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EXPERIENCES AFFECTING POST-FRESHMAN
RETENTION OF AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKAN NATIVE
STUDENTS AT A BIBLE COLLEGE

by

Joseph J. Saggio

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

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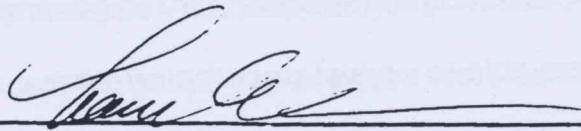
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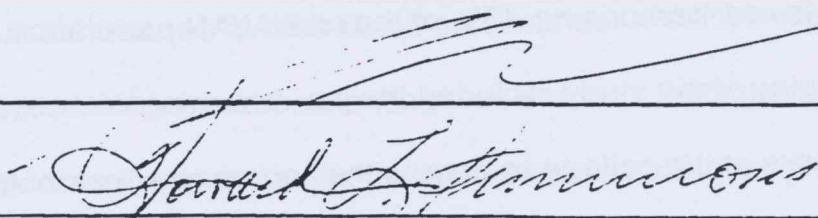
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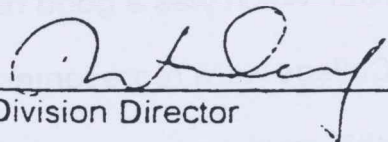


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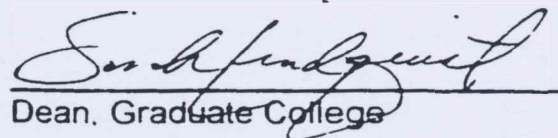


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ABSTRACT

This study examined institutional choice and experiences that enhanced or precluded retention past the freshman year at American Indian College (AIC), a Bible college located in Phoenix, Arizona. The site selection was significant because 78% (Spring 2000) of the college's students identified their ethnicity as American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) and because the most recent (1999) freshman year retention rate was 86%.

Through the use of focus groups and a six-phase qualitative analysis of the data, the study attempted to generate data on why some AI/AN students were able to persist past their freshman year. A total of 29 students were interviewed, comprising 47% of the total AI/AN population at AIC, $N = 62$. Strengths of the study included the pre-screening of the questions by AI/AN staff members of the college to ensure the appropriateness of the questions and the safeguard of discussions with the moderator after the sessions to ascertain participant meaning. In addition, there was a meeting with a panel of senior AI/AN officials of the college to clarify the initial data findings and the use of an AI/AN moderator. Another strength was the sample size (29) in relation to the N (62), which was a good representation, since 67% (18/27) of the tribes at the College were represented. There was also a good gender balance including 45% male participants (13/29) and 55% female participants (16/29).

This work is dedicated to the AI/AN college students that I have had the pleasure of serving at American Indian College these past several years. These students have taught me more about life, education, and the ministry than I will ever be able to teach them. It is also dedicated to three outstanding Native American educators that I have been privileged to serve with: Rev. Jim Hubert Lopez, Ms. Belinda Flame Lopez, and Rev. Clement Blair Schlepp. May their shining examples continue to inspire future generations of students at American Indian College to excellence in both theory and practice.

This work is also dedicated to the memory of my great-grandfather, the late Rev. Frank Passeti who inspired me to the ministry of serving others by his selfless and consecrated life.

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Most especially I thank my parents Joseph and Shirley Saggio, my in-laws, William and Eva Delamater, and other family members who believed in me, never doubting that I would make it through the process. My daughters, Rachelle and Leah, have had to make many sacrifices of their daddy's time over the past several years. Most importantly, I wish to thank my wife, Nancy Jo, who has cooperated magnificently during this time and encouraged me with her thoughts and prayers, especially when I grew weary of the process. I will always appreciate her sacrifices so that I could continue on to this personal milestone

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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM OF AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKAN NATIVE PERSISTENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduction

A significant problem in American higher education of salient concern to educators, researchers, and policy makers is the low retention rate of American Indian/Alaskan Natives (AI/ANs), especially at the undergraduate level. In fact, AI/ANs have been reported to be the least successful minority group in terms of completing an undergraduate degree program (Benjamin, Chambers & Reiterman, 1993). This is a pressing issue both nationally and in the focal institution of this study, American Indian College (AIC).

The specific problem investigated in this study is the poor retention of AI/AN students during the pivotal freshman year of college. In particular, the study focused on AI/AN students enrolled at American Indian College, a Bible college affiliated with the Assemblies of God, located in Phoenix, Arizona.

Demographic data suggests that 75% of all AI/ANs who begin college depart before completing their degree program (Wells, 1997; Hoover & Jacobs, 1992). Much of this problem begins during the pivotal freshman year where Wells (1997) determined that the AI/AN freshman retention rate was 46.7%. This means that nearly one out of two AI/AN students drop out before their sophomore year. In essence, these students are stopping before they have

even had a chance to begin. Clearly, many AI/AN students are not finding a good "fit" within the academy and are caught within a cycle of failure that prevents them from achieving their educational objectives. Thus in many cases forcing them to relinquish their opportunities for a better way of life.

A great deal of research has been conducted that has attempted to uncover determining factors of AI/AN retention and persistence in higher education in general, especially within the public sector (Falk & Aitken, 1984; Pavel, 1991; Wright & Tierney, 1991; Tierney, 1992; Pavel & Padilla, 1993; Bowker, 1992; Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman, 1993; Melchior-Walsh, 1994; Wells, 1997; Colbert, 1999). However, at present there is a complete lack of research on how AI/AN students do in private sectarian institutions such as American Indian College (AIC), the focus of this particular study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the multiple experiences that preclude or enhance the retention of AI/AN students beyond the freshman year at a Bible college. Indeed, the freshman year is pivotal in terms of determining the likelihood of further persistence to degree completion (Gardner, 1980 & 1991; Astin, 1991; Tinto, 1975, 1987, & 1993). Students develop many of the requisite skills and abilities to continue in their quest for a bachelor's degree during their first year in higher education. Students who do not have positive

experiences during their freshman year may be at a serious risk of dropping out of college

Since retention beyond the freshman year has a powerful impact upon the remainder of a student's undergraduate experience, studying freshman experiences is extremely important since it may help unlock some of the reasons why freshman students, and in particular, AI/AN freshman students have difficulty persisting beyond the freshman year. A study focusing on AI/AN freshman experiences at a Bible college is capable of opening up a new avenue of research into an area that has remained previously unexplored.

This qualitative study used focus groups to obtain accounts of the students' freshman experiences and used the obtained data to construct concept models that reflected the phenomena and relationships of these student experiences. Through the use of these focus group interviews, the researcher strove to obtain accounts in the students' own words that would help inform readers of the particular experiences these students underwent while persisting past the freshman year.

Significance of the Study

The AI/AN population is a small, but growing part of the total population of the United States that is in need of greater representation within the academy

Unfortunately, the retention and persistence rate of AI/AN students continues to be a formidable challenge since they are, according to Astin (1982), the least successful minority group in terms of total educational attainment. Consequently, research needs to be conducted to better understand the phenomena of freshman experiences that enhance or preclude retention beyond the freshman year since the first year of college is such a pivotal point in a student's education. Therefore, this study is significant to higher education researchers, practitioners, and policy makers.

Significance for Higher Education Researchers

This study has significant implications for higher education research scholars for the following reasons:

- Insufficient research exists related to AI/AN post-freshman year retention. Therefore, this study adds to the literature regarding AI/AN student retention in college.
- The AI/AN population is growing and entering higher education in greater numbers; thus, greater attention must be paid to identifying AI/AN unique socio-educational needs.
- This study may be able to further articulate both the successes and the failures encountered by AI/AN students as they attempt to navigate past the pivotal freshman year.

Significance for Higher Education Practitioners

Practitioners, including both student affairs personnel and teaching faculty, will find that this study is significant to them as well for the following reasons:

- The demographic and sociological make-up of an institution may have a significant impact upon the retention rate of AI/AN students.
- The curriculum and academic tempo of an institution may affect the ability of AI/AN students to persist past the pivotal freshman year.
- Recognition of the key factors influencing persistence and retention past the freshman year may help institutions better serve AI/AN students in both academic and student service-related areas.

Significance for Policy Makers and Analysts

This study is significant not only to scholars, higher educational practitioners, and teaching faculty, but also to policy makers and analysts since they have the opportunity to influence and guide public policy in higher education. For example:

- Public policy is often significantly guided by research findings; therefore, more information on AI/AN retention past the freshman year may help policy makers and analysts to formulate policy and legislation that will further enhance AI/AN retention and persistence.

- This research may be able to raise public awareness of the need to assist greater numbers of AI/AN students through higher educational institutions including Bible colleges and how to more effectively do so
- Funding agencies at local (tribal), state, and federal (including Bureau of Indian Affairs) levels will have more information on how to equitably fund and provide for AI/AN students to be able to complete their academic programs.

Indeed, there is a compelling need to investigate the issue of AI/AN persistence and retention in order to eliminate the "permanent underclass" within American higher education. As America moves into the next millennium the issue of AI/AN retention and persistence must be made paramount. The historical background given in the next section details why this is so necessary.

Historical Background

Throughout America's history AI/AN students have encountered difficulties within the higher educational institutions of the United States. Boyer (1989) indicates that Harvard College was established in 1636 and listed among its early educational objectives: "the Education of the English and Indian youth of this country in knowledge and Goodness." (p. 8) Although this may have been a noble goal, Harvard had very little initial success with its plan of creating a school within a school. Many of the Indian students did not persist for

various reasons including poor health, homesickness, and frustration with a Western, Euro-centered curriculum that had little or no relevance to Indian life. For the next 150 years many subsequent attempts were made to assimilate the American Indian into the American educational system. Schools such as Dartmouth, and William & Mary also strove to incorporate American Indians, but to no avail.

As the colonial era gave way to the birth of the American nation, America's policy began to be that of forced assimilation of Indians into the cultural patterns of the white man (Wright, 1989; Wright & Tierney, 1991; Colbert, 1999). The eradication of Indian cultures, philosophy, and religious traditions became prevalent. Instead of helping the Indian to become a part of society, AI/ANs became increasingly marginalized by these efforts. Today, over 350 years later, the track record of AI/AN students in higher education continues to be very dismal.

This information becomes even more unsettling when considering that ethnic minorities, including AI/ANs, are fast becoming a major part of the population. Indeed, recent population projections indicate that by the start of the new millennium the majority of people under the age of 30 in the United States will be members of an ethnic minority (Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman, 1993; Rendón & Hope, 1996). Rendón and Hope (1996) speak of the dramatic cultural transformation taking place in America today. By 2012 "students of color" are expected to make up 24% of the under age eighteen population. This

is a five percentage point increase over 1990. America is rapidly becoming a "minority majority" nation. Additionally, the percentage of AI/AN students nationally has increased from 0.8% to 1.0% from 1975 to 1995 indicating that the percentage of AI/AN students is increasing, as well as their absolute number.

The Demographics of the AI/AN Population

The AI/AN population in the United States has grown from approximately 1.4 million to 2.3 million from 1980 to 1997 (see Table 1). This is a 39% increase in less than twenty years. The Anglo population during that same time period grew from 194 million to 221 million, a net increase of only about 12%. Thus, the AI/AN population is growing at a rate of more than three times that of the Anglo population in the United States.

Table 1

U S Population Growth Anglo (White) Compared to AI/AN Growth Rate
1970-1997 (in thousands)

<u>Year</u>	<u>White (Anglo)</u>	<u>AI/AN</u>
1980	194,713	1.420
1985	202,031	1.718
1990	208,727	2.065
1995	218,066	2.252
1997	221,334	2.322

Sources: US Bureau of the Census
Statistical Abstract of the United States 1998

Arizona Demographics

The state of Arizona also has a growing Indian population (see Table 2). In the decade from 1980 to 1990 the American Indian population grew from approximately 152,000 to 203,000. This growth represented a net increase of 25%. During that same time period the Anglo population grew at approximately the same rate, growing from approximately 2.24 million to 2.96 million, a net increase of 24%. Thus, nationally, the AI/AN population is growing faster than the Anglo population, and in Arizona it is growing at about the same rate.

Table 2

Arizona Population Growth: Anglo (White) Compared to AI/AN Population Growth 1980-1990

<u>Year</u>	<u>White(Anglo)</u>	<u>American Indian</u>
1980	2,240,761	152,498
1990	2,963,186	203,527

Source: Arizona Statistical Abstract 1993

American Indian College Enrollments

During the four-year period beginning in the Fall 1994 semester and extending to the Spring 1999 semester, AI/AN enrollment at AIC declined. However, in the Fall 1999 semester there was a slight (5.3%) enrollment increase over Fall 1998 (see Table 3). With the recent change of the presidency to indigenous leadership, the College's leadership is hopeful that the statistics can continue to be reversed. Since AIC recruits AI/AN students from a national pool, its future is bright if it can continue to overcome its recent enrollment difficulties.

Table 3

American Indian College Total Enrollment: Fall 1994-Spring 2000

<u>1994 - 1995:</u>	Fall 1994 = 120	Spring 1995 = 115
<u>1995 - 1996:</u>	Fall 1995 = 112	Spring 1996 = 110
<u>1996 - 1997:</u>	Fall 1996 = 106	Spring 1997 = 94
<u>1997 - 1998:</u>	Fall 1997 = 80	Spring 1998 = 86
<u>1998 - 1999:</u>	Fall 1998 = 71	Spring 1999 = 69
<u>1999 - 2000:</u>	Fall 1999 = 75	Spring 2000 = 80

Source: American Indian College, Office of Institutional Research, 2000

Experiences Associated with Low Retention for AI/AN Students

AI/ANs and other minorities have not fared well in educational attainment. Astin (1982) indicates that family background, including socio-economic and educational status, correlates positively with increased rates of persistence for children of minority parents. As a result, those who come from families with low parental educational attainment and income have greater difficulty persisting to an undergraduate degree. Students born into families that are low in socio-economic (SES) status may find it difficult to compensate for the inadequacies they encounter, such as inadequate

technology, weak support system, financial deprivation, and cultural gaps that seem impossible to bridge (Demmert, 1996; Garrod & Larrimore, 1997).

Demmert's (1996) research into AI/AN K-12 education also notes that AI/AN students have difficulty in school because of teachers who are inadequately prepared to work with AI/AN students, family violence, substance abuse, high drop out rates, and lack of good AI/AN role models within the classroom. Although this research focused on K-12 students, it has implications for higher education because if these problems aren't rectified before college, retention will be strongly affected at the collegiate level.

Rendón and Hope (1996) note that AI/AN students also have some of the same problems encountered by Hispanic and Afro-American students, including difficulties in transferring from community colleges to four-year schools. Consequently, AI/AN students remain clustered in these community colleges where they are far less likely to persist to a four-year degree (Rendón & Garza, 1996). Like many other minorities, AI/AN students are enrolled in two-year colleges not by choice but by necessity, and they are afforded far fewer opportunities for academic and professional advancement since they frequently remain excluded from more prestigious institutions. Even when these students gain entry to better schools, they are often faced with a culturally hostile environment including indifferent and unfriendly students, as well as an educational system not designed for them (Lin et al., 1988; Tierney, 1991 & 1992; Wright, 1991; Wright & Tierney, 1991; Melchior-Walsh, 1994; Garrod &

Larrimore 1997). Therefore, creating a strong foundation of positive change could have positive ramifications for future generations of college and university-bound AI/AN students.

AI/AN Educational Attainment: National Statistics

Tables 4, 5, and 6 clearly highlight AI/AN students' low overall academic attainment. Clearly, AI/AN students do not achieve at the same level of educational attainment as the U.S. population in general. For example, 13.9% of the white population persisted to a bachelor's degree in 1990. However, only 6.1% of the AI/AN population had risen to the same level. This is less than half the rate at which the general population (13.1%) attains a four-year degree (see Table 4).

Table 4

Educational Attainment of the U.S. Population by Racial and Ethnic Group, 1990

<u>Highest level reached</u>	<u>All</u>	<u>American Indian</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>	<u>White</u>
8th grade or less	10.4%	14.0%	12.9%	13.8%	30.7%	8.9%
Some high school, no diploma	14.4	20.4	9.5	23.2	19.5	13.1
Some college, no degree	18.7	20.8	14.7	18.5	14.3	19.1
Associate degree	6.2	6.4	7.7	5.3	4.8	6.3
Bachelor's degree	13.1	6.1	22.7	7.5	5.9	13.9
Graduate or professional degree	7.2	3.2	13.9	3.8	3.3	7.7
Number of adults (in millions)	158.9	1.1	4.3	16.8	11.2	132.0

Note. The figures are based on the 1990 census and cover adults age 25 and older. The total includes those whose racial or ethnic group is not known. Hispanics may be of any race. The figures may not add to 100 per cent because of rounding.

Source: Census Bureau

Note: From The Chronicle of Higher Education September 1, 1995 Vol. XLII No. 1 Almanac Issue

AI/AN ACT and SAT scores are also low and comparable to the scores of other under-represented minority groups such as Hispanics and African-Americans. Anglos in 1996 averaged 526 and 523 on the Verbal and Mathematic section of the SAT respectively. Mean scores for AI/AN students were 483 and 477 respectively (see Table 5).

