native Americans in the contemporary educational system of the USA. CRT views inter-racial relationships as a conflict, and the victory of one culture always denotes the failure of the other, which is not the case for the present subject of interest. The urge towards a dialog and cooperation has been noted as pervasive in the context of both Borderland University staff and Native American students, which implies that the interaction of these two cultures is entering a new constructive stage in which dialog becomes possible under the condition of reciprocal curiosity and active involvement in the common initiative. Native Americans have acknowledged the need for higher education as a competitive advantage in the

labour market, and as a move forward in improving the tribal communities. Hence, they have started participating in the U.S. education system much more actively, though facing a number of challenges of institutional character.

The overt, detailed discussion of agency as a proactive means of resistance to assimilation and oppression is also a vital implication of the present research. An effective way of combating the present-day forms of racism, colonialism, and discrimination in the educational field is through agency employed by Native American students within activist organizations aiming at achieving higher levels of diversity on campus. Educators and activists possessing more power than regular students do are able to push the interests of disenfranchised communities to the forefront of public attention, emphasizing the richness of Native culture, and helping Native students in harsh and sometimes hostile educational environments. Due to the emergence of such institutions and advocacy groups, the racial climate in the modern institutions is significantly improving, providing Native students with more possibilities of going through the educational process without foregoing their cultural values.

Following the theoretical framework pursued in the present dissertation, one should admit that focusing on the prior history of oppression and forced education in boarding schools is a reactive way of approaching the cultural change in contemporary education. However, completely forgetting the past is impossible and inappropriate because keeping memories about the past mistakes enables the nation not to make them again. Instead, it is essential to adopt an evolutionary approach to exploring the Indigenous-white relationships, which may help both parties in the negotiation process to acknowledge and celebrate each other's cultures, and to move toward a closer acceptance and diversity. The American nation can advance the dialog with Native Americans only under the condition of allowing and fostering the formation of

Native American tribal sovereignty, and the establishment of Peoplehood as a diachronic, dynamic approach to constructing Indian identity.

Recommendations for Further Research

Taking into account the theoretical basis and empirical setting of the present dissertation, I believe it is essential to provide a list of recommendations stemming from the critical ethnographic analysis conducted for this paper both for theory development and practical application. Colonialism and racism are the elements of the modern U.S. educational reality, so these problems have to be addressed through advancing research and changing practices in the U.S. universities.

Critical social theory has been developed as a broad, comprehensive, and powerful tool for analysing and changing the structures sustaining the white privilege in key social domains, such as access to vital resources (healthcare, education), political rights, and representation. CRT and TribalCrit have been logically developed on the basis of critical social theory to explain the racial tension in the USA within the framework of its colonial past and the trauma of assimilation and forced education that Native Americans have suffered. Developing new theories and testing their viability should be indisputably connected with the central CRT and TribalCrit propositions serving as effective tools for comprehending the current structure of Native-white relationships, and changing them in a mutually beneficial and fruitful way.

Since its inception at Borderland University, the Frontier Project was aimed at advancing research on Native Americans' educational success and involvement. Its strategic orientation, published in official Frontier Project documents, repeatedly emphasized the need for conducting active empirical research in the field of advancing the status of Native Americans in the U.S.

educational system. Hence, the first recommendation for further research is to enrich the body of existing academic literature on Native American students' representation in the U.S. educational system (from historical and contemporary perspectives), contributors to Native American students' educational participation and involvement. The reason why many Native students drop out is that they face structural and individual challenges, which undermines their self-esteem and makes them think they will never accomplish their educational goals. However, while some students drop out and never return, other students with much stronger internal motivation (or with thicker skin regarding racism and isolation on campus) perceive their education value and return to Borderland University even in cases where they had to drop out because of objective circumstances. Understanding mechanisms causing students to stay or leave may help policymakers design more effective retention strategies, thus improving the graduation rates for Native Americans, and improving the overall image of higher education among tribal members.