In 1996 the mean composite score for the ACT was 18.8 (a modest increase of 0.2 over the 1995 score) for AI/AN students versus 21.6 for Anglo students (who exhibited an increase of 0.1 over the 1995 mean score). American Indians did slightly better than African-Americans and about the same as Mexican-Americans and other Hispanics (see Table 6).

National mean scores for GPAs are not available, however, Rendón et al. (1997) received data from 28 schools in 10 cities nationally and discovered that the mean reported GPA for AI/AN students for the 1995-1996 school year was 1.85. Of the five separate ethnic groups surveyed, AI/AN students had the lowest reported GPA (see Table 7).

Table 5

Average Scores on the Scholastic Assessment Test by Gender, Racial, and Ethnic Group, 1996

	<u>Verbal Section</u>		<u>Mathematical section</u>	
	<u>Score</u>	<u>1-year Change</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>1-year Change</u>
Men	507	+2	527	+2
Women	503	+1	492	+2
American Indian	483	--	477	--
Asian	496	--	558	--
Black	434	--	422	--
Mexican-American	455	--	459	--
Puerto-Rican	452	--	445	--
Other Hispanic	465	--	466	--
White	526	--	523	--
Other	511	--	512	--
All	505	+1	508	-2

Note Each section of the Scholastic Assessment Test is scored on a scale from 200 to 800. A dash indicates that data are not available. In 1996 the College Board recentered the test, and converted the scores from previous years to the new scale. The scores in this table should not be compared with figures previously published in the Chronicle.

Source: The College Board

Note: From The Chronicle of Higher Education September 2, 1996 Vol. XLIII No. 1 Almanac Issue (p. 14).

Table 6

Average Scores on the ACT Assessment by Gender, Racial, and Ethnic Group, 1996

	<u>Score</u>	<u>1-year change</u>
Men	21.0	0.0
Women	20.8	+0.1
American Indian	18.8	+0.2
Asian	21.6	0.0
Black	17.0	-0.1
Mexican-American	18.7	+0.1
Other Hispanic	18.9	+0.2
White	21.6	+0.1
All	20.9	+0.1

Note: The American College Testing Program's A.C.T. Assessment is scored on a scale from 1 to 36.

Source: American College Testing Program

Note: From The Chronicle of Higher Education September 2, 1996 Vol. XLIII No. 1 Almanac Issue (p. 14)

Table 7

Mean High School Grade Point Averages by Race/Ethnicity and Gender
1995-1996 School Year

	All Students	African American	American Indian	Asian Pacific Island	Hispanic	White Non-Hisp
Total	2.28	2.14	1.85	3.00	2.49	2.77
Females	2.63					
Males	2.37					

Note: Number of cities reported: 10 Number of schools/clusters: 28
Grade representing the year GPA reported: 11th grade = 9 schools.
12th grade = 19 schools

Source: Student Academic Progress: Key Data Trends Baseline 1995 - 96
(October 1997). Prepared by L. I. Rendón, Amaury Nora, Wendy L. Gans, and
Mistalene D. Calleroz

AI/AN Educational Attainment: Arizona Statistics

AI/AN statistics for the state of Arizona regarding educational attainment are similar to those for the nation as a whole. Of 20 selected tribes in the state of Arizona, the average tribal graduation rate from a four-year institution was 4.6% based on figures provided in Table 7. The national rate for AI/ANs is 6.1% (see Table 4). Thus AI/AN academic attainment is lower in Arizona than it is for the nation as a whole.

Table 8

Educational Characteristics of Indians in Arizona for Identified Reservations:
1989 (Continued on next page)

Educational Attainment	Camp Verde	Cocopah	Colorado River	Fort Apache	Fort McDowell	Fort Mojave	Fort Yuma	Gila River	Hava-supai	Hopi
Persons 25 years & Over	267	302	3,799	4,673	311	185	11	4,515	225	3,778
Less than 9th grade	39	117	734	791	22	18	0	1,100	50	610
9th to 12th grade	96	76	701	1,473	87	62	0	1,738	80	753
High School Grad	60	71	1,153	1,358	114	73	6	1,059	53	1,187
Some college, no degree	47	32	611	528	58	28	5	414	26	652
Associates Degree	16	6	233	221	5	3	0	109	2	364
Bachelor's Degree	1	0	233	216	22	1	0	87	9	98
Graduate or Professional Degree	8	0	134	86	3	0	0	8	5	114
Percent H.S. Grad or Higher	49.4	36.1	62.2	51.6	65.0	56.8	100.0	37.1	42.2	63.9
Percent Bachelor's Degree or Higher	3.4	0.0	9.7	6.5	8.0	0.5	0.0	2.1	6.2	5.6

Table 8 (continued)

Educational Characteristics of Indians in Arizona for Identified Reservations:
1989

Educational Attainment	Hualapai	Kaibab	Maricopa	Navajo	Papago	Pascua Yaqui	Salt River	San Carlos	San Xavier	Yavapai
Persons 25 years & Over	409	60	211	41,590	4,240	928	2,805	3,119	553	86
Less than 9th grade	34	13	57	14,676	1,370	321	265	438	47	2
9th to 12th grade	157	10	79	8,472	865	342	906	1,113	249	29
High School Grad	128	27	48	9,522	1,730	178	879	1,039	223	9
Some college, no degree	70	4	15	4,719	182	51	524	297	16	34
Associates Degree	15	0	6	1,761	31	16	56	139	0	0
Bachelor's Degree	4	3	4	1,411	29	5	121	38	0	7
Graduate or Professional Degree	1	3	2	1,029	33	15	54	61	18	5
Percent H S Grad or Higher	53.3	61.7	35.5	44.3	47.3	28.6	58.3	50.3	46.5	64.0
Percent Bachelor's Degree or Higher	1.2	10.0	2.8	5.9	1.5	2.2	6.2	3.2	3.3	14.0

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. 1990 Census of Population and Housing. summary Tape File 3A

Note: Arizona Statistical Abstract 1993 Data Handbook

An examination of the 20 tribes represented indicates that the overall percentage (by tribal affiliation) of those attaining a bachelor's degree is generally low, but there is some significant variation between the tribes as well. For example, among Yavapai Apaches, 14.0% persist to a bachelor's degree or higher. Conversely, the Cocopah have a 0.0% persistence rate (see Table 8).

Data in Table 8 clearly reflect the fact that the overall baccalaureate attainment rate is unacceptably low. Table 9 shows how AI/AN students (over the age of 25) fared state-wide within Arizona compared with other ethnic groups.

Table 9

Years of School completed by Persons 25 and over by Race and Hispanic Origin, in Arizona: 1990 Census

	Total	White	Black	American Indian Eskimo or Aleut	Asian & Pacific Islander	Other Race	Hispanic
Amount of Schooling							
Less than 9th Grade	9.0%	6.4%	9.3%	24.9%	10.4%	32.0%	30.0%
9th to 12th Grade No Diploma	12.3%	11.2%	15.6%	23.0%	9.4%	19.2%	18.3%
High School Graduate	26.1%	26.6%	21.9%	27.1%	17.1%	23.4%	23.4%
Some College, No Degree	25.4%	26.5%	30.2%	15.3%	18.0%	16.1%	16.6%
Associate Degree	6.8%	7.0%	8.8%	5.0%	7.5%	4.3%	4.7%
Bachelor's Degree	13.3%	14.6%	9.9%	3.0%	21.8%	3.5%	2.3%
Graduate or Professional Degree	7.0%	7.6%	4.4%	1.6%	15.8%	1.5%	2.3%
Total	2,301,177	1,960,882	59,507	94,257	31,548	154,983	329,455
Note: The figures are based on the 1990 census and cover adults 25 and older. The total percentages may not add up to 100 per cent because of rounding.							

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. *1990 Census of Population and Housing*. Summary Tape File 3.

Note: Arizona Statistical Abstract 1993 Data Handbook

Tables 10 and 11 show the average SAT and ACT scores, respectively, of various ethnic groups within the state of Arizona. On the SAT AI/AN students score ahead of Blacks and Mexican Americans by a small margin, but lower than Puerto Ricans, Asians and Whites. The Arizona composite score for AI/AN students (965) approximates the national average (960), see Table 5.

Table 10

State of Arizona SAT Scores by Racial/Ethnic Groups, 1996

<u>Group</u>	<u>Verbal Score</u>	<u>Math Score</u>	<u>Composite</u>
American Indian/ Alaska Native	476	489	965
Asian	511	556	1067
Black	462	449	911
Mexican American	483	481	964
Puerto Rican	495	499	994
White	534	532	1066

Source: Arizona State University, Office of Institutional Analysis, 1997.
College Bound Seniors: Arizona

Note: Charles R. Colbert, unpublished Ed.D. dissertation, Arizona State University, 1999, p. 17

Table 11 shows the Arizona mean scores for the ACT for various racial and ethnic groups. On the ACT, AI/AN students scored lower than any of the other ethnic groups reported, with a mean score (17.5) just below that of Blacks (17.6). The mean composite ACT scores for AI/AN students in Arizona (17.5) was a little lower than the national composite score for AI/AN students (18.8), see Table 6.

Table 11

State of Arizona Mean ACT Scores for Racial/Ethnic Groups, 1996

<u>Group</u>	<u>Average ACT Test Score</u>
American Indian/Alaska Native	17.5
Asian	23.1
Black	17.6
Mexican - American	20.2
Puerto Rican	19.8
White	23.0

Source: Arizona Board of Regents, Research Division

Note: Charles R. Colbert, unpublished Ed.D. dissertation, Arizona State University, 1999, p 17

Unfortunately, there is no information available on AI/AN student high school GPAs statewide in Arizona. However, Table 12 shows the mean GPAs and class rankings for the entering freshman cohorts of AI/AN students at Arizona State University for 1989-1991.

Table 12

Pre-College Academic Profile: Mean HS GPA and HS Rank for AI/AN Students in 1989 - 1991 Freshman Cohort at Arizona State University

Cohort	N	M	F	HS GPA			HS RANK		
				M	F	All	M	F	All
1989	57	27	30	2.98	3.16	3.07	36.71	20.37	21.00
1990	52	28	24	3.14	3.26	3.20	19.22	18.38	18.79
1991	38	15	22	2.99	3.20	3.12	29.08	18.35	22.58
Totals/Av.	147	70	76	3.04	3.21	3.13	28.34	19.03	20.79

Source: Arizona State University, Office of Institutional Analysis, 1998, University Enrollment Files; statistics were rounded to the nearest hundredth

Note: Charles R. Colbert, unpublished Ed.D. dissertation, Arizona State University, 1999, p. 100

The results suggest that for such a large university, the AI/AN freshman cohort is quite small, perhaps suggesting that only a very small number of qualified AI/AN students enter Arizona State University that ironically enough, is practically adjacent to the Salt River (Pima) Reservation. According to the 1990

Census. American Indians made up 6.86% of Arizona's population (see Table 2), thus they should be represented in greater numbers at ASU.

AI/AN Educational Attainment: American Indian College Statistics

Table 13 shows the six-year graduation rates for all AIC students beginning in 1986. All students who attend AIC are required to either have a high school diploma or GED certificate. The table shows a large drop between the first cohort (1986-1992) and the second cohort (1989-1995). The third cohort shows the strongest increase to date.

Table 13

American Indian College: Six-Year Graduation Rates (150% Normal Completion Time) For All (BA/AA) Students for Cohorts Beginning in 1986, 1989, and 1991

<u>1986-1992:</u>	<u>1989-1995:</u>	<u>1991-1997:</u>
38.25%	27%	47%

Source: American Indian College, Office of Institutional Research, 1999

AIC's most current six-year rate compares favorably with the national rate of 29%. However, AIC's 1989-1995 rate was just a bit under the national figures from 1988-1994 (see Table 14). Table 14 also shows that AI/AN students have

the lowest rate of completion (29%) of any of the ethnic groups compared.

AI/AN students graduated at a rate of just a little better than half that of Anglo students and less than half that of Asian students. Clearly, retention is a major concern for AI/AN students.

Table 14

College Graduation Rates for Racial/Ethnic Groups After 6 Years.
1988-1994

<u>Group:</u>	<u>Rate Percentage:</u>
American Indian/Alaskan Native	29
Asian	62
Black	31
Hispanic	40
White	56

Source: Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac, 1997

Note: Charles R. Colbert, unpublished Ed.D. dissertation, Arizona State University, 1999

AIC, like many other institutions of higher education, makes use of the ACT as part of its admissions criteria. Although a specific score is not required, the results are used to help assess the students' strengths and weaknesses at the point of entry. Most students take the ACT before gaining admission to the College. Table 15 shows the composite scores for AIC AI/AN students from

1995-1996 and 1996-1997 combined into one cohort, as well as students entering from 1997-1998 and 1998-1999 combined into a second cohort. These cohorts were combined because of the very small sizes of these groups (N = 47). There is a very slight increase (+0.2) between the 1995-1997 cohort and the 1997-1999 cohort. Nonetheless, despite the increase, the composite scores are still below those of both national and Arizona figures for AI/AN students (see Table 16). AIC has traditionally admitted many students who are well below average in academic attainment and who have low standardized scores. Tables 15 and 16 show that Arizona's mean ACT scores for AI/AN students are lower than those of the state of Arizona, and that Arizona's mean scores are higher than those of AIC.

Table 15

Mean Composite ACT Scores for AIC Students entering in the Years Fall 1995-Spring 1997 and Fall 1997-Spring 1999 (N = 47):

<u>Fall 1995-Spring 1997:</u>	<u>Fall 1997-Spring 1999:</u>	<u>Increase:</u>
14.9	15.1	+ 0. 2

Source: American Indian College, Office of the Registrar, 1999

Table 16

Comparison of Recent Mean Composite ACT Scores for AI/AN Students at the National, State (Arizona), and Local (AIC)

<u>National (1996):</u>	<u>Arizona (1996):</u>	<u>AIC (Fall '95-Spring '97):</u>
18.8	17.5	15.1

Sources: American College Testing Program; Arizona Board of Regents, Research Division, American Indian College, Office of the Registrar

Notes: From The Chronicle of Higher Education September 2, 1996 Vol. XLIII No 1 Almanac Issue (p 14); Charles R. Colbert, unpublished Ed D dissertation, Arizona State University, 1999

Table 17 shows the mean and median GPA for the 1998-1999 freshman cohort at AIC. The total incoming freshman class was 28, but GPAs were unavailable for seven of the students because they had completed the GED instead of graduating from high school. Based on the scores of the 1998-1999 freshman cohort, the average AIC student has a GPA of less than 3.0. The institution prides itself in specializing in working with students whose grades and standardized test scores might prevent them from being admitted to more selective colleges and universities.

Despite lenient admissions standards, AIC's 1997 six-year graduation rate for all students was 47% (American Indian College Catalog, 1998 - 2000, p. 60).

Table 17

Mean and Median High School GPAs for 1998-1999 Freshman Cohort at AIC

Mean GPA = 2.61	Median GPA = 2.79	N = 21	Not Available = 7
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Source: American Indian College, Office of Institutional Research, 1999

AI/AN Representation Within Higher Education

Table 18 shows the national representation of AI/AN students within undergraduate education as compared to other ethnic groups. The 1990 census shows that AI/AN students represented 0.8% of the total higher education population in the United States. Within the state of Arizona the percentage of AI/AN students in terms of distribution is slightly higher at 3.8%. This is possibly because AI/AN students represent a larger proportion of the state's population than at the national level (see Table 19). Also, in Arizona AI/AN students rank

Table 18

U S Population Distribution, By Race/Ethnicity, 1990 and Racial/Ethnic Distribution in Total Higher Education Population, 1997

<u>Group</u>	<u>Population</u>		<u>Population in Higher Education</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
AI/AN	1,878,000	0.8	131,304	0.8
Asian	7,274,000	2.9	797,359	2.9
Black	29,986,000	12.1	1,473,672	12.1
Hispanic	22,354,000	8.5	1,093,839	9.0
White	199,686,000	75.6	10,311,243	80.3

Source: 1990 U.S. Census Bureau
Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac, 1997

Note: Charles R. Colbert, unpublished Ed D. dissertation, Arizona State University, 1999

very low proportionally just as they do at the national level. In Arizona, AI/AN students rank just ahead of Black students and are tied for second to the last place with Asian students.

At AIC, AI/AN students have always been represented in high proportions since the stated mission of the College has been "to prepare Native Americans for a life of ministry, which in Scripture is synonymous with service." (American Indian College Catalog 1998-2000, p. 13). Although other ethnic groups have typically been represented at AIC, the main emphasis continues to be serving a Native American population. Table 20 shows the proportion of AI/AN students represented within the student population. Since 1994 the proportion has

ranged between 66-78%. AIC has a high AI/AN proportion of population because the institution specializes in AI/AN students and actively recruits them from within its stated constituency of Assemblies of God churches.

Table 19

State of Arizona Population Distribution, by Racial/Ethnic Group, 1997
And the Racial/Ethnic Population Distribution in Arizona Higher Education

<u>Group</u>	<u>State of Arizona</u> <u>N</u>	<u>State of Arizona</u> <u>%</u>	<u>State of Arizona Higher Education</u> <u>N</u>	<u>State of Arizona Higher Education</u> <u>%</u>
AI/AN	247,968	5.6	10,613	3.8
Asian	66,420	1.5	8,578	3.8
Black	132,840	3.0	8,776	3.2
Hispanic	832,464	18.8	38,691	14.1
White	3,577,824	80.8	200,052	73.0
Arizona	4,428,000	100.0	273,981	100.0

Source: Annual Report To The Arizona Board of Regents, 1996

Note: Charles R. Colbert, unpublished Ed.D. dissertation, Arizona State University, 1999

Table 20

American Indian College: Total Enrollment and Percentage of
AI/AN Students Fall 1994-Spring 2000

<u>1994-1995:</u>	<u>Fall</u>	<u>AI/AN %</u>	<u>Spring</u>	<u>AI/AN %</u>
	120	77	115	78
<u>1995-1996:</u>	<u>Fall</u>	<u>AI/AN %</u>	<u>Spring</u>	<u>AI/AN %</u>
	112	77	110	73
<u>1996-1997:</u>	<u>Fall</u>	<u>AI/AN %</u>	<u>Spring</u>	<u>AI/AN %</u>
	106	65	94	66
<u>1997-1998:</u>	<u>Fall</u>	<u>AI/AN%</u>	<u>Spring</u>	<u>AI/AN%</u>
	80	66	86	66
<u>1998-1999:</u>	<u>Fall</u>	<u>AI/AN%</u>	<u>Spring</u>	<u>AI/AN%</u>
	71	72	68	72
<u>1999-2000:</u>	<u>Fall</u>	<u>AI/AN%</u>	<u>Spring</u>	<u>AI/AN%</u>
	76	71	80	78

Source: American Indian College Office of Institutional Research, 2000

Freshman Retention

Very few studies are available that document freshman retention rates for AI/AN students (see Swisher & Hoisch, 1992; Wells, 1997). Table 21 shows the first to second year college re-enrollment rates for first-time, full-time students in 18 urban four-year colleges by race, ethnicity, and gender for the 1995-1996 school year by percentages.

Rendón et al. (1997) determined from their findings that Asian-Pacific Islanders had the highest freshman reenrollment rate with 80.8% re-enrolling for their sophomore year. The reader will note that American Indians had the lowest reported retention rate (67.6%) of the six groups reporting.

Table 21

First to Second Year College Re-enrollment Rates for First-Time, Full-Time Students in Four-Year Colleges by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, 1995-1996 Academic Year (by Percent)

4-Yr. Full	All Students	African American	American Indian	Asian-Pacific Islander	Hispanic	White, Non-Hisp
Total	74.4	72.0	67.6	80.8	70.3	74.4
Females	76.1					
Males	72.3					

Note. Number of cities reported: 12 Number of four - year colleges reported: 18

Source. Student Academic Progress: Key Data Trends Baseline 1995 - 1996 (October 1997)
Prepared by L. I. Rendón, Amaury Nora, Wendy L. Gans, and Mistalene D. Calleroz, p. 13

Findings for Arizona State University are very similar to the national survey undertaken by Rendón et al. (1997) albeit the average persistence rate from 1991-1997 is lower than the 1995-1996 rate reported by them in 1997. At ASU, American Indians had the lowest retention rate of all groups reporting (56.1%) versus Asian Americans who had a high of 76.8% for the average of 1991-1997. In fact, American Indians had a much lower persistence rate than minority students in general (71.0%). Ironically, Hispanics had a higher reported persistence rate (74.9%) than did Whites (72.7%) (see Table 22). This is interesting in light of their low academic attainment nationally (see Table 4) and their low SAT and ACT scores (see Tables 5 and 6).

Table 22

Arizona State University Persistence Summary First-Time, Full-Time Freshman to Sophomore Year Persistence: 1991-1997 Averages

All Students	All Minorities	African-American	American Indian	Asian American	Hispanic	White
71.2%	71.0%	67.9%	56.1%	76.8%	72.2%	71.1%

Source: Arizona State University, University Office of Institutional Analysis, 1999

American Indian College has a higher freshman retention rate than either the reported national findings quantified by Rendón et al. (1997) or Arizona State University. Table 23 displays the freshman retention rate from 1994 to 1999 as well as the mean percentage of those years.

Table 23

American Indian College Freshman Retention Rates 1994-1999

1994-1995	1995-1996	1996-1997	1997-1998	1998-1999	Mean % Rate
81.6%	55.6%	82%	76%	86%	76.2%

Source: American Indian College, Office of Institutional Research

Note: The retention rate is for all students and not just AI/AN students. However, the ethnic composition of American Indian College ranged between 65-77% AI/AN from the years 1994-1999. Thus, AI/AN students are the primary ethnic group comprising the College.

AIC's mean reported freshman retention rate (76.2%) is close to the retention rate reported for all college students (74.4%) attending four year colleges in 1995-1996 by Rendón et al. (1997). Although these authors determined that the freshman retention rate for American Indian students was 67.6% (see Table 21), Wells (1997) determined in his survey that the freshman retention rate for AI/N students was even lower, a mere 46.7%. Wells's (1997) data is closer to the results reported by ASU.

The reader should also note that AIC's retention rate is just slightly ahead of the mean reported all-student freshman retention rate (71.2%) from ASU.

All of these statistics suggest that perhaps AI/AN students have a better chance of persisting to the sophomore year in an environment where there are a higher percentage of other AI/AN students present. The high percentage of AI/AN students at AIC (72%) (see Table 20) must be noted in light of the low percentage statewide within Arizona (3.8%) (see Table 19) and the even lower (0.8%) national figure of AI/AN representation within higher education (see Table 18).

In this next section the research questions that guide this study are presented to provide direction and scope to the course of the research.

Research Questions

This study is guided by five research questions that generated the questions used in the research protocol (see Appendix B).

Research Question 1: What is the demographic profile of students attending this Bible college?

Research Question 2: What are the pre-collegiate experiences (i.e. high school academic background and preparation, positive and negative life experiences, encouragement from significant others, spirituality, etc.) that influence AI/AN students to attend this Bible college?

Research Question 3: What student-related experiences both on and off campus (i.e., family background, support systems, parenting skills, interactions

with students and faculty from the same and different racial backgrounds, etc.)

enhance or preclude the retention of AI/AN students at this Bible college?

Research Question 4: What are the institutional culture experiences (i.e. curriculum, institutional role models, campus climate, programming, etc.) that increase or lessen the retention of AI/N students at this Bible College?

Research Question 5: What strategies can Bible colleges implement to enhance the retention of its AI/AN students?

Overall, this study seeks to understand phenomena and uncover meanings and perspectives related to freshman year experiences from the specific vantage point of AI/AN students attending a Bible college. The specific questions contained in the Research Protocol were designed to elicit responses from the participants that would provide the needed information.

A definition of terms of the specific terminology used in this study is provided in the next section to assist the reader in understanding these terms as employed by both the researcher and the study participants.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined per the writer's usage to provide the reader with a common frame of reference in understanding them as they are used in this study.

Academic attainment - level of education achieved (i.e.: high school graduate, college graduate, etc.); refers also to the quality of grades and standardized test scores (such as SAT or ACT); sometimes used interchangeably by the writer with "educational attainment."

Academy - the world of higher education, particularly that of the four-year institution and beyond.

Acculturation - refers to the degree to which someone in one culture is able to comfortably navigate through another one by taking on the attributes of the second culture.

American Indian/Alaska Native - abbreviated as AI/AN, the combined cohort of American Indians and Alaska Natives (including Eskimos) who are recognized as the indigenous peoples of North America (pre-Columbus), and the major focus of this study.

Assemblies of God - a conservative Protestant denomination characterized by such tenets as beliefs in biblical inerrancy, divine healing, a literal personal return of Jesus Christ to the earth, and a strong emphasis on a personal

salvation experience. American Indian College is an Assemblies of God institution.

Assimilation - the degree to which someone from one culture takes on the cultural traits of another culture, often denying or suppressing traits of the first culture by doing so.

At-risk student - a student likely to encounter difficulties persisting to a college degree because of any of the following factors: low socio-economic status, low grades, low standardized test scores, first generation college student, single-parent, older student (over age 25), and part-time students; many AI/AN students fall into one or more of these categories.

Attrition - refers to students dropping out and failing to persist to a college degree.

Bible college - an institution of higher learning (usually undergraduate) whose chief academic mission is to train students for ministry and where the curriculum is strongly influenced by the Bible.

Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) - a federal agency responsible for AI/AN concerns and issues including health, verification of tribal ethnicity, education, etc.

Cohort - a group of students matriculating at an institution at the same time whom ordinarily track together (i.e.: Fall 1999 freshman cohort).

Constituency - a group of people banded together by a common interest or cause.

Educational attainment - highest level of education achieved (i.e.: high school graduate, college graduate, etc.) sometimes used interchangeably by this writer with "academic attainment."

First-generation college student - a student who is the first in the family to attend college (many AI/AN students fall into this category).

Indigenous - characterized by the original inhabitants (i.e.: AI/ANs are the indigenous inhabitants of North America); also characterized by self-governance such as AI/AN governance of their own affairs in government, education, etc.

Institutional culture- in this study institutional culture refers to the inclusive institutional environment at an institution and includes size and ethnicity of students, student/teacher ratio, recruitment practices, programming, and faculty and staff characteristics.

Institution-related experiences- refers to those experiences perceived to be influenced by the institution in either enhancing or precluding academic persistence or retention.

Non-traditional student- a college student outside the scope of the normal demographic profile of someone seeking a higher education and includes: students over age 25, single parents, part-time students, and first-generation college students (many AI/AN students fall into the category of non-traditional student).

Persistence - persevering to completion of a college degree.

Pre-collegiate experiences - refers to those experiences from before a student matriculates into college and perceived to influence (either positively or negatively) the student's navigation through the realm of higher education.

Retention - characterized by those persisting to a degree while remaining at the same institution.

Saved - used in the religious sense, it refers to having undergone a personal spiritual transformation into the Christian faith

Sectarian - of or belonging to a particular denomination or sect; characterized by particular beliefs.

Student-related experiences - refers to experiences perceived to influence the student's navigation through the academy including skill levels, high school preparation, life experiences, family background, and ability to relate to non-AI/AN people.

Students of color - in reference to students who are ethnically non-Anglo such as American Indian/Alaska Natives, Hispanics, African-Americans, and Asians.

Teen Challenge - a residential substance-abuse treatment program operated by the Assemblies of God since 1960 that utilizes spiritual principles to cure addictions.

Tribal Colleges - currently 24 colleges run by individual tribes for the benefit of their tribal members. Tribal colleges are characterized by open admissions standards, education with a strong emphasis on tribal philosophy, and a high proportion of non-traditional students (See Boyer 1989)

Summary

Clearly there is a major problem of AI/AN academic persistence and retention within American higher education. Compared to other ethnic groups, AI/ANs are the least successful at remaining in college. AI/AN retention is of concern at the national, state, and local level. The study took place at American Indian College, a Bible College that had an enrollment of 78% AI/AN students and a freshman retention rate of 86% (Spring 2000). This study examined the experiences of AI/AN students beyond the freshman year through the use of focus groups and the creation of concept models from the derived data. Because this study examined institutional choice and post-freshman year retention of AI/ANs at a small Bible college, it is significant to researchers, practitioners, and policy analysts.

The next chapter presents a literature review that examines current empirical and theoretical findings related to the issue of AI/AN retention. These provide a theoretical framework in which to understand and evaluate this study's findings.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

Introduction

The literature review examines significant research findings in the retention of AI/AN students, including issues specifically related to freshman AI/AN students, as well as relevant background information. The literature review lays a theoretical foundation for subsequent examination of retention issues specific to freshman AI/AN students through a review of empirical studies. Next, several major theoretical orientations relative to the study of AI/AN student retention will also be discussed.

Empirical Studies

Freshman Retention

Higher educational researchers have clearly identified the freshman year of college as a crucial time in the academic and social formation of college and university students (Gardner, 1980 & 1990; Upcraft, 1991; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989; Astin, 1991; Daughtry, 1992; Tinto, 1987 & 1993). For students the freshman year is a critical time in determining the likelihood of continued persistence towards a bachelor's degree. Students make a transition into a very different lifestyle, especially if they decide to attend a four-year residential

school. For many, enrollment in college is seen as a rite of passage (Tinto 1987 & 1993). Also, attrition is highest during the pivotal freshman year. Tinto (1993) determined that attrition for all full-time, first-time degree-seeking freshman is 53.3% in four-year colleges, and 67.7% in two-year colleges. Thus, for all students the percentage of students who persist past the freshman year is less than 50%.

AI/AN Freshman Retention

If the problem of academic persistence is difficult for students in general, it is even more difficult for minorities, and especially for AI/AN students. Latino, African-American, and especially AI/ANs have been determined to be "at risk" of dropping out. Smith (1995), in a study of first-time freshman students at 67 U.S. colleges and universities determined that the overall retention rate was 80%. Among minority students the freshman retention rates were 73% for African-Americans, 72% for Hispanics, and 69% for AI/AN students. Wells (1989) determined that more than half of AI/AN students who leave college before their graduation do so in their freshman year. These figures are consistent with Wells's (1997) follow-up study in which he determined that the freshman retention rate for AI/AN students is 47%. Still, Wells (1989 & 1997) cautions that there is a paucity of quantitative data available on AI/AN students. This is a sentiment also echoed by Astin (1982) and Pavel and Padilla (1993).

Pre-College Related Experiences that Preclude or Enhance Retention

Cultural Discontinuity

A number of experiences are associated with AI/AN student retention even before students enroll in college. For AI/AN students, the cultural discontinuity with the world of the academy begins long before matriculation in a college program. Both Demmert (1994) and Colbert (1999) cite the issue of English as a second language for many AI/AN students as a factor contributing to attrition. Many AI/AN students are at a distinct disadvantage in their scholastic skills if English is not their first language. Both researchers cite concern over the loss of the AI/AN student's mother tongue since many students feel they must "give up" their mother tongue to succeed in the "white man's world." Colbert (1999) refers to this as "cultural genocide." AI/AN students have seen their cultures denigrated in the eyes of society and do not feel a sense of partnership with the rest of society. Thus, they may feel isolated and alone making it difficult to seek a college experience

Inadequate Technology

Both Demmert (1996) and Gilbert (1996) cited the lack of adequate instructional technology present in Indian elementary and secondary schools as a serious problem that threatens the students' ability to succeed academically.

In particular, the lack of state of the art computer technology is a serious problem. According to Gilbert (1996) Northern Arizona University (NAU), in an attempt to help bridge the gap between high school and college, has established a five-week summer bridge program called Nizhoni Academy which focuses on increasing the retention rates of Navajo and Hopi students who intend to pursue a college education. By forming an educational partnership with seven schools located in both Arizona and New Mexico, they hoped to reduce the drop-out rate from high school as well as increase the college graduation rate. Before the program began, only one of the participating schools had a computer lab. Funding was obtained so that the other schools could have computers and software to assist in teaching language arts, English composition, writing, general math, science, as well as mechanical drafting.

Low Academic Attainment

AI/AN students are often kept out of good colleges and universities because of low academic attainment in terms of GPA, standardized test scores and academic skills. Benjamin et al. (1993) studied 166 AI/AN first-time freshman enrolled at a medium-sized southwestern university and determined that most of those students "exhibited marginal academic traits." (p. 27). Likewise, Wells (1997) found that one of the key inhibitors to successful AI/AN college retention is inadequate academic preparation, which is part of the

reason the drop-out rate among AI/AN students in high school is also so high (Swisher & Hoisch, 1992).

Rendón et al.'s (1997) survey research shows that AI/AN students have a low GPA attainment amongst the 28 schools they surveyed in ten cities. The mean GPA for all students was 2.28 with AI/AN students having the lowest mean GPA (1.85) of all ethnic groups (see also Table 7).

Gilbert (1996) determined that indeed, AI/AN students have very low standardized test scores. For example, in the state of Arizona, public school students as a whole scored average or above average nationally in 33 out of 36 testing categories on the Iowa Basic Skills Test (ITBS), the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT-7) for students in grade 9, and the Stanford test of Academic Skills (TASK), given to students in grades 10-12. However, when compared with all other ethnic groups including Blacks and Hispanics, American Indians scored lowest of all ethnic groups on reading, language, and mathematics. The scores for these American Indian students were generally below the national average. Not only were standard scores very poor for Indian students, reports indicated that the high school drop-out rate for American Indians in Arizona is 30%. Gilbert (1996) expressed alarm at these results and said that current trends indicate that this problem is becoming worse. Wright (1991) indicates that as AI/AN students progress through the educational pipeline, they fall farther and farther behind the other students, going from one year behind in 9th grade to 2 1/2 years behind by the twelfth grade.

Deficiencies in College Preparation

Even AI/AN students who have the natural ability to be admitted to college programs are denied a good education because they are inadequately prepared. Hill (1991) reports that in many Indian communities, formal science classes are non-existent below 6th grade. Many of these students complete high school with only one year of science. Gilbert (1996) maintains that many of the schools serving primarily Indian students offer no advanced classes in English, Science, or Math. Classes for gifted students are also non-existent.