Another field of proposed future research should be targeted at the Native American culture and heritage, which is especially convenient in the areas close to the tribal communities' place of residence. Borderland University is in a favourable position in this aspect, which has already been proven by extensive anthropological research endeavours of F3; thus, conducting more research on history, culture, anthropology, archaeology, etc. may advance Borderland University's teachers', administrators', and local residents' understanding and acceptance of the Native American community. As it has been repeatedly noted in this work, many instances of micro-aggressions and racially discriminatory remarks were made not because of the speakers' wish to intentionally offend Native Americans, but because of their cultural ignorance and aptness to rely on stereotypes instead of objective truth. Consequently, it is assumed that the better informed the society becomes by researching the neighboring culture and learning about

its traditions, rites, and spirituality, the more likely it is to put that awareness into actions and words that avoid abuse or racism.

Finally, more research should be conducted in the educational plane to smoothen the transition to a more inclusive climate and curriculum in the modern U.S. educational institutions. As it has been noted by Hurtado (1992) in her campus climate model, even institutions wishing to become more diverse and inclusive can be simply unprepared for hosting the new diverse, tolerant, and inclusive atmosphere. Any campus is first of all a set of people with their diverse and heterogeneous systems of beliefs and attitudes, so frictions are inevitable when such sensitive, delicate issues as advancement of Native American people's status in higher education are addressed. There are advocates and opponents of the inclusion process, since the ideas of colonialism and dominance are still deeply rooted in many backward people's minds. Consequently, the most effective (from the educational viewpoint) and the most optimal (for the educational sector) variant of starting the change is through a curriculum change.

Once Native American students see that their culture and language are fairly well represented in the curriculum of their educational institution, they are likely to grow more comfortable studying there, and their perceptions of campus climate are likely to become more positive. Moreover, students having outdated stereotypical beliefs about Native Americans will be able to change their views through a process of easy educational inquiry, without the need to acknowledge their ignorance, which in itself may be humiliating. However, a curriculum change should be gradual and well thought-out, to be able to provide an adequate representation of Native Americans, and at the same time not enacting aggressive protective mechanisms of the white supremacy order. The curriculum research should be intensely conducted in the U.S. educational institutions, testing the best practices of other universities that have already managed

to achieve a high level of Native people's inclusion. The most informative courses, as well as their coherent links bringing a holistic body of knowledge about the Native American culture and people, should be the targeted outcome of such research, and research findings in this field should be extensively published and shared among educational institutions to contribute to a large-scale, nationwide change.

Applications of Research

Taking into account a complicated but changing situation with racism and colonialism, and considering nearly two years of personal involvement in the Frontier Project's existence at Borderland University, I have formulated a number of practical recommendations for Borderland University that can be applied generally by many other institutions struggling with institutional resistance to inclusion of Native American students and other minority students. These recommendations may be adapted to a concrete context of any educational establishment, and those already put in place may be ignored.

The first recommendation for Borderland University is to think carefully about the need to employ more (and permanent) Native American faculty, staff, and administrators. Such a step would become a tremendous breakthrough in fostering inclusion at Borderland University, since the tribal community attempts to increase participation of their younger generations in education, but their influence is very small. A feasible change occurs only if the representatives of the educational institution reach out to the tribal communities and involve them in the common educational decision-making process. Unfortunately, the tenets of colonialism and social/racial inequality prevent Native Americans from taking independent steps towards participating in the policy change in education; they have limited knowledge about how the university's

administration works, and what exactly can be done to improve the campus climate for their people.

In case more and more Native American staff enter Borderland University's workforce, they will have increased professional, insider knowledge about what is being done to improve the position of Indigenous students at the university, and what should be done for those processes to take place more noticeably and effectively. Interviewees among the students and staff of Borderland University repeatedly noted in their accounts that it is very hard for Native American students to build trusting relationships with non-Native teachers and advisors, if having some psychological or moral problems at the university, they often lack a person to whom they may turn for help and reassurance. After the emergence of the American Indian Student Association and Native Education Center, more Native American students have obtained a safe haven in which they could feel comfortable, listened to, respected, and understood. Nevertheless, the presence of Native American educational leaders, advisors, and teachers is certain to create much more confidence in Native students regarding their recognition on campus. Additionally, it will alter the white image of success and leadership, giving each student extra motivation to study and succeed in a professional career.