Lee (1997) reports that the University of North Carolina has had some success in addressing weak skill areas in AI/AN college freshmen that are under-prepared academically in Basic Math, Writing, Critical Thinking, and College Survival Skills through the use of their Freshman Year Experience. The program is reported to have helped AI/AN freshman student retention, although no statistics were cited.

Partnerships and Summer Bridge Programs

The evidence suggests that the time to retain students must begin long before the student arrives on campus. Kleinfeld, Cooper, and Kyle (1987) noted that Alaska's postsecondary counselor program has had good success in ameliorating the situation of high school drop-outs. In this program a student is paired-up with a post-secondary counselor who actively works with both the

student and the family before and after graduation. The benefits include having the cost of the program absorbed by the government rather than the post-secondary institution and a drop in the high school attrition rate from 50% down to 16%. Kleinfeld, Cooper, and Kyle (1987) believe this can only serve to strengthen the efforts of students who go on to pursue a college education.

Robert and Thomson (1994) indicate that the Berkeley Summer Bridge Program has been highly successful. This program targets "at risk" students who are given an intensive, pre-collegiate experience on campus for three weeks before the semester begins. They have been able to reduce the anxiety of these students by putting them in specialized, intensive pre-collegiate programs that provide mentoring and specialized tutoring. At that time, they reported that Berkeley had a 57% six-year graduation rate for AI/AN students versus a national average of 29%. The evident strength of this program is that it provides rigorous academics with peer tutoring, and reduces the cultural distance between minority students and others.

Demmert (1996) believes that the time to prepare AI/AN students for college is long before they arrive. If a student arrives in college with major educational deficiencies this will only serve to compound the cultural and linguistic barriers that must also be bridged. Demmert (1996) also contends that stronger partnerships must be developed within the K-16 systems so that AI/AN students arriving in post-secondary institutions will not be "at risk" because of educational or cultural difficulties. The entire system of education

must work in tandem so that more AI/AN students can persist to a college degree.

Inadequately Trained Teachers

Part of the reason for inadequately prepared AI/AN freshman college students is the lack of properly trained elementary and high school instructors who are skilled at working with students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Wells, 1997; Almeida, 1996; Demmert, 1996; Bowker, 1992; Ledlow, 1992, Reyner, 1991). Because of their lack of familiarity with the indigenous cultural and learning factors associated with AI/AN students, teachers may use instructional and assessment techniques that harm rather than help the students. (Demmert, 1996; Ledlow, 1992). Pavel and Colby (1992) report that at Oglala Lakota College, a tribal college operated by the Lakota Sioux, prospective instructors are required to take courses in the Lakota Sioux culture in order to help facilitate a better understanding and learning environment between the instructors and the students.

Lack of Role Models

More AI/AN role models throughout the educational process can solve much of the problem of cultural discontinuity in learning (Wells, 1997; Bowker, 1992; Wright, 1991). AI/AN students have few role models in higher education and the professions (Hill, 1991). Falk and Aitken (1984) in their research point

out that at least for men, the lack of cultural role models is one of the three major obstacles to educational attainment. Their research points to the importance of role models throughout the campus community if incoming AI/AN students are to persist. These new students need to see students, staff, professors, and administrators who are AI/AN and who are an integral part of the campus community.

Family Support

Also, the importance of family background and support cannot be overstated. Tinto's (1975, 1988, & 1993) research on American college students has shown the importance of family background as a pre-collegiate determinant to successful degree completion. The importance of family background has been shown to be an important determinant among high school AI/AN students as well (Pavel, 1991; Pavel & Padilla, 1993).

Wright (1991) found that many AI/AN students lacked a significant base of parental support towards the idea of a college education. Bowker (1992) and Brown (1995) determined that family background and parental support (especially mothers and grandmothers for female students) had a positive effect on retention. Martin and Farris (1994) determined that both the immediate and extended family have a vital part in the formation of decision-making and thus are important in promoting retention as well. Falk and Aitken (1984) point out that the support of the family, extended family, and Indian community are

important to those students who wish to attend college and to those who are already attending. Bennett (1997), a Lakota Sioux, cites the example of his grandmother in helping him to persist through the rigors of Dartmouth.

However, many AI/AN students do not have a strong family background to draw emotional support from when they enter college. For example, on the Flathead Indian Reservation in Montana, counselors have described the problem of poor parenting as "multi-generational dysfunction" (Ichizawa, 1992, p. 11). The problems exhibited by the poor parenting include child neglect, fetal alcohol syndrome, crack cocaine usage, hallucinogens, and intravenous drug use.

Reyhner (1991) reports that many students drop out of school, not even making it to college because of lack of parental involvement and dysfunctional families that feel they are powerless against the school system. Part of the solution to the problem of dysfunctional families is programs such as the Young Mothers program on the Northern Cheyenne reservation which allows unwed mothers to remain in high school while also learning parenting skills. With increased education, more of these young mothers may be able to go on to improve their lives.

In addition to family and extended family influence, Pavel and Padilla (1993) determined that for AI/AN students, post-secondary intentions are formulated both before and during a student's time in college. Indeed, the intention to persist to a college degree appears to be determined early in life.

Benjamin et al. (1993) discovered that Navajo students who persisted to a college degree decided early in life to attend college, perhaps as early as elementary school. Brown (1995) found highly significant results ($p < .0001$) when comparing persisters vs. non-persisters in terms of their academic preparation/aspirations.

Student Campus Experiences and Retention

Once the AI/AN student arrives on campus to begin studies, the difficulty is far from over. Enrolling in a higher educational institution and overcoming some of the pre-collegiate experiences that stifle retention is only the beginning. The retention issue for AI/AN students is quite complex because a large number of issues must be dealt with concurrently. The Indian Nations at Risk/National Advisory Council on Indian Education (INAR/NACIE) Joint Issues Sessions meeting held by the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) at the 22nd Annual Conference (San Diego, California, October 16, 1990) addressed this issue a decade ago. The Council noted a number of experiences that mitigate against successful AI/AN retention in college. These experiences include skill levels, high school preparation (especially in the Math and Sciences), intrapersonal issues, inability to deal with non-AI/AN people, alcohol and drug problems, and poor parenting skills.

The previous section already dealt with some of these pre-collegiate issues, including skill levels and high school preparation. However, intrapersonal issues and the inability to deal with non-AI/AN people, alcohol and drug problems, poor parenting skills, and other issues are discussed in this section.

Feelings of Alienation

It is not unusual for AI/AN and other ethnic students who are enrolling in college to feel a great deal of dissonance over their decision to seek a college degree. This is a compelling intrapersonal issue since it involves moving from the familiar world that includes one's ethnic culture into an unfamiliar one, the academy. A leading Hispanic researcher, Rendón (1992), reported that as a college student she sometimes felt guilty over her decision to go away to school when there were compelling reasons to remain behind, such as helping the family financially. She also related feelings of disconnection and alienation amidst many of the other students who came from more "traditional" educational backgrounds. Minority students often quickly discover that the world of higher education is very different compared to what they are used to. Thus, many of these students feel out of place in it, and adjustment can be quite difficult (Rendón, 1992; Jalomo, 1995; Robert & Thomson, 1994, Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996).

Melchior-Walsh's (1994) research focused on First Nations (Canadian Indians) who attended a federated college for First Nations students within a Canadian university. Her research findings suggest that even if a federated college exists to meet the needs of the First Nations students, if prejudice exists within the larger university environment, then socio-cultural alienation will still be a problem for First Nations students regardless of the existence of the federated college serving as a sociological "refuge."

Feelings of alienation can also occur when AI/AN students feel that their value systems are infringed upon. Native American views of science, religion, and leadership roles are very different, and often AI/AN students thrust into a "Western" world-view are extremely uncomfortable when forced into situations that challenge their traditional beliefs. When students are denied the "right" to be "Native" in their thinking they will feel out of place within the academy (Badwound & Tierney, 1988; Tierney, 1991; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Warner & Brown, 1995).

Inability to Deal with non-AI/AN People

This problem is an extension of the issue of alienation. AI/AN students who experience feelings of alienation may also have difficulty getting along with non-AI/AN people. This inability to foster good relationships with non-AI/AN people may be racially-oriented. Many AI/AN students feel that they are treated unfairly because of their ethnicity. They may sense feelings of unworthiness.

disdain, and contempt from others causing conflict with non-AI/AN people, or avoiding any unnecessary contact with them (Lin et al., 1988; Huffman, 1991; Melchior-Walsh, 1994; Brown, 1995).

Chamberlain (1997), a Dartmouth graduate who is of Assinaboine and Sioux lineage, relays one extremely painful encounter she had with an Anglo student at Dartmouth while she was a student there:

My work-study job was at the Dining Hall. The first month and a half of work went smoothly. Then one day the student supervisor on duty approached me and asked if the rumor he had heard about me was true. "They say that you are an Indian." I answered him honestly and told him, "Yes, I am an American Indian." "Well, then, I better go and hide all the liquor. We don't want it to disappear or find you drinking on the job." I couldn't believe what I was hearing. But then he continued, "The only reason that you got into Dartmouth is because you are Native American. We all know that you are not smart enough to get in. They lower the standards for you people!" You people? All Native Americans are stupid and alcoholics? When was this going to end? I wanted to call my mother that night to tell her about all the things that went on at Dartmouth. I wanted to tell her about the night that I came back to my room and found "Indian Bitch" written across my door in red paint. I wanted to tell her how hard it was

and how many times I had wanted to come home. But I couldn't. We don't have a phone in my house. We do not live in a tipi; we just can't afford a telephone. I guess it was a good thing that we didn't have a phone, or I might have left Dartmouth that night (pp. 158-159).

Alcohol and Drug Problems

Alcohol and drug problems among AI/AN students begin long before college and are sometimes prevalent in high schools with high AI/AN populations, including BIA schools (Reyhner, 1991; Dehyle, 1992; Hodgkinson, 1992; Swisher & Hoisch, 1992). The American Medical Association (AMA) has determined that AI/AN youth are at extremely high risk for alcohol-related health problems. As a result they are twice as likely to die in their youth. Both alcohol and drug abuse are plagues among Indian youth. About 35% of all Indian deaths are caused by alcohol. Five of the leading ten killers of Indian people, include auto accidents, cirrhosis of the liver, suicide, clinical alcoholism, and homicide, are alcohol-related (Ichizawa, 1992). The alcoholism rate on the Northern Cheyenne reservation, located in Wyoming and Montana, for people over the age of 14 is reported to be approximately 80% (Curley, 1984).

Even for those students who manage to get admitted to college, the problem of alcoholism still poses an imminent threat. Minner et al. (1995) found

that a leading cause of AI/AN students withdrawing from Northern Arizona University (NAU). was alcohol and drug abuse. Bray (1997) details how even at Dartmouth, an elite Ivy League institution, some of the Native students struggled with alcoholism. Bray (1997) details the tragedy of a promising fellow student whose premature death at age 27 still haunts him:

Val was Yup'ik from Alaska. When she entered Dartmouth, she was a poet, a singer, and a person with the most boundless raw energy I have ever known. By the time she left the college a couple of years later, she was addicted to alcohol and cocaine and physically and emotionally battered. By the age of twenty-seven, she was dead from drinking antifreeze (p. 37).

Poor Parenting Skills

Some participants in the Indian Nations at Risk / National Council on Indian Education (INAR/NACIE) Conference (1990) indicated a concern with the lack of parenting skills that some AI/AN students have who are having to raise children while still trying to pursue higher education. Begaye Two Bears (1997), then a graduate student in anthropology at Northern Arizona University, remembers the struggles she had growing up. Both of her parents were college students, her mother later graduated. Her father never did, instead he died in an

alcohol-related car accident. She sadly relates how many professors and co-workers tried to reach out to help him with his drinking and family neglect because they saw great potential in him. His short life was punctuated by much family neglect, abuse, and alcoholism. His premature death left behind a widow and four young daughters.

Without proper parenting skills, AI/AN students who are raising families may encounter great difficulties. Curley (1984) maintains that many of the people of her tribe (Northern Cheyenne) have not been given proper parenting skills. Because of poor parenting, she believes the child's self-esteem and attitude are severely affected. Her research on the Northern Cheyenne reservation suggests that many problems of parenting are tied to substance abuse problems.

Tribal colleges are often aware of these dynamics and some have taken action to help students who are parenting as well. Boyer (1989) reports that at many of the Indian tribal colleges, the typical student is single, female, a first-generation college student, and a mother of two. Many tribal colleges in order to help retain these students, offer services ranging from day care to alcohol counseling, and GED testing. As an example of success, Boyer (1989) points out that Standing Rock College in Fort Yates, North Dakota graduated 228 students between 1976 and 1986. Of these graduates, less than 5% were known to be unemployed or not attending another institution of higher learning. These are remarkable statistics for a reservation community where 80% of its residents are unemployed.

Part-Time vs. Full-Time Enrollment

Rendón & Garza (1996) and Rendón et al. (1997) affirm that students who are full-time students persist at a higher rate than those who attend college on a part-time basis. The length of time for degree completion coupled with additional work and often family responsibilities makes it advantageous for a student to attend college on a full-time basis and without heavy additional encumbrances. Rendón et al. (1997) discovered in their survey of 18 colleges in 12 cities that full-time freshmen American Indian students had a 67.6% retention rate versus part-time, freshmen American Indian students who had a 51.2% retention rate, a difference of 16.4%. Similar results were found in a later study by Rendón and Nora (1998) with full-time American Indian freshmen at four-year institutions persisting at a rate of 41.82% versus part-time, American Indian freshmen at four-year institutions who persisted at a rate of 28.61%. This was a difference of 13.21 percentage points.

Financial Aid

Falk and Aitken (1984) in their seminal study of AI/AN retention discovered that financial aid could have a great deal of influence on retention. Financial aid also affects the length of time it takes to persist to a bachelor's degree. If a student is relegated to part-time status because of finances, the ability to persist may be affected. Wright (1991) also noted the need for more financial aid so that many AI/AN students who have family responsibilities will be

able to remain in school. Insufficient funding makes it necessary to carry a part-time load for a longer period of time, often endangering a student's financial aid status if (s)he does not finish within a stated length of time.

Also, many loans and scholarships require full-time enrollment. If a student is not able to carry a full-time load, (s)he is effectively excluded from certain types of financial aid. Since one third of AI/AN students attend college part-time (Wells, 1989) this is of significant concern to both researchers and practitioners.

Wright (1991) indicates that in virtually every study of barriers to attaining an academic degree for AI/AN students, the lack of financial aid is listed. Over the years, this problem continues to persist (Wells, 1997; Brown, 1996). Many AI/AN students come from families below the poverty level and so they cannot expect much financial contribution from the immediate family. Because of the lack of financial aid, the choices of AI/AN students are often limited to community colleges and tribal colleges (Rendón & Garza, 1996; Brown, 1996; O'Brien, 1992; Boyer, 1989). In fact, 54% of AI/AN students are clustered in community colleges (Brown, 1996; O'Brien, 1992).

Huffman (1991) reports that even when AI/AN students receive financial aid, they are sometimes openly disparaged for receiving it. This type of negative attitude toward AI/AN students can also extend to those students receiving benefits such as free health care (Ancis, Choney, and Sedlacek, 1996). Also, sometimes those needing financial help the most are ineligible for it. According

to the previously mentioned INAR/NACIE conference, Indians living off the reservation are often excluded from tribal benefits. Some post-bachelor's degree professional development courses that are not considered part of a masters program are excluded from funding, even though these courses are needed in some states for teacher credentialing or certification.

Institutional Culture and Retention

In addition to pre-collegiate and student-related experiences, there are institution-related experiences that also contribute to retention or attrition for AI/AN students. The INAR/NACIE Joint Issues Sessions meeting held by the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) also addressed issues related to institutional culture that influence retention. The conference specifically noted the prevalence of racism, the lack of day care facilities at many schools, inadequate funding (especially for students who lived off the reservation), and a need to fund post-baccalaureate teacher's certification courses. The participants also expressed concern over the high default rate on student loans. Similarly, Tate and Schwartz (1993) indicated that many older, non-traditional students are eligible for limited types of funding.

Racism and Institutional Climate

The existence of racism on a college or university campus can have a very depressing effect upon minority students. Huffman (1991) lamented that

racism against AI/AN students has received very little notice within the higher education literature. He explains that much of the literature on racism talks about racism against other minorities at large urban campuses. Since AI/AN students frequently attend smaller institutions, often located in the western and midwestern parts of the country, racism receives less notice because it often appears in subtler form. In Huffman's (1991) study, racism never became physically violent, but it was manifested in name-calling, racial slurs, and stereotyping. Because of the already high attrition rate of AI/AN students, Huffman (1991) was concerned that racism could affect the students' ability to persist, although his own study showed that many students persisted in spite of it.

In an earlier study, Lin et al. (1988) determined that campus hostility towards AI/AN students can "contribute significantly, though indirectly, to the problem of academic performance of Indian students." (p.8). When comparing Anglo students with AI/AN students in this study, only 15% of the Anglo students said they sensed any hostility from their professors, whereas 40% of the AI/AN students reported sensing some degree of hostility from their instructors.

Melchior-Walsh (1994) discovered that a Canadian federated college devoted to First Nations students, located within a larger university, provided support in the context of the total university environment. However, the existence of the federated college alone was insufficient to eliminate the socio-cultural alienation felt by many of these First Nations students. There was an

insufficient base of social support within the university at large to help these students feel truly accepted.