Finally, the recommendation for Borderland University (stemming from Hurtado's (1992) campus climate model and from numerous campus observations and interview analyses) is to include the cultural pluralism and acceptance courses and content into the curriculum. Despite an explicit emphasis of the twenty-first century educational sector on pluralism and inclusion, such initiatives face sharp resistance in particular educational institutions, mainly from the staff and administration, because of their deeply rooted fears and racial prejudices. Following the duality of the CRT (which may correspond to the ideas of conservative educators),

the victorious stance of the Native American heritage to mainstream culture inevitably symbolizes the defeat of the Anglo-European white culture. However, inclusion does not mean a struggle with only one winner, and cultural pluralism courses (or even content elements included sporadically into some relevant educational courses) may help communicate that idea to people afraid of losing their dominance. The racial atmosphere at Borderland University is still tense, but much has been done by Native American advocates, and these efforts may be further pursued by targeted and well-planned action, informed by research findings, and based on the historically dynamic, comprehensive theory of tribal sovereignty and peoplehood.

Applications of the present study are also possible in the research field, since the present study considerably advances the theory of colonial and racial legacy and its effect on the educational experiences of minorities like Native Americans. Though it is hard to generalize this study to other minorities due to a unique position of Indigenous people in the USA, there are still ways of applying its findings to studying the status of Native American students in other educational establishments. For instance, Dei and Johal (2005) pointed out multiple methodological challenges of anti-racist research, so some of them can be addressed by using the verified new theory of diachronically determined racial oppression and a historical struggle of Native Americans against assimilation and for their culture's recognition as a valid framework for further research.

This study has enabled me to take a closer look at the individual stories of many Native American students studying at Borderland University. They have distinct personalities and have individual concerns while remaining representatives of their nation. Such an approach addressed the gap in anti-Indian violence noted by Perry (2009) who stated that scholarly attention to historical and modern victimization of American Indians as nations has blinded the research

community to their victimization on an individual level. The framework I offered in this study has enabled such an individualistic paradigm of consideration, which may find further fruitful application in this field of research.

Appendix A.1

Student Email Solicitation Protocol

My research study entitled *Native American Students, Campus Climate, & Resistance at Borderland University: Adventures in Colonialism* will examine how Native American students (1) perceive campus attitudes, behaviors, and standards held by its members and the level of respect concerning individuals and/or groups; (2) interpret of campus experiences; and (3) respond to campus experiences.

An inclusive and welcoming campus environment has the ability to enhance and promote Native knowledge, self-determination, and sovereignty within mainstream dominated spaces. My study seeks to document institutional success/failure and student agency/resistance. The proposed study will be the first empirical study focused on Native American student experiences at a small, rural, predominantly white institution in the Northeast. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

- Participants must belong to a federally or provincially recognized tribe or band, attend the university, and be 18 years or older.
- Participants will be asked to participate in a 60- to 90-minute interview during the 2010 - 2011 academic year. Interviews will be digitally recorded with participant consent.
- Participants have the opportunity to review, edit, clarify, and delete their own interview transcripts.
- Participants will be invited to review and critique study findings.
- Participants' confidentiality will not be broken.
- Participants will receive a \$50 gift card for participating in the above study.

Sincerely,

Eddy A. Ruiz, PhD Candidate
Department of Education
University of California, Los Angeles
Angeles
3005 Moore Hall, Mailbox 951521
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Appendix A.2

Key Informant Email Solicitation Protocol

My research study entitled *Native American Students, Campus Climate, & Resistance at Borderland University: Adventures in Colonialism* will examine how Native American students (1) perceive campus attitudes, behaviors, and standards held by its members and the level of respect concerning individuals and/or groups; (2) interpret of campus experiences; and (3) respond to campus experiences.