Falk and Aitken (1984) discovered that AI/AN students persist better if they have a strong, supportive institutional climate that includes acceptance from other students, faculty, staff, and administration. Cain (1997) discovered that AI/AN students at Arizona State University indicated that the positive interactions with professors on campus were extremely important to the students' academic integration on campus, confirming earlier work done by Tinto (1993) and Pavel (1991).

The need for AI/AN role models serving in leadership capacities is a concern also echoed by Wright (1991) and Badwound and Tierney (1988). Students need to see other AI/AN students, as well as faculty, staff, and administrators, so that they can discover appropriate role models.

Lack of Day-Care Facilities

Boyer (1989) indicates that all of the 24 tribal colleges in existence today were established with the express purpose of providing for the unmet needs of AI/AN students. Single women with children dominate the enrollment of some of these colleges. As a result, day care facilities for dependent children have been a priority in order to increase enrollment and retention of these students who would otherwise not have a chance to enroll. Wright (1991) stresses the urgency of providing a strong, receptive institutional climate towards AI/AN

students. Providing young mothers with a safe, loving environment for their young children is one way to do that (Krumm, 1995). Boyer (1989) indicates that at Little Hoop Community College in Fort Totten, North Dakota, 90% of the students are first-generation college students; most of these are single women with an average of two dependents. For many of them, day care is absolutely essential if they are to continue as students.

Curriculum

Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) contend that the curriculum offered in many institutions is not relevant to AI/AN students. The curriculum and textbooks found in many institutions are highly Euro-centric and do not take into account the history and cultural vantage point of Native Americans. Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) contend that some AI/AN's may not have high postsecondary educational aspirations because of this very reason. They cite as an example the Athabaskan Indians of Alaska who live in geographical and cultural isolation. The value system of the Athabaskan Indians places great merit on the ability to survive in a climatically hostile environment and to thrive independently. Lin, LaCounte, and Eder (1988) and Wright (1991) also argue that the juxtaposition of Anglo values upon AI/AN languages, customs, and traditions is extremely problematic. For example, Native American views of science can differ dramatically with Eurocentric view points and cause a great deal of cultural dissonance for AI/AN students.

Role Models

Although the need for role models has previously been identified as a pre-collegiate factor, it is also a need once a student matriculates into a college program. Students need role models both before and during their tenure as college students. Rendón (1992) lamented the lack of Hispanic role models when she was both an undergraduate and graduate student. Wright (1991) also noted this pervasive problem for AI/AN students because of their small numbers represented within the academy. AI/AN students attending traditional colleges and universities are immediately struck by the lack of ethnic role models for them to emulate. These students immediately recognize that there will be few who will understand their culture, language, customs, and unique accomplishments. The lack of AI/AN role models can have a "chilling" effect upon the motivation of a student to attain a diploma. Tinto (1993) recognizes that faculty/student relationships are an integral component to successful retention since these relationships are part of the formal/informal integration into the campus environment. Faculty and staff who are AI/AN, or at least knowledgeable in the individual tribal cultures of the students represented can have a positive influence on the student's retention at that institution.

Freshman Experience Program

The creation of Freshman Experience Programs has been shown to be an effective means of improving the retention of freshman college students.

Gardner (1980) reports that participation in this program by freshmen initially found to be less qualified academically results in those same freshmen actually performing better their freshman year than more highly qualified freshmen that did not take the course. Fidler (1991) reports in an examination of annual studies conducted between 1973 and 1988 on freshman students, that participation in the University 101 program was associated with significantly higher return rates for sophomores in 11 out of the 16 years studied. The return rates were also numerically higher the other five years as well. Results support the idea of the University 101 course as a means to increased freshman retention.

There is very little research done specifically on AI/AN students and the freshman year experience. However, Warner and Brown (1995) indicate that for AI/AN students, the importance of managing the freshman year is very important, far more important in fact than managing the environment. Haskell Indian Nations University, a federally-operated college with a 100% AI/AN enrollment in Kansas, has constructed a program for freshmen that is designed to deal with the unique needs of its students. Their freshman experience program is constructed around the concept of "surprises" encountered by these students including surprises involving conscious expectations, self-expectations, unanticipated features, internal reactions, and also cultural assumptions.

The overall focus of the program is to help freshman AI/AN students make the types of cultural adaptations to the collegiate environment necessary to

successfully adjust to being a college student. This program anticipates the "surprises" that these students encounter as they go through their collegiate experience and helps them to deal with them in the light of the student's cultural matrix by providing linkages with the students' past experiences and the freshman year. Warner and Brown (1995) point to a higher retention and graduation rate over a five-year period because of the implementation of the program.

Theoretical Orientation

Discussion now turns to major theoretical perspectives involving retention and socialization that are specifically relevant to the concerns of AI/AN student persistence beyond the freshman year. The theories of Astin, Bean, Tinto, Wright and Tierney, and de Anda will be briefly summarized in order to lay a substratum for subsequent discussion and research findings.

Astin's Theory of Student Involvement

A review of higher education literature shows an extensive amount of material directly related to student retention. Familiarity with Astin's (1984, 1985a & 1985b) theory of student involvement is requisite for even a basic understanding of college retention. Compared to some other models, Astin's (1985a) theory of student involvement is relatively uncomplicated:

Quite simply, student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience. A highly involved student is one who, for example, devotes considerable energy to studying, spends a lot of time on campus, participates actively in student organizations, and interacts frequently with faculty members or other students (p.134).

Thus, the "involved student" is highly immersed in the campus environment and expends considerable time, energy, and resources in pursuit of the degree. The "involved student" is an active, not passive, participant in the educational process.

Astin (1985a) presents five basic postulates to his involvement theory which can be summarized as follows:

1. Involvement has to do with the investment of both physical and psychological energy in various "objects" than can be either highly generalized (such as student experience) or highly specific (such as preparing for a chemistry examination).

2. Involvement, regardless of the "object" occurs along a continuum. Different students manifest various degrees of involvement in a given object, and the same student will manifest different degrees of involvement in different objects at different times.

3. Involvement has features that are both quantitative and qualitative. A student's involvement can be measured quantitatively (such as the amount of hours spent on a given academic task) and qualitatively (does the student actually comprehend and grasp the reading assignments, or does the student simply stare at the book and daydream?)

4. The amount of learning and personal development gained by a student in a given educational program will be directly proportional to the quantity and quality of the student involvement in that particular program.

5. The effectiveness of educational policy and effectiveness is directly related to the capacity of each to increase student involvement.

Citing numerous longitudinal studies conducted in the 1970's. Astin (1985b) notes that higher levels of retention and persistence have been associated with full-time attendance, living on campus, participation in extra-curricular activities, interacting with other students, and studying hard. In other words, the "involved student" is the more successful student in terms of academic persistence. Conversely, lower rates of retention and academic success have been associated with part-time attendance, living at home, non-participation in extracurricular activities, lack of interaction with other students and faculty, and also infrequent studying.

Student involvement theory has significant implications for the study of AI/AN academic persistence since Astin's (1982) earlier findings concluded that

AI/AN students are the least successful ethnic group in terms of academic attainment.

Bean's Model

Bean's (1980) research focuses on the causes of student attrition. He concluded that many researchers were not inclusive in their coverage of the determinants of student attrition, which he attributed to researchers ignoring major bodies of research. A second concern was that many studies don't distinguish between the determinants of student attrition (the analytic variables) and the correlates (the demographic variables). The analytic and demographic variables are often confused, making it difficult to determine the real causes of student attrition.

Bean (1980) adopted a causal model of employee turnover in work organizations to student attrition in institutions of higher education. His underlying assumption was that students leave institutions of higher learning for the same reasons they leave work organizations such as dissatisfaction, lack of institutional commitment, organizational determinants, and background variables. For men and women "institutional commitment" was the single greatest indicator of dropout potential. In a later study, Bean (1983) developed a model of college student attrition that contained attitudinal and behavioral measures that were associated with satisfaction with an institution. In Bean's (1983) model, attitudes about the school influenced intent to leave that

institution. Intent also had a strong positive association with actual attrition in the study.

In a more recent study, Eaton and Bean (1995) demonstrated that certain approach/avoidance behaviors might affect certain types of integration more than others. Eaton and Bean's (1995) approach/avoidance model has four constructs:

1. **Academic approach:** represents both positive and assertive acts that the individual uses to enhance academic success. This includes selecting courses, preparing for tests, studying, and formulating relationships with faculty.
2. **Academic avoidance:** represents various behaviors that students can use to become passive, avoid, or withdraw from academic situations such as dropping courses and avoiding daily academic activities.
3. **Social approach:** represents positive and assertive behaviors that individuals can use to achieve social successes. This includes making friends and engaging in activities within both the formal and informal social environment.
4. **Social avoidance:** represents behaviors that are used by the individual to avoid, cause withdrawal from, or become passive in regards to the social environment.

Eaton and Bean's (1995) research concluded that certain approach/avoidance behaviors will affect certain types of integration more than

others. For example, students who sought to actively engage in the social environment of the institution by being socially active were more likely to become socially integrated. Also, students who took initiative and accepted responsibility for their academic activities felt more satisfied with their academic situation. The study also pointed out that social and academic integration may be far more complicated than past studies have suggested.

Although these studies were not done with an AI/AN population, the issue of academic and social integration is pivotal among those studying AI/AN students (Tierney, 1991 & 1992; Wright, 1991; Wright & Tierney, 1991). Researchers concerned with AI/AN student are also concerned with those variables that will help strengthen students' commitment and loyalty to their institutions which will help lead to lower attrition rates. Finally, as Bean (1980) maintains, researchers must broadly examine the literature findings and not ignore large segments of cognate research that could help unlock the mystery of student attrition.

Tinto's Model

Since the 1970s, Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) has examined many of the sociological and educational factors related to undergraduate retention. Drawing heavily upon the research of Dutch anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep (1981/1969), James Spady (1970), and Emile Durkheim (1954), Tinto

postulated a model of post-secondary student departure. Van Gennep (1981/1969) posited that individuals move through a progression of stages during their lifetimes that include acceptance and membership in various groups. Van Gennep (1981/1969) examined the ceremonies and rituals of birth, marriage, entrance into adulthood, and death as he derived conclusions about societal rites of passage.

Tinto adapted Van Gennep's stages into transitions that college students undergo as they embark upon their pursuit of higher education. Tinto sees some great similarities between the transitional stages of life characteristic of primitive tribal members and those of college students.

In essence, Tinto's model (1975, 1987, & 1993) postulates that for college students to successfully navigate through the college system they must be able to navigate the educational system by "fitting into" the institution, thus avoiding institutional departure. Tinto's (1993, p. 114) longitudinal model of institutional departure takes into account the student's academic and social integration as well as their family background, skills and abilities, prior schooling, their goals and institutional commitments, as well as several other factors. The onus is on the student to make a proper "fit" into the institutional environment rather than a systemic approach that calls for institutions to alter their structures, systems, and learning environments to facilitate student success.

Tierney and Wright's Model of Institutional Adaptation

Tierney (1991 & 1992) has been somewhat critical of Tinto's model maintaining that it focuses on the need of the student to adapt to the institutional climate rather than ask the institution to make appropriate adaptations to AI/AN students. Under the Tinto model the collegiate community is seen as a rite of passage in itself, a break from the student's culture. It is contingent upon the student to make adaptations to the world of the academy. Minority students have traditionally found integration into the collegiate culture a very difficult task (Astin, 1982; Rendón et al., 2000; Rendón, 1992; Jalomo, 1995; Tierney, 1991, 1992; Padilla, 1999; Padilla, 1991; Padilla et al., 1997; Lin et al., 1988; Melchior-Walsh, 1995; Wright, 1991; Gilbert, 1996; Wells, 1997). In particular, AI/AN's have experienced an extremely difficult time adjusting to the higher educational world because of the cultural changes inherent in such a transition. Often AI/AN students must traverse social, economic, and linguistic barriers to participate in higher education. The world of the academy, so long dominated by white, upper-middle class males still holds strong vestiges of that culture in spite of significant demographic shifts in the past few years. Tierney's (1991 & 1992) belief is that the institutions themselves must make adaptation for AI/AN students. The onus is upon the institution rather than the student to make the adaptation. Tierney and Wright (1991) and Wright (1991) cite the early attempts of American institutions such as Harvard, Dartmouth, and William

& Mary to include Indians within the scope of their educational missions.

Though some attempts were made to do so, these efforts were made with little success and the students did not succeed well in the white man's educational world. Some, like Caleb Cheeshateamuck, an Algonquian Indian from Martha's Vineyard who did manage to graduate, died a short time later, the victim of a disease to which he had no natural immunity.

Wright (1991) cites the lack of Native role models, financial support, inadequate academic preparation, and an unsupportive institutional climate, as obstacles to successful retention. Like Tierney (1991 & 1992) and Tierney and Wright (1991), he believes that the institution must make significant adaptations to the student in order to successfully retain students. Wright (1991) is a strong advocate of tribal colleges that are culturally oriented towards the specific educational and social needs of the respective populations they serve. The Carnegie Foundation's Report (Boyer, 1989) identified tribal colleges as schools that fill a unique niche in the fabric of AI/AN society. Culturally geared to the unique needs of its local constituents, tribal colleges adapt to the specific needs of their respective students. Western Euro-centric competitive values are not stressed, rather as Badwound and Tierney (1988) point out, wisdom, generosity, and cherishing the earth are values at the forefront of many of these institutions. Thus, tribal colleges serve the purpose of empowering students by allowing

them to study in a culturally-relevant environment that cherishes the Native heritage of the students. This is relevant to earlier research conducted by Falk and Aitken (1984) in which they determined that in order for institutions to retain AI/AN students, there had to be a significant AI/AN presence on campus (including faculty and key administrators) who were AI/AN themselves, or non-AI/AN individuals who show strong support and interest in AI/AN students. The presence of AI/AN leadership and others sympathetic to the needs and beliefs of AI/AN students is pivotal to empowering students to persist at the institution.

Thus, the overall difference between Tinto and Tierney's theoretical orientation is that Tinto emphasizes the responsibility of the student to fit into the institutional fabric, otherwise the student is likely to depart the institution if (s)he feels incongruent about remaining there. Conversely, Tierney emphasizes the role of the institution in empowering the individual student by adapting to the needs of the student rather than ask the student to conform to the institution.

de Anda's Model of Bicultural Socialization

de Anda (1984) who believes minority individuals can be helped by bicultural socialization to successfully navigate life in two very different cultures. In the bicultural socialization model students must learn to adapt to both their original culture as well as the culture of mainstream society. Six factors are posited by de Anda (1984) to contribute to an individual's ability to become bicultural. They are summarized as follows:

1. The similarity or overlap between the two cultures in regards to values, norms, beliefs, perceptions, etc
2. Availability of cultural translators, mediators, and models to those wishing to bridge the gap between their culture and the dominant culture
3. The type and amount of (positive or negative) of corrective feedback provided by each culture involving attempts to produce normative behavior
4. The conceptual style and the problem solving approach used by the minority individual as well as their mesh with the prevalent or valued styles of the majority culture
5. The individual's degree of bilingual ability
6. The degree of divergence in physical appearance from the majority culture, including skin color, facial features, etc.

Thus, the individual's ability to navigate between cultures is contingent upon these six factors. Regarding the first factor, the farther apart the minority individual is from the mainstream culture, the more difficult the navigation will be. This model suggests that those who are more acculturated to the mainstream culture will have greater success navigating through the dominant culture.

The second factor (translators and models) refers to those individuals who are from the minority person's culture and who have successfully navigated the path between the minority and dominant culture. For AI/ANs this would mean someone from the Indian culture who has successfully completed college

and can help the prospective student understand the path ahead. A cultural mediator is someone who may be outside the minority person's culture but is able to assist the individual even though (s)he may not be keenly aware of the points of convergence between the two cultures.

The ability to provide corrective feedback to the minority individual is the third factor. According to de Anda (1984) there must be an appropriate balance between both positive and negative feedback given or the individual attempting to socialize into the dominant culture may cease his or her efforts at persisting in socialization attempts.

The fourth factor deals with the mesh between the dominant culture's cognitive style and that of the minority individual. Cognitive approaches and problem-solving styles differ between cultures and the ability to adapt to differing approaches needed in both the individual's original society as well as the dominant society is important.

Where there is a language difference, the bilingual ability of the individual is important as the fifth factor. In order to communicate between both cultures and to have a level of acceptance in both cultures requires that the individual have a high degree of fluency in both their original tongue, as well as the tongue of the dominant society. Obviously, AI/AN students whose native tongue is not English, and who wish to persist academically at the collegiate level will need to develop a strong command of the English language as well.

Finally, the sixth factor involves the dissimilarity of physical appearance between the members of the minority and majority society. de Anda (1984) notes that European immigrants who were similar in appearance to other Americans had a much easier time assimilating into American society, especially when the concept of the "melting pot" was prevalent. Today, minority groups such as Afro-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and AI/ANs have a greater difficulty, in part because of their physical dissimilarity that makes it more difficult to become accepted within the dominant culture.