An inclusive and welcoming campus environment has the ability to enhance and promote Native knowledge, self-determination, and sovereignty within mainstream dominated spaces. My study seeks to document institutional success/failure and student agency/resistance. The proposed study will be the first empirical study focused on Native American student experiences at a small, rural, predominantly white institution in the Northeast.

As a key informant, interviews topics to be discussed include: (1) university and program histories, (2) tribal-institutional relations, (3) university tribal students perceptions, (4) keys to student success. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

- Participants must be 18 years or older.
- Participants will be asked to participate in a 60- to 90-minute interview during the 2010 - 2011 academic year. Interviews will be digitally recorded with consent.
- Participants have the opportunity to review, edit, clarify, and delete their own interview transcripts.
- Participants will be invited to review and critique study findings.
- Participants' confidentiality will not be broken.
- Participants will receive no financial compensation for participating in the above study.

Sincerely,

Eddy A. Ruiz, PhD Candidate
Department of Education
University of California, Los Angeles
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APPENDIX B.1

Student Consent Protocol

Eddy A. Ruiz, a doctoral student at the University of California at Los Angeles, in the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies. He is conducting a research study. Participant solicitation is limited to enrolled federally or provincially recognized tribe or band membership, Borderland University students, and subjects must be 18 years of age or older. Participants have the option to contribute or not to participate in the research study. Regardless of the decision, it will have no negative bearing on the participant's relationship with Borderland University.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

My critical ethnographic case study *Native American Students, Campus Climate, & Resistance at Borderland University: Adventures in Colonialism* examines Native American student (1) perceptions of campus attitudes, behaviors, and standards held by its members and the level of respect concerning individuals and/or groups; (2) interpretations of campus experiences; and (3) response to campus experiences.

PROCEDURES

Voluntary participation in this study will consist of one interview lasting approximately 60 to 90 minutes. The interview focuses on: (1) perceptions of campus attitudes, behaviors, and standards held by its members and the level of respect concerning individuals and/or groups; (2) interpretations of campus experiences; and (3) response to campus experiences. All interviews *will be digitally taped and notes taken with participant permission*. The *data* collected *will be de-identified and stored for future use* by the principle researcher with *participant permission*.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Recalling personal experiences may cause discomfort. If a participant becomes distressed in any manner, the participant may elect not to answer, to take a few minutes to compose him- or herself, to withdraw your participation in the study, or to reschedule another time to continue the interview and remain a participant in the research study. Available resources include: University Counseling Center, which offers confidential counseling, stress management, and coping skills and is located in [] Hall on the first floor, (555) 555-9520; and Ash-Birch Health Department, which provides culturally specific health and wellness services located at 7 [] Road, (555) 555-1972.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR SOCIETY

The research may assist in the dismantling of discriminatory structures that are detrimental to Native American student persistence and degree attainment. It may provide Native college student participants with the tools to uncover covert oppressive structures and to apply successful resistance strategies, which maintain their cultural integrity and allow them to succeed in the academy. Last, it may provide tribal members, educators, and practitioners with a deeper understanding of campus climate for American Indians.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Participants in the research study will receive a \$50 gift card.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Eddy A. Ruiz, will be the only individual with access to the data in the study. Neither personal names, institutional name, nor will the names of any individuals referred to in the interview be reported in the findings. *Confidentiality is a top priority.* With participant consent, all interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed. A participant has the right to refuse the recording of their interview or have the taping turned off at any time. In addition, participants have the opportunity to review, edit, add to, or erase in part or in entirety, the data pertaining to them. Last, to ensure participant confidentiality all data collected will be stored in a secure location with access limited to the researcher.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Involvement in the research study is voluntary. Participants can elect not to answer a question. If a participant decides not to answer a specific question, he or she can still partake in the research study. Participants also have the option to leave the interviews at any time, for any reason, without consequences and receive a prorated payment.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE INVESTIGATOR

If a participant has any questions or concerns about this study, please contact Eddy A. Ruiz at earuiz@ucla.edu or eddy.ruiz@borderland.edu and/or the faculty sponsor, Richard Wagoner at wagoner@gseis.ucla.edu.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

A participant may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation in the research without penalty. A participant does not waive any legal claims, rights, or remedies because of participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding participant rights, please contact:

Borderland University, Institutional Review Board, 81 Main Avenue, 108.