Summary

The freshman year of college has been clearly identified as the pivotal time for retention of all college students (Gardner, 1980; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989; Tinto, 1987, 1993). This is especially true for AI/AN students who are particularly high risk in their freshman year (Smith, 1995; Warner & Brown, 1995). There are many experiences (pre-collegiate, family background, and institutional culture) that preclude or enhance AI/AN student retention, especially in the freshman year. A review of the literature has clearly shown that AI/AN students, as well as other students, face tremendous obstacles to persisting past the freshman year and going on to obtain a bachelor's degree. Astin's (1984, 1985a, & 1985b) research among American college students

shows that both retention and academic success are intimately connected to the level of student involvement displayed by the student. Bean's research (1980) adapted a causal model from employee turnover in work organizations to student attrition in institutions of higher education. In a more recent study, Eaton and Bean (1995) demonstrated that certain approach/avoidance behaviors can affect certain types of academic and social integration more than others.

Tinto's (1975, 1987 & 1993) studies on retention help researchers to understand some of the factors that impact freshman and other students' retention. Tierney (1991 & 1992) and Tierney and Wright (1991) counter Tinto's model of institutional departure by placing the onus on the institutions, rather than the students, pointing to the need for institutions to adapt to AI/AN students. Finally, de Anda's (1982) model of bicultural socialization attempts to explain how minority individuals can only successfully navigate two cultures when they are able to find cultural translators and mediators to assist them in doing so.

The next chapter will detail the methodological approach used in this study as well as discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed design. Rationale is also given for the use of a qualitative approach using focus groups which yield concept models in this research.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

Type of Research Design

This study examined the family, spirituality, life experiences, as well as the institutional culture experiences that affect institutional choice and retention of AI/AN students beyond their freshman year at a Bible college. Some researchers have successfully examined retention issues involving minority students by using qualitative research methods (Padilla, 1991, 1993, & 1999; Padilla et al., 1997; Jalomo, 1995; Rendón & Jalomo, 1993; Tierney, 1992; Benjamin et al., 1993; Melchior-Walsh, 1994). In these studies, the participants were able to express in their own words their feelings towards and about the issues being investigated. The focus on the participant's vantage point was paramount.

In this study, focus group research was conducted with the goal of providing data that could then be analyzed, tagged, and adapted into grounded concept models that would be able to explain the phenomena of freshman experiences that enhance or preclude retention beyond the freshman year.

Rationale for Research Design

Focus group research is an increasingly popular approach used within qualitative research that allows participants to address specific questions and issues in a group setting and to present their opinions as well as interact with others in the group. These groups can be replicated with different people and additional data can be collected to suit the need of the individual study (Krueger, 1988 & 1994). The data derived in these groups appears in the form of the participants' own words and is often richly textured and highly descriptive. The researcher employed focus group research in this study for the following reasons. First, this study examines reasons why some AI/AN students are able to persist beyond the freshman year. Questions of *why* often can be best obtained through a qualitative approach such as using focus groups (Krueger, 1988 & 1994). Indeed, there are over forty kinds of qualitative research currently being used by researchers (Tesch, 1990). However, it was determined that focus group research was the best approach to answer the research questions contained in this study.

Secondly, the goal of this research study was to conduct research in a naturalistic setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Erickson, 1986). The focus groups did not meet in a sterile laboratory setting, but instead took place in a meeting room that was suitable for group discussion. The researcher desired to have the

participants discuss their experiences in familiar surroundings on their own campus

Thirdly, qualitative research is applicable to small populations. Because the AI/AN database at many institutions is small, there continues to be a paucity of data available for researchers to study (Astin, 1982; Pavel & Padilla, 1993). This continues to be a real frustration for researchers attempting to uncover dynamics that impact AI/AN higher education. By using a qualitative technique such as focus groups, the small available population at the Bible college could be studied in depth. Qualitative research in its various forms is very useful in studying smaller populations. At the limit, qualitative research has been used with populations of one person, such as Wolcott's (1973) ethnographic study of a school principal.

The fourth reason that this study used a qualitative mode of inquiry is that qualitative research is capable of taking into account the person and background of the researcher. In research that emerges from the hypothetico-deductive model, the researcher is detached from the subjects. AI/AN students are often distrustful of Anglos and gaining trust may take years. Some feel they have a story to tell, but they have not been listened to (Tierney, 1992). Many tribes have a rich heritage of oral traditions (Demmert, 1994 & 1996) because Indians are often good story-tellers. Focus group leaders must be willing to listen non-judgmentally (Krueger, 1988 & 1994). A researcher who is comfortable working

with AI/AN students and who can gain their trust and truly listen has a chance of uncovering good data.

Data Collection

The data collected for this study came from four focus groups conducted at American Indian College, a Bible college located in Phoenix, Arizona. The focus groups generated discussion centered on questions contained in the protocol (see Appendix B). Additional background information was also gained from student transcripts and records to try and create a composite picture of a "typical" AI/AN student at the Bible college.

The focus group discussions took place in a private meeting room on campus away from noise distractions. The interviews were audio-taped and then completely transcribed before being subjected to data analysis. This study made use of transcript-based analysis (Krueger, 1994) since this is the most rigorous approach used to analyze focus group data. In transcript-based analysis, a complete transcript is made of the focus group discussion. The researcher took extensive field notes during the sessions and met with the moderator after each night's two sessions in order to compare understanding of the focus group transactions. These post-sessions were also taped as well as transcribed. The researcher took notes during the post-sessions as well.

Because the study focused on why students chose the Bible college, as well as persistence past the freshman year, all participants were required to be at least second semester freshman so they could experientially answer the questions being raised. Additionally, all participants were either enrolled tribal members or students who had indicated their primary ethnicity as either American Indian or Alaskan Native.

This study did not make use of random selection of participants. Participants were deliberately selected based on their ability to meet the study's criteria. The primary criteria were: at least second semester freshman standing and preferably higher, a mixture of various tribal backgrounds, a balanced mixture of male and females, and a willingness to participate. All participants were made clearly aware of the reasons and purpose of this study.

The researcher made a brief presentation in the chapel indicating the nature of the study and asked students who wished to volunteer to contact him or the designated research assistant afterwards. Also, because some students at the college did not attend every chapel service, flyers were distributed that indicated the nature of the project. Students were once again invited to participate if they met the criteria. The research assistant chosen to assist with recruitment and various logistical tasks such as room set-up, arranging snacks, etc. was a college staff member who held no administrative power over the students but who expressed an interest in helping when the nature of the research was described to her. She was remunerated seventy-five dollars for

her time and effort. All students who met the criteria of the study and wished to participate were then asked to sign an informed consent form (See Appendix A). Diverse tribal background of participants was emphasized so as to not unduly bias the research results towards one or more particular tribes. Gender balance of the participants was sought within the constraint of voluntary participation in the focus groups.

Krueger (1994) recommended that focus groups range from about five to seven participants. However, Crabtree and Miller (1992) reported successfully using focus groups with as few as four participants. Krueger (1994) did recommend not going over twelve members in a focus group. This study worked within these recommended parameters.

Site Description

American Indian College (AIC) is a Bible college affiliated with the Assemblies of God in Phoenix, Arizona. The college was an appropriate site for the study because students comprised 78% of the student population. AI/AN students and the college 1999 freshman retention rate was 86% (American Indian College Office of Institutional Research, 2000). The research questions engaged in this study specifically dealt with AI/AN students and their

experiences of institutional choice and persistence beyond the freshman year, thus creating a match between the research goals and the site.

As an administrator on a leave of absence from the college, the writer had access to the college community since he was known and trusted within the college's constituency. The administration of the college permitted this research since it hoped to glean from the research findings insights on how to further improve the student retention rate.

Participant Demographic Profile

The 29 AIC students who took part in the four focus groups were all current students at the college who were at least second semester freshmen. Of these students, 27 were full-time; the other two participants were part-time students.

Tribal Affiliation

Participants came from 18 different tribes throughout the United States including White Mountain Apache, Navajo, Eskimo (Inupiat), Hopi, Flathead Crow, Pima, Tohono O'odham, Chumash, Eskimo (Tsimpsiam), Creek/Cherokee, Choctaw, Kiowa, Comanche, Ute, Quinault, Assinaboine, and Northern Cheyenne. Some of the participants chose to have their tribal designation(s) listed as "unspecified" in the data findings.

Class Standing and Gender

Table 24 on the next two pages lists each of the 29 participants using a pseudonym assigned by the researcher, their class standing at the time of the focus groups, tribal designation (including "unspecified" for those who wished to disguise their tribal designation), gender, and the chronological focus group they participated in.

Table 24

Demographic Profile of AIC Focus Group Participants

N = 29

<u>Pseudonym</u>	<u>Class Standing</u>	<u>Tribe(s)</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Focus Group #</u>
1. Sophie	Senior	Apache/Navajo	F	1
2. Jimmy	Senior	Navajo	M	1
3. Angelica	Junior	Eskimo	F	1
4. Bobby	Freshman	Unspecified	M	1
5. Rick	Freshman	Unspecified	M	1
6. Buster	Sophomore	Apache	M	1
7. Marsha	Sophomore	Unspecified	F	1
8. Tammy	Freshman	Unspecified	F	2
9. Fred	Sophomore	Apache/Pima	M	2
10. Terrie	Sophomore	Tohono O'odham	F	2
11. Diane	Sophomore	Navajo	F	2
12. Billy	Sophomore	Chumash	M	2
13. Irene	Junior	Navajo	F	2
14. Tracy	Sophomore	Eskimo	F	3
15. Buddy	Sophomore	Creek/Cherokee	M	3
16. Linda	Sophomore	Unspecified	F	3
17. Sarah	Sophomore	Navajo	F	3
18. Wayne	Junior	Navajo	M	3
19. Ben	Junior	Navajo	M	3
20. Charlie	Freshman	Kiowa/Comanche	M	3

Table 24 (continued)

Demographic Profile of AIC Focus Group Participants

N = 29

<u>Pseudonym</u>	<u>Class Standing</u>	<u>Tribe(s)</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Focus Group #</u>
21. Lucy	Sophomore	Unspecified	F	3
22. Will	Sophomore	Kiowa/Comanche	M	3
23. Andrea	Senior	Navajo	F	4
24. DeDe	Sophomore	Ute	F	4
25. Joshua	Sophomore	Quinault	M	4
26. Randy	Freshman	Unspecified	M	4
27. Toni	Junior	Tohono O'odham	F	4
28. Marlene	Sophomore	Navajo	F	4
29. Carmen	Freshman	Unspecified	F	4

Background Academic Data

In addition to the focus group data, the researcher examined the high school transcripts, college placement test scores, etc. of those students who participated in the study. Table 25 found on the next two pages lists each student by pseudonym, major (Christian Ministry, Business, or Elementary Education), college test scores, high school GPA, and whether or not they had college-prep courses listed on their high school transcripts.

On the whole, participants who took part in the study had rather low GPA's for college-bound students. In fact four out of the 29 students did not graduate from high school but took the GED test. Ten out of the 29 students did not even take the ACT or SAT, and those who did (with very few exceptions) scored rather low. Also, only three out of the 29 students had college-prep courses on their high school transcripts. The majority instead followed a general high school curriculum. The profile constructed in Table 25 is not that of typical college persisters and is insufficient to infer why these 29 students persisted. The data contained in the focus group interviews proved to be far more illuminating as to why they stayed in college.

Procedures

This study used focus groups to acquire the needed data. A list of interview questions was carefully formulated in advance of the meeting of the focus groups. The questions were adapted from those used in Jalomo's (1995)

Table 25

Pre-collegiate profile of AIC Focus Group Participants N = 29

<u>Pseudonym</u>	<u>Major</u>	<u>SAT/ACT</u>	<u>HS GPA</u>	<u>College Prep</u>
1. Sophie	EI Ed	16	1.90	N
2. Jimmy	EI Ed/CM	20	2.50	N
3. Angelica	CM	12	3.50	N
4. Bobby	Bus	17	1.68	N
5. Ricky	CM	12	1.25	N
6. Buster	CM	13	2.31	N
7. Marsha	CM	15	3.35	N
8. Tammy	CM	N/A	2.21	N
9. Fred	CM	N/A	2.72	N
10. Terrie	Bus	N/A	3.61	N
11. Diane	EI Ed	15	2.16	N
12. Billy	CM	N/A	2.52	N
13. Irene	EI Ed	16	3.57	Y
14. Tracy	CM	1080	3.28	Y
15. Buddy	CM	15	2.72	N
16. Linda	EI Ed/CM	920	2.98	Y
17. Sarah	CM	13	2.85	Y
18. Wayne	EI Ed	N/A	2.18	N
19. Ben	EI Ed	N/A	1.83	N
20. Charlie	CM	N/A	2.67	N

Table 25 (continued)

Pre-collegiate profile of AIC Focus Group Participants N = 29

<u>Pseudonym</u>	<u>Major</u>	<u>SAT/ACT</u>	<u>HS GPA</u>	<u>College Prep</u>
21. Lucy	EI Ed	13	2.24	N
22. Sam	Bus	N/A	GED	N
23. Andrea	CM	15	2.89	Y
24. DeDe	Bus	13	3.0	N
25. Joshua	Bus	N/A	GED	N
26. Randy	Bus	N/A	1.96	Y
27. Toni	EI Ed	14	2.43	N
28. Marlene	Bus	N/A	GED	N
29. Carmen	Bus	N/A	GED	N

study of freshman Latino students at two different community colleges. These questions were modified to fit the needs of this study that of interviewing students who have persisted beyond their freshman year. The committee chair then reviewed and further modified the questions (See Appendix B).

Next, three AI/AN staff members from AIC who had attained at least a bachelor's degree screened the proposed questions. The purpose of screening the questions was to ensure that the questions were culturally appropriate and would not cause embarrassment or discomfort to the focus group participants. The questions were approved by the three staff members and returned to the researcher. The questions were then resubmitted to the committee chair for one more final review before they were actually used (See Appendix B).

Four focus group interviews were held with a total of 29 participants in order to have sufficient data to conduct a worthwhile analysis. The 29 participants constitute 36% of the AIC student population, but 47% of the total AI/AN student population at AIC. Krueger (1988, 1994) recommends planning at least three focus groups and then evaluating whether a fourth one is needed. In order to increase the likelihood that adequate data would be available, it was determined from the onset to conduct at least four focus groups.

Data Collection

The first type of data collected in this study was background information on each student including high school GPA's, standardized test scores (ACT and SAT), and transcript analysis to determine whether the student followed a college preparatory curriculum or a general high school curriculum. These data were collected after the focus groups had taken place and were used to compile a profile of a typical AI/AN Bible college student in this study. This information was obtained from the Office of the Registrar at AIC.

However, the main data collected in this study were the verbal comments made by the students during the focus group discussions. These discussions were audio-taped and word-for-word transcripts were made from the recordings. From these transcripts electronic infobases were created that could be sorted, analyzed, and tagged during qualitative analysis.

Data Management and Analysis

Data Management

The data obtained from the Registrar's Office were summarized from high school and college transcripts in order to construct a profile of the type of AI/AN student who attends a Bible college like AIC.

Data collected during the focus group discussions were audio-taped using a high quality tape recorder to create an accurate oral account of what was said. The tape recorder was equipped with a foot pedal to facilitate the transcription of the focus groups and two post-sessions. The database were electronically converted into an infobase that could be tagged, sorted, and analyzed. Research memos were written both during and after the focus groups in order to capture thoughts and ideas about the data analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was based on an inductive, interpretivist approach (Erickson, 1986). Appropriate software, adequately versatile for the task, was selected as well. Although their specific approaches were not used, ideas were gleaned from the qualitative methodologies employed by both Melchior-Walsh (1994) and Jalomo (1995).

This study made use of Folio VIEWS 4.2 (Open Market, 1998) software, a text-based manager popularly used in qualitative research to analyze the data. Microsoft Word 2000 (Microsoft Corporation, 1983-1999) was used to make the initial transcripts. After the initial transcripts were made, they were imported into the Folio VIEWS program by creating an infobase. All focus group and post session transcripts were then analyzed using the Folio VIEWS software. Data were initially entered and sorted according to focus group number. Both Miles

and Huberman. (1994) and Weitzman and Miles (1995) have strongly endorsed earlier versions of this software, commenting on its versatility and user-friendliness. Folio Views is a Windows-based product used with PCs.

Phases of Data Analysis

The data analysis was divided into six phases. Phase One involved reviewing the transcribed focus groups and post sessions and creating additional research memos beyond the field notes that were taken during the focus groups (Glaser, 1978; Miles & Huberman, 1994). These research memos helped to better understand and develop some initial concepts about the data. The initial analysis was based on the hard-copy transcriptions.

Phase Two of the analysis process involved sorting the responses of the focus group participants by both questions and prompts, as well as by focus groups in order to initially categorize the responses. The data in Folio VIEWS format were also examined. Also, all data were examined through an inductive means of analysis in order to determine the multiple realities present within the data (Jalomo, 1995). The researcher developed his interpretation by student responses (meaning) and researcher notes and post-session discussions (perception).

The third phase involved the development of initial taxonomies (Spradley, 1979) based on the development of thematic descriptors, subordinate topics, and assigning the corresponding exemplars from the data to the thematic descriptors and subordinate topics.