If you wish to ask questions about your rights as a research participant, or if you wish to voice any problems or concerns you may have about the study to someone other than the researchers, please call the Office of Human Research Protection Program at (310) 825-7122 or write to Office of Human Research Protection Program, UCLA, 11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 102, Box 951694, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I understand and agree to the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, I consent to participate in the study, and I agree to have my de-identified data stored for future research use. I have been given a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

In my judgment, the participant has voluntarily given his/her informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

Printed Name of Researcher

Signature of Researcher

Date

APPENDIX B.2

Key Informant Consent Protocol

Eddy A. Ruiz, a doctoral student at the University of California at Los Angeles, in the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies is conducting a research study. Key informant participants are limited to subjects 18 years of age or older. Participants have the option to contribute or not to participate in the research study. Regardless of the decision, it will have no negative bearing on the participant's relationship with Borderland University.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

My critical ethnographic case study *Native American Students, Campus Climate, & Resistance at Borderland University: Adventures in Colonialism* examines Native American student (1) perceptions of campus attitudes, behaviors, and standards held by its members and the level of respect concerning individuals and/or groups; (2) interpretations of campus experiences; and (3) response to campus experiences.

PROCEDURES

Key informant participation in this study will consist of *informal and unscripted* interviews with no set timeframe. Interviews will focus on university and program perceptions, tribal-institutional relations, tribal students, and keys to student success. All interviews *will be digitally taped and notes taken with participant permission*. The *data* collected *will be de-identified and stored for future use* by the principle researcher with *participant permission*.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Recalling personal experiences may cause discomfort. If a participant becomes distressed in any manner, he or she may elect not to answer, to take a few minutes to compose him- or herself, to withdraw participation in the study, or to schedule another time to continue the interview and remain a participant in the research study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR SOCIETY

The research may assist in the dismantling of discriminatory structures that are detrimental to Native American students' persistence and degree attainment. It may provide Native college student participants with the tools to uncover covert oppressive structures and to apply successful resistance strategies, which maintain their cultural integrity and allow them to succeed in the academy. Last, it may provide tribal members, educators, and practitioners with a deeper understanding of campus climate for American Indians.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Participants in the research study will receive no financial incentive.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Eddy A. Ruiz, will be the only individual with access to the data in the study. Neither personal names, institutional name, nor any individuals the names of individuals referred to in the interviews will be reported in the findings. *Confidentiality is a top priority*. With participant consent, all interviews will be digitally recorded and then transcribed. A participant has the right to refuse the recording of their interview or have the taping turned off at any time. In addition,

participants have the opportunity to review, edit, add to, or erase in part or in its entirety, the data pertaining to them. Last, to ensure participant confidentiality, all data collected will be stored in a secure location with access limited to the researcher.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Involvement in the research study is voluntary. Participants can elect not to answer a question. If a participant decides not to answer a specific question, he or she can still participate in the research study. Participants also have the option to leave the interviews at any time, for any reason, and without any consequences.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE INVESTIGATOR

If a participant has any questions or concerns about this study, please contact Eddy A. Ruiz at earuiz@ucla.edu or eddy.ruiz@borderland.edu and/or the faculty sponsor, Richard Wagoner at wagoner@gseis.ucla.edu.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

A participant may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation in the research without penalty. A participant does not waive any legal claims, rights, or remedies because of participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding participant rights, please contact:

Borderland University, Institutional Review Board, 81 Main Avenue.

If you wish to ask questions about your rights as a research participant, or if you wish to voice any problems or concerns you may have about the study to someone other than the researchers, please call the Office of Human Research Protection Program at (310) 825-7122 or write to Office of Human Research Protection Program, UCLA, 11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 102, Box 951694, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I understand and agree to the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, I consent to participate in the study, and I agree to have my de-identified data stored for future research use. I have been given a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

In my judgment, the participant is voluntarily and has given his/her informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

Printed Name of Researcher

Signature of Researcher

Date

APPENDIX C
Semi-Structures Interview Protocol

Hello _____. Thanks for agreeing to participate in my *Native American Students, Campus Climate, & Resistance at Borderland University: Adventures in Colonialism* study. Your participation is voluntary, and you may decide to withdraw from the study at any time. Your responses will be confidential, and the principal investigator will be the only individual with access to your information.

With your consent, I will begin digitally recording your responses and take handwritten notes in order to get an accurate account of your responses.

You will be asked to complete a 60- to 90-minute **interview**. The interview focuses on: (1) perceptions of campus attitudes, behaviors, and standards held by its members and the level of respect concerning individuals and/or groups; (2) interpretations of campus experiences; and (3) response to campus experiences.

Feel free to add any details you find appropriate and to amend any comments made as I am seeking your perspective.

Before we begin, do you have any questions?

APPENDIX D
Student Interview Questions

- * *Ice Breaker:* Tell me how you and your tribal community views education. Has the residential/boarding school experience influenced this perspective?
1. *Scenario:* A Native applicant is considering attending this university and solicits several tribal student opinions. Several Native students have described the campus as “chilly” or unwelcoming. Why would they maintain this perspective?
- How does the campus perceive tribal communities?
 - Administration, faculty, staff, students, and programs?
 - How does the campus perceive Native American students?
 - Administration, faculty, staff, students, and programs?
 - How does the campus perceive the tuition waiver? Recipients?
 - Administration, faculty, staff, students, and programs?
 - How does the campus celebrate tribal cultures and histories? Classroom?
 - Are these campus and classroom efforts sufficient? Why?
 - Where on campus do you feel Native views are most (under)appreciated? Why? Who?
 - How often do you actively engage (non)natives in the classroom? Why?
 - How often to you actively engage (non)natives outside the classroom? Why?
 - Why would Native students feel a lack of belonging on campus?
 - How do you feel when you are on campus? Anxious? Alienated? Welcomed?
 - Do you leave the campus as soon as your classes or appointments end? Why?
 - Have campus experiences caused other Native students to drop out? Why?
 - Have your campus experiences caused you to consider dropping out? Why?
2. *Scenario:* Native students are voicing their concerns about the campus environment and its negative effects on them and their communities. They believe these negative experiences are attributable to two factors: racism and colonialism.
- Why would Native students attribute their campus experiences to racism?
 - Why would Native students attribute their campus experiences to colonialism?
 - Have Native students and/or you been singled out ...
 - In the classroom because of your race/ethnicity?
 - Out of class because of your race/ethnicity?

- Have Native students and/or you...
 - Heard stereotypical/racist beliefs on campus regarding Native peoples?
 - Had tense or hostile campus interactions with members of another race/ethnicity?
 - Felt threatened based on your race/ethnicity?
 - Had a physical altercation based on your race/ethnicity?
 - Felt pressured to assimilate or conform to mainstream norms and ideals?
 - How does the campus replicate social, political, and/or economic oppression?
 - How do negative campus experiences resemble those of the residential/boarding schools? Why?
 - Would you agree with your peers' perspectives that racism and colonialism contribute to negative campus experiences?
3. *Scenario:* A Native student is seeking to develop successful strategies to combat campus racism/colonialism in order to succeed in college. She looks to you for advice. What advice and/or strategies would you suggest to her?
- How successful have these strategies proven?
 - How have they aided your college success?
 - What motivates you to resist campus oppression and/or inequities?
 - How do you confront the institution and/or individual(s)?
 - How do you push for institution and/or individual change?
 - How difficult is it to resist campus oppression?
4. *Conclusion:* Would you like to share anything else before we conclude our interview?

Thank you for your participation. Upon your request, I will forward you a transcribed copy of this interview to edit and amend as you see fit.

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