The fourth phase consisted of presenting the results of the initial findings to three of the AI/AN senior administration and faculty at the College for input, discussion, and indications of agreement or disagreement with preliminary findings. The panel included the president of the College who is a mixture of Cocopah Indian and Hispanic. His wife, who serves as Chair of the Elementary Education program, is full-blooded Quechan Indian. The third member of the panel was the Dean of Students who served as moderator and is Lakota Sioux. All three hold a master's degree and are personally well acquainted with issues of AI/AN retention. The moderator also had first-hand knowledge of these specific focus groups. Erickson (1986) warns against five major types of evidentiary inadequacy including: inadequate amounts of evidence, inadequate variety in kinds of evidence, faulty interpretation of the status of evidence, inadequate disconfirming evidence, and inadequate case analysis. Thus, input from the panel of three was considered in this phase of the data analysis in an attempt to avoid the five types of error noted by Erickson (1986). At this point, it has been possible that additional focus groups and/or semi-structured interviews (Kvale, 1996) could have been conducted if it was determined that the preliminary research findings were inconclusive and additional data were

needed. However, after a review of the data, the panel felt that the initial findings were consistent with their expectations and they expressed no concerns or disagreements with the initial findings. Only a few of minor changes were made in some of the taxonomies based on panel discussion.

The fifth phase involved making appropriate revisions based on meeting with the panel of AI/AN senior personnel from the college and the results of any additional focus group sessions or semi-structured interviews. Since the panel was satisfied with the amount of data as well as the initial findings, no additional focus groups or interviews were scheduled.

Finally, the sixth phase involved the construction of concept models (Padilla, 1991) to display grounded concepts and their relationships. The results in this sixth phase are the findings presented in the next chapter.

Strengths and Limitations of the Research Design

Strengths

In this study the questions used in the protocol were pre-screened by AI/AN staff members at the Bible college to ensure that the questions would not be culturally offensive. Pre-screening the questions helped to ensure that the questions could be understood by the participants and that those questions would not offend them.

Secondly, this study had effective safeguards built into its design to assist the researcher in gaining an accurate understanding of the meaning given by the participants. For example, discussions with the moderator after the focus group sessions took place helped to clarify the meaning of both the actions and the words of the participants. This helped the researcher more accurately assess the data from the focus groups. Also, meeting with the panel of AI/AN senior college officials helped the researcher clarify initial understandings of the data that was collected.

A third strength of the study was the use of an AI/AN moderator. The Dean of Students was asked to serve as moderator since he holds a master's degree in counseling and has an extensive background in small groups and Indian higher educational issues. The Dean of Students had given many presentations and workshops in areas related to Indian education issues and multiculturalism. Perhaps most importantly, the Dean was widely admired and respected by the students at the College and was well able to undertake such a role. Krueger (1994) indicates that having a moderator who has a similar background to the participants can be very helpful in creating an environment of trust within the focus groups. Using the Dean of Students as the moderator proved advantageous in this study by helping students to feel more at ease and free to share their concerns since his ethnicity (Lakota Sioux) provided some common ground with the participants

A fourth strength of the research design is the size of the sample (29) in relation to the N (62). AIC had a total student population of 80 students of which 62 were AI/AN. Thus, 47% (29) of the total eligible students participated in this study creating a sample size just under 50%. This project was also fortunate to have 67% (18) of the total number of student tribes (27) represented in the study. Finally, there was a reasonable gender balance between male and female students participants. Thirteen out of 29 participants (45%) were male and sixteen participants out of 29 (55%) were female.

Limitations

Since there were only 27 tribes (American Indian College Office of Institutional Research, 2000) represented at AIC out of several hundred nationally, one could not readily generalize the conclusions across tribes.

A second limitation of the study was the non-random use of participants. The participants were recruited by large group announcements, flyers, and a third party recruiter. Thus, the process was non-random and no attempts were made to statistically generalize from the sample of these participants.

A third limitation of the study was the small size of the school that limited the number of participants available for the focus groups.

Finally, the fourth limitation of the study is that the results of this study cannot be generalized to AI/AN students at public institutions because of the

unique dynamics of a Bible college and the distinct religious views held by those who attend these types of institutions

Ethical Concerns

The researcher served as Academic Dean at the College since the Fall semester of 1994. However, in order to accommodate the needs of the study, he took a one-year leave of absence beginning in January 2000 in order to complete his doctoral studies, and an acting dean was appointed during this time. Thus, during the scope of this study the researcher stepped away completely from his collegiate responsibilities. This was done in part to minimize some of the concerns of dual relationship. Additionally, assistance with this study was totally voluntary and no students were compelled to participate. All students who participated in the study were remunerated fifteen dollars. Each participant signed an informed consent form attesting to willingness to participate and knowledge that the study's results would be kept confidential. Students were informed that the results of participation had no affect on their status as students at the Bible College (see Appendix A.) The administrative committee of the college was properly informed of all stages of the research and had the right to monitor the process if needed. Overall, in spite of some ethical concerns, the high percentage of AI/AN students at the college (78%), its high freshman retention rate (86%), and the accessibility of the students to the researcher made the Bible college an ideal site to conduct this research project.

Summary

This study used focus group data that yielded concept models, a qualitative approach, to investigate the reasons that AI/AN students chose the Bible college and were able to persist past their freshman year. In light of the 1999 freshman retention rate of 86% (American Indian College Office of Institutional Research, 1999) at this institution it was an important research question to investigate. The study used data derived from focus group discussion to help assemble the data-base using a six-step process. Microsoft Word 2000 was used to create the initial transcripts and Folio VIEWS 4.2 is the text-based management software system that was used to store, tag, sort, and analyze the data that was obtained from the focus groups and the post-sessions. The analyzed data was then arranged into grounded concept models displaying the student experiences of institutional choice and persistence.

Strengths of the research design include pre-screening the focus group questions, the use of key informants to assist in understanding the preliminary data results, using an AI/AN administrator of the College as moderator, the percentage (47%) of eligible students who chose to participate in the study creating a sample size nearly half the size of the total population, as well as the gender balance of the participants (males = 45%, females = 55%).

Limitations of the research design included the small number of tribes represented at the college compared to the total number in the United States.

the non-random use of participants in the study, the small size of the institution limited the total amount of eligible students that could have participated in the focus groups. the results of the study cannot be generalized to AI/AN students at public institutions because of the unique dynamics of a Bible college and the religious composition of its students which differs from the majority of AI/AN people.

The study also raised one ethical concern, that of the relationship of the researcher to the institution. Care was taken to avoid a dual relationship by having the researcher take a leave of absence from his assigned duties as dean during the course of the study.

The next chapter presents the study's findings including the four major grounded concepts associated with institutional choice and retention beyond the freshman year that illustrate the study's findings.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

The results of the four focus group discussions, two post-sessions, and subsequent data analysis yielded various concepts and themes that describe the experiences of the students as they navigated through their first year of college. These concepts and themes illustrate how the students made choices about attending college and also about their persistence beyond the pivotal freshman year. Data analysis yielded the following four grounded concepts: family, spirituality, personal life, and institutional culture. Research findings will be presented as they correspond to each grounded concept.

Family

AI/AN students indicated that the family was highly influential in their first year experiences. Students who were seeking to decide whether or not to attend college were advised and influenced by family members. Family as described by the participants included both immediate and extended family members. The participants experienced family influence both positively and negatively.

Positive Family Influence in College Choice

Encouraged to Attend

Some of the participants indicated that the family influenced them by encouraging them to attend college, sometimes specifically encouraging them to attend Bible college. For one female student, the decision to attend Bible college came from her mother: "Normally when mother speaks I go. Because basically that's the way I was raised. That's the only reason I came."

Another woman student also was encouraged to attend by her mother who had also attended a Christian college when she was younger. Like the first student, the mother of the second student also thought it was a good idea for her daughter to attend a Christian college:

The first time I knew I wanted to go to college was my mother who had the idea for me to go—come to this college because it was a Christian college. . . . I just took it by chance, just to try it out and when I came I took Bible classes and I like the atmosphere and the teachers . . .

This young man was encouraged by both of his parents to attend a Bible college he had never heard of previously:

... to be truthful I never really even knew this place existed. But I was looking at [Christian University] or [Bible college] around-- somewhere close to where I live in [State], and my parents first told me about this place . . . it has a heart for Native Americans . . . where I'm from it isn't really a Native community; it's just a little ethnically diverse . . .

Positive family influence to attend college also came from other members of the family such as spouses. For example, one middle-aged married student was very apprehensive about going to college at her age. Her husband was instrumental in advising her to attend college:

Well, my husband played a major role in my coming to college . . . he kept encouraging me the whole time. I kept having doubts and backing out and saying, "No this is not going to work." And he kept saying, "No, you can do it." And so he was the primary person that was there to back me up and cushion me back into returning to school.

Encouraged by Example

Another young woman had dreamed of going to a Bible college since she was a child. Her father, along with her aunts and uncles were listed as positive

motivators towards her attending a Bible college because they had also attended one:

I guess I can relate to [Student] because my father and my aunts and my uncles had gone to school here and they had come to [Name of community] Assembly of God where I used to go before and they would tell how wonderful the school was. One of my heart's desire[s] was to come here and I had just never seen the place but I always wanted to come here. I made a decision when I was eight years old so it's always been a part of me that I wanted to come here.

This male student credits his parents with influencing him to attend Bible college because they had also attended the school:

The reason that I came here was both my mom and dad got their education here and so I figured if they got something out then maybe I could.

In addition to parents, aunts, and uncles, the example of other siblings had a positive influence on choosing to go to college. One woman had been influenced by her brother's earlier decision to attend the same Bible college:

For me, [Bible college] has always been a part of my life since I was young. And it was always my first choice. I didn't know why but I always said that I was going to come here and one of the main factors that really encouraged me to come here was the difference that I saw in my brother's life and [what] an impact the Lord has been and that was something that I wanted and that was exciting to me. He'd always come back and he'd say this is what we do at college and this is what the friendships I've built and different things like that . . .

Finally, this female student was inspired to attend college in part because of her sister's example: ". . . my older sister had just finished college a couple years ago and . . . her degree inspired me to go to college as well."

Encouraged to Succeed

The family of some of the students encouraged attendance at a Bible college because they saw that as an opportunity for the student to succeed there. These exemplars show in part that family members were concerned that few of their own relatives had succeeded; therefore they wanted to see the participants succeed at college. This male student was told by his uncle that he thought the student would succeed where his other relatives had not:

... well. I had an uncle who told me. "[Name], you know all the other cousins didn't seem to do too good in college and make it. But I really feel in my heart that you are going to be one of the ones to make it."

This woman was encouraged by her parents to attend a Bible college because her parents felt that her opportunities were very limited in her tribal community: "[My parents] told me that they wanted me to get a further education because there was really nothing out there on the [Tribal] reservation career wise."

Finally, this young man felt an urgency to succeed because no one in his family had been successful in college. He felt that he needed to take initiative and be a positive example within his family by succeeding:

... but the major influence is my parents had placed inside of me was to make something of my life—do something in my life because I haven't had many relatives that have succeeded, as a matter of fact I don't recall any of my relatives succeeding in college or anything and I wanted to make a difference in my family ...

Negative Family Influence in Choosing a College

Bias Against Bible Colleges

As participants shared their stories of how their families influenced them to attend college, a few participants indicated that they received negative as well as positive influences leading up to their first year experiences. The negativity shared by the participants centered specifically on the choice of the institution. Some of the participants came from families that were not Christian and who had little regard for the type of training that could be obtained at a Bible college. Rather than seeing it as a place where the student could succeed, they felt that attending there would limit the student's opportunities to succeed.

For one female student, her father, along with her uncles was very discouraging towards her attending a Bible college:

I had just met my dad during high school and he wasn't used to having a family member be a Christian and he just kept saying, "You don't need to go to there, just go to the one in [name of community]. You'll be closer to home and your family wants you home." Because I had just met my dad I wanted to please him. But I wasn't really happy with the decision, so it was mainly my father and my uncles—they were like, "What're you gonna

do with that degree anyway? You know, all Indians should stay on the rez." And it was kind of like they were the main ones that discouraged me from coming to college.

Another young woman had a similar experience, identifying one of her uncles as a negative family influence:

I think for me it would be my uncle, he's not saved and so he kind of said "What're you going to do with that degree, with a Christian Education degree?" And it was just kind of like, it made me think because you know. I guess his thinking was--the money, you know where are you going to get a job that will pay you good money with that degree?

This young man said that his family was extremely unsupportive of his wish to attend a Bible college because they thought that a Christian college would have an indoctrinating affect on him:

I think for me it was, my family because they're not saved and I was in rehab during the time in like my eighth month when I got accepted and they didn't--they don't really know much about

Christianity, they're like, "Ah, you're just brain-washed. It's them that's putting the stuff in your head. You'll be back."

Family Influence Positively Affecting Retention

The family's influence did not end once a student matriculated in college; it continued. Focus group participants indicated that during times of discouragement they received validation from family members who helped them to remain in college during turbulent times.

Encouraged to Succeed

Once the student had made it to college some of the family members worked at encouraging the students to persevere and succeed. This student credited his mother with helping him to persist in college. He poignantly shared his love and appreciation for her belief in him to succeed in college:

For me, I'd have to say it was my mom. Growing up, it wasn't really that great. Before I came here I was still getting into trouble. I was trying to change but it was hard. But every time I needed someone, every time I got in trouble with the law or anything, she was always there. She was the one who was filling out all the paperwork to help me get here. I can finally do something that's positive--that

can put a smile on her face, to let her know I'm succeeding. It makes me feel good that I can do something good.

On a similar note, this female student shared the importance of her father's encouragement that helped her even when she was a great distance away and had to talk by phone to stay in touch:

He was always saying he could help me through anything and he's always telling me how proud he is of me. He always told me, "You're already halfway through your first year. Hey, look you already got one year done." He's always really encouraging me and keeping me going.

This young woman had a family that believed that she could do well in college and they encouraged her by telling her that she was capable of anything she set her mind to do:

... my family never told me I couldn't do anything. Even when it was crazy stuff, they always said, "Yeah, you can do it." So they kind of like instilled in me a faith in myself that I could do it . . .

Finally, this student had a number of relatives also attending the College who encouraged her during difficult times:

I had several cousins who were here at the college at the same time I was here. There was my older brother, three of my cousins, and also two other, three or four other people from our church. I felt like I was at home because they were there. They gave me comfort: they were there to encourage me and help me through whatever I needed.

Encouraged Spiritually

Encouragement that came from family members also included spiritual encouragement. In other words, encouragement was not just limited to academic success, but also included the spiritual dimension of seeking God's blessing in one's higher educational experience. This female student credited her father with helping her to remain in college and to rely on her faith in God to help her when she encountered difficulties in her college experiences:

Mine would be my dad because anytime I have a difficult situation that I can't get out of, he's always telling me and reminding me that there are people out there even though he's not here that care about me

from friends and faculty. "You can't do it on your own. You always have to rely on God."

This female student gave credit to her mom as well as her brother for giving her spiritual encouragement to succeed in college:

But they really put a lot of encouragement in me through God and they said to never give up on God and stuff like that. But it was my mom and my brother that really encouraged me to come to school and even up to this day they still do. If I do wrong they get on my case about it and they sit me down . . .

Finally, this woman credited her parents with their spiritual support when she became homesick and felt like leaving college:

I think that the thing that got me through the first year here was my parents. There were many times I called home because it was my first time away from home for a long period of time, and when situations came up. I was on the phone crying, "Mommy, I want to come home! I want to come home!" My mom would just tell me, "You can make it." Or, "We're here. We're praying for you."

Encouraged by Example

Although many AI/AN students are first generation college students, several of the students did have family members who had attended college themselves and served as encouraging examples to these students. In this third type of encouragement to persist in college, the students indicated that in part they were able to succeed past their first year because they had role models within the family that encouraged them onwards. This male student had several relatives who had attended the Bible college and graduated. He was encouraged by their example to enroll and succeed:

The thing that helped me . . . to succeed . . . [and] encourage me was two older brothers--and I have a bunch of more cousins--that came here and they kind of influenced part of my decision . . . I saw the changes that both of my brothers took from coming here.

This female student was encouraged to enroll in college when she saw the enormous obstacles her own mother had overcome and still maintain good grades. This encouraged her to want to succeed in college herself.

I saw [my mom] going back to college and after a lot of trauma that happened after I had my baby she helped me out and she still

got straight A's that semester that I had gotten sick. That was when my daughter was just a newborn and so I was thinking, "Man, if she can do it, why can't I?"

Family Negatively Influencing Retention

The data clearly show that the family can be a strong enhancer to persistence past the freshman year. Support from parents, siblings, cousins, spouses, and children can be very meaningful. Still, as focus group participants told their stories, a few indicated that the family and its needs sometimes precluded college persistence. Many students felt enormous responsibilities toward their families that made them consider dropping out of school.

Family Responsibilities

One woman returning to college in middle age had many family members who were skeptical about her desire to remain in college at this point in her life because of the family needs that existed back home. They put enormous pressure on her to drop out and return home to her community to assist with family needs:

... every time I'd call home all I ever heard was negative things like "You're too old. You shouldn't be away down there. You need

to come home. You need to be around your family. You're having a hard time. You don't have no finances. then come home. All you're going to be for the rest of your life is paying off this bill. And what are you going to do with this degree when you graduate? You'll be fifty years old, you know. It's not going to do you any good, and you got grandkids and we need you down here, you know. "

This young woman felt like she should leave school shortly after arriving because of problems back at home:

For me, it was my family. There was things going on in my family with my brother like two months after I came to college, and I remember going home for the weekend and then that night there the cops were looking for my brother 'cause he had gotten in a fight with his girlfriend. He had a pistol and, that night I was just thinking about it that whole night, "Should I stay home?"

This male student had difficulties in his home involving his stepfather and the stepfather's relationship to the family. He felt that perhaps he should remain at home and drop out of school because of the unstable home situation:

... back at home I got a stepfather and he's not saved. My mom's saved and probably the only thing that really almost kept me from going back to college was my family. Cause I didn't know--I wanted to make sure that my mom was taken care of and I wanted to make sure my little brothers had the best, and I just wanted to be there for my family and God. If it wasn't for God... like telling me that He could take care of my family better than I can: "I love your family more than you ever could love them." He said, "Just leave them in my hands and just go where I want you to go." The only thing that would have probably held me back was my family... 'cause if it wasn't for God's word that day I would have never come back to school.

This male student's elderly mother was the sole support of his sister and when the mother became ill this student considered dropping out to help at home:

It really gave me a scare there for a while. She said that she went to the hospital and they found a lump somewhere, I'm not quite sure. She said she thought it was cancerous and she didn't tell me at all... that shocked me like crazy and I was... contemplating not coming back here. Losing my mom and having my sister home

alone, that scared me to where I wasn't sure if I wanted to come back . . .

Family Financial Difficulties

Most of the students in the study came from low-income families. Even with the help of financial aid, college costs were very high for students and many found it very expensive to remain in school. Focus group participants saw financial difficulties as a leading cause of students experiencing difficulty in persistence. This young married student had financial troubles that nearly forced her to drop out of school. She tearfully related how relatives living with them financially drained them, making it very difficult at times to remain in school:

I almost didn't come back this semester because I live with [relatives] and it's really hard because they're really--not to be mean--but they're just like lazy. They don't help or they say they don't have money--but they do. They don't help us pay our bills. I said, "I feel like I could leave and then you'd have one less mouth to feed." And [my husband] would say, "You don't need to say that. This is God's will and you're not supposed to be saying that." . . . so I told him, "I don't want to go back, I want to . . . work and help you to pay up for my share of the rent and for the food and stuff like that." He said, "No, you don't need to think like that. You just need

to pray about it." So I made myself really strong and I told God, "God, if it's your will for me to go to school, provide a way for me and stuff." I really praise God because He's given me--my husband a better job that pays him like fifteen dollars an hour, ten hours a day and he works at night, and [God] has even provided us with that car that was paid for by my mother-in-law. So, it's like "God, you're really making a way for us. You're just opening the doors."

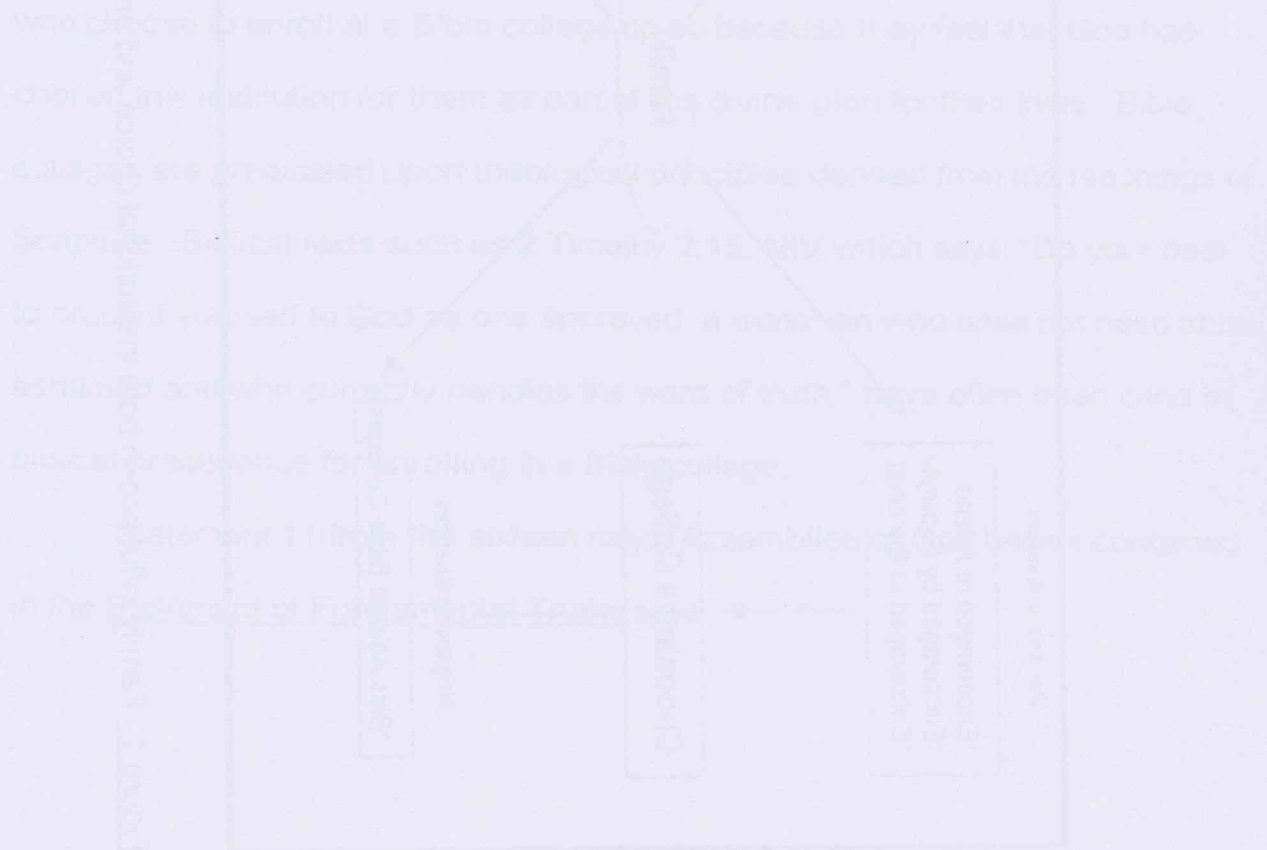
This young woman saw her family going through financial difficulties because of her parents' separation. She considered leaving school to assist with needs at home:

My mom, she was going through some difficult times at home because she was separating from my step dad. It was like she was doing three jobs on her own. So I felt like I was needed at home-- maybe to help out with the kids and . . . helping her out, maybe working--that was my worry.

Finally, this student expressed how it was very difficult for her to remain in school because of the family's financial needs:

I think mine was finances. . . with my husband the only one working. I felt sometimes that I needed to be at home to be a mom to my children. Also I needed to be at times working and helping pay bills. When we were getting behind and stuff, that was a big discouragement sometimes to me to where I wanted to just quit going to school and stay home and do what I needed to do.

Figure 1 displays the concept of family as an influence in both institutional choice and persistence. The family can influence positively or negatively. Note that family encouragement occurs both as the student is formulating a decision on where to attend college and in deciding to stay in college.



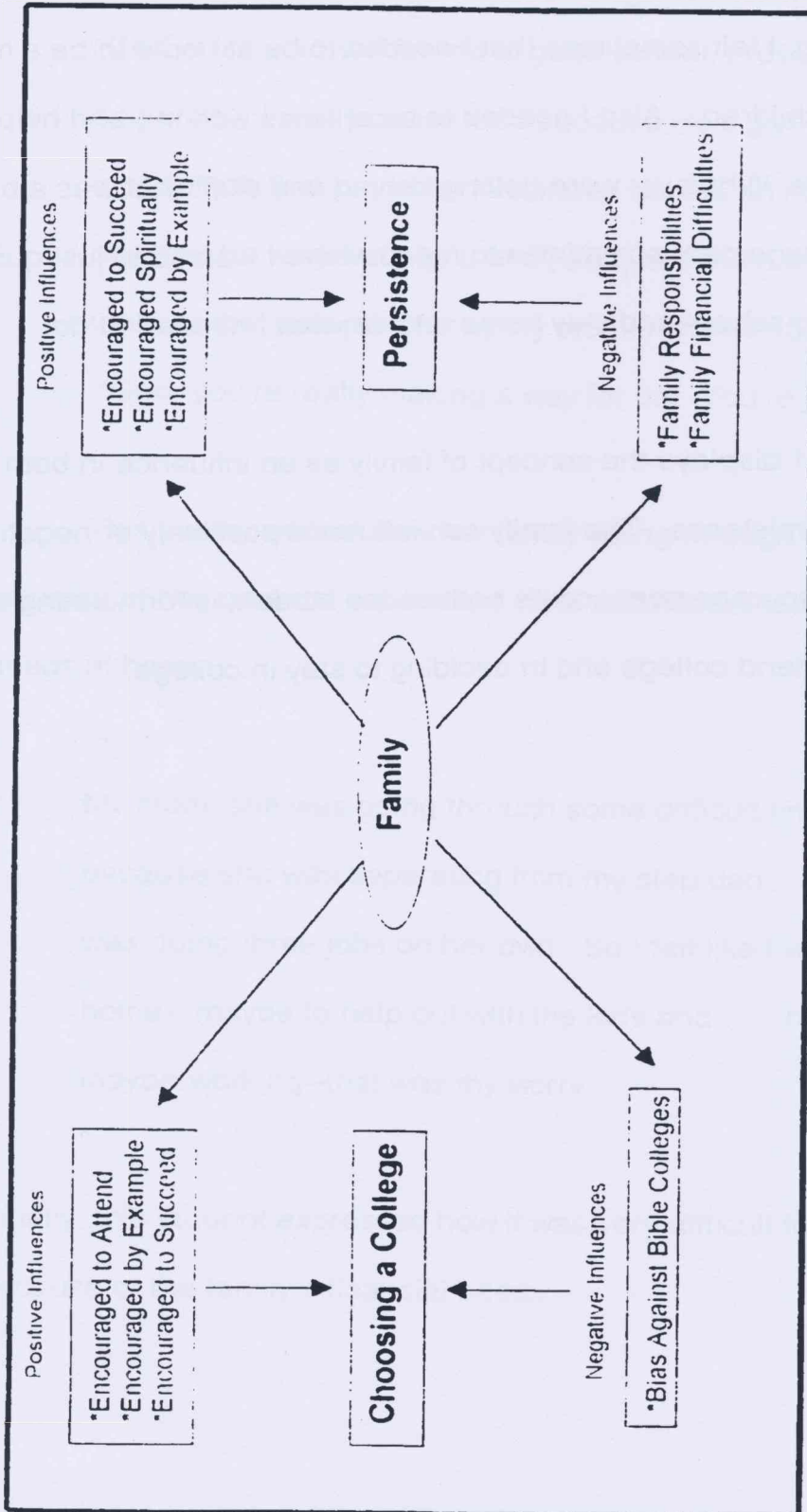


Figure 1. Family influence in both institutional choice and persistence

Spirituality

Spirituality is the second grounded concept affecting both choice of institution and the ability to persist beyond the freshman year. For these students their religious faith and religious figures were very influential in both why they chose to attend a Bible college and how they persisted past the freshman year.

Influenced by Divine Calling

One of the unique attributes of Bible colleges is the sense of “divine destiny” for the students who attend there. In other words, many of the students who choose to enroll at a Bible college do so because they feel that God has chosen this institution for them as part of His divine plan for their lives. Bible colleges are predicated upon theological principles derived from the teachings of Scripture. Biblical texts such as 2 Timothy 2:15, NIV which says: “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth,” have often been cited as biblical precedence for enrolling in a Bible college.

Statement 11 from the sixteen major Assemblies of God beliefs contained in the Statement of Fundamental Truths says:

A divinely called and scripturally ordained ministry has been provided by our Lord for the threefold purpose of leading the Church in (1) Evangelization of the world (Mark 16:15 – 20), (2) Worship of God (John 4:23 – 24), (3) Building a body of saints being perfected in the image of His Son (Ephesians 4:11 – 16).

Thus, many of the students interviewed felt divinely called towards ministry and felt a strong sense of responsibility to respond to that divine call by attending a Bible college. For one particular male student, the choice lay between attending a trade school and a Bible college:

I was led by the Holy Spirit. . . . I had two applications, one was for air conditioner mechanic and one was for here. I filled out both. After[wards] . . . I remember I lay my head down and I prayed and . . . everything went towards [the Bible college]. [This] was the point I know I was called to be here at [the Bible college].

A female student also acknowledged God as an encourager for her to enroll at a Bible college:

I'd probably say God because there's no other encourager in my life that I would really turn to. He's the one that really fully developed my mind and put all the desires in my heart. He used my mom to remind me of what was around me because I wanted to be different and I wanted my life different. . . . my brothers probably helped me too . . . but God was the one who really encouraged me to keep my eyes on the path that He set for me. So I'd probably say God was the one who brought me here and He's the one who placed everything in my heart that I want to do . . .

This female student initially resisted, but sensed divine providence in her decision to attend a Bible college:

It was just like I want to get out of here, change of atmosphere but . . . everybody kept telling me God's already told me that you're going to go to [a Bible college], that you're going to be a preacher . . . you have a call on your life. It was like everybody in my church could see it. I was like struggling with it for a long time until I finally said, "OK, I'm going to go down there, fill out an application. If it's really [God] then everything will fall into place"--and it did.

Influenced by Spiritual Leaders

Although divine calling was a strong influence to attend a Bible college, another strong influence came from spiritual leaders in the students' lives, such as pastors and elders. Many people who are seeking to form an opinion on whether or not they should attend a Bible college often will consult with spiritual leaders who have had an influence on their life. For many students, such as this male student, a former pastor was very influential in his decision to attend:

I wasn't really planning on coming to college this semester but I guess things kind of worked out for me that I was able to go. I was told about this [college] a few years ago, [by] a former pastor and he told me a lot about this school . . .

This female student credited her youth pastor with her decision to attend a Bible college even though she was initially a bit concerned about going to the college.

I believe it's God that did it all because my youth pastor was also an influence . . . the day before I was supposed to be here he was telling me a lot of things and I was getting scared and afraid because he's been here.

Finally, this young woman was strongly influenced to enroll at a Bible college because of the encouragement of her late pastor. His encouragement was coupled with the love and admiration that she had for him.

The main one was my pastor. Before he passed away he used to say, "Oh, [Name], you know you're going to go in the ministry. He was the one who kept encouraging me throughout high school before he passed away he used to tell me, "You know, that's the place that God wants you and I know." It was just like, because I love my pastor so much, it was something that I wanted to do to make him proud of me . . .

Encouraged by Faith in God

As students detailed the importance of spirituality, it was apparent that this influence was significant in persistence as well as in choice of college. Students who felt divinely directed to attend a Bible college also felt strong influence for remaining in college as the following data show. Often, when students felt like dropping out, they drew encouragement from their faith in God and gained strength from their faith that helped them to remain in college.

This male student credited his mother, brothers, and professors for his success, but saved his greatest appreciation for God's help in making it through his first year:

My mom has been a realiv good source of encouragement and my brothers have also been an encouragement. Also the professors but I know all those people wouldn't be supporters if God hadn't sent them to me. God is probably the one that has not only supported me and encouraged me through these people, but He s been my main source throughout the four years that I've been here. If I had to point to one person that would be God 'cause He sent countless people to me in my times when I was down and when I was ready to throw in the towel. He sent someone that had that one little word and it just kept me going.

This married student with several children also credited her faith in God with helping her through her freshman year:

I think my freshman year I really struggled. There was many times I wanted to just throw in the towel and say, "No, I'm not going to school no more. This is it." Because I was stressed out a lot and I was trying to fit back into going back to college at my age. But my biggest support was praying to God, number one.

This young man looked back on his freshman year and like the other two students cited above attributes his perseverance to faith in God. "God brought me through that first year and it feels like I knew I would not give up for nothing."

Encouraged by the Church Family

Finally, for some students spirituality came through the encouragement that they received from members of the local church. In addition to the strength that they received from their religious faith, some of the focus group participants indicated that they were encouraged to remain in Bible college by fellow church members. Some students, such as this woman, referred to their church as their "church family." She had the loving support of her church family who took great pride in her decision to earn a college degree. "Mine was my church family. When I'd go home they'd encourage me saying, 'You know we're really proud of what you're doing, what you're doing for yourself and for God.'"

This male student credited his church family with their loving encouragement tangibly expressed through their financial assistance. "My church also supported me and they made a commitment to me every month and I think it was twenty dollars or something like that a month."

This young man found that he could depend on his church family to help encourage him to persist since he encountered some difficulty fitting

in on campus. The support of his church and the enjoyment he derived from working with homeless people was instrumental in helping him to persist beyond his freshman year

I don't know some of the people around here. . . . you have your cliques and you have your groups, and you have your talk and whatever. But I found my encouragement through [the] church I'm going to now and the friends that I've made . . . I find my encouragement from my ministry [with homeless people] that I was doing for a while . . .

Figure 2 shows the concept of spirituality and its connection to attending and persisting at a Bible college.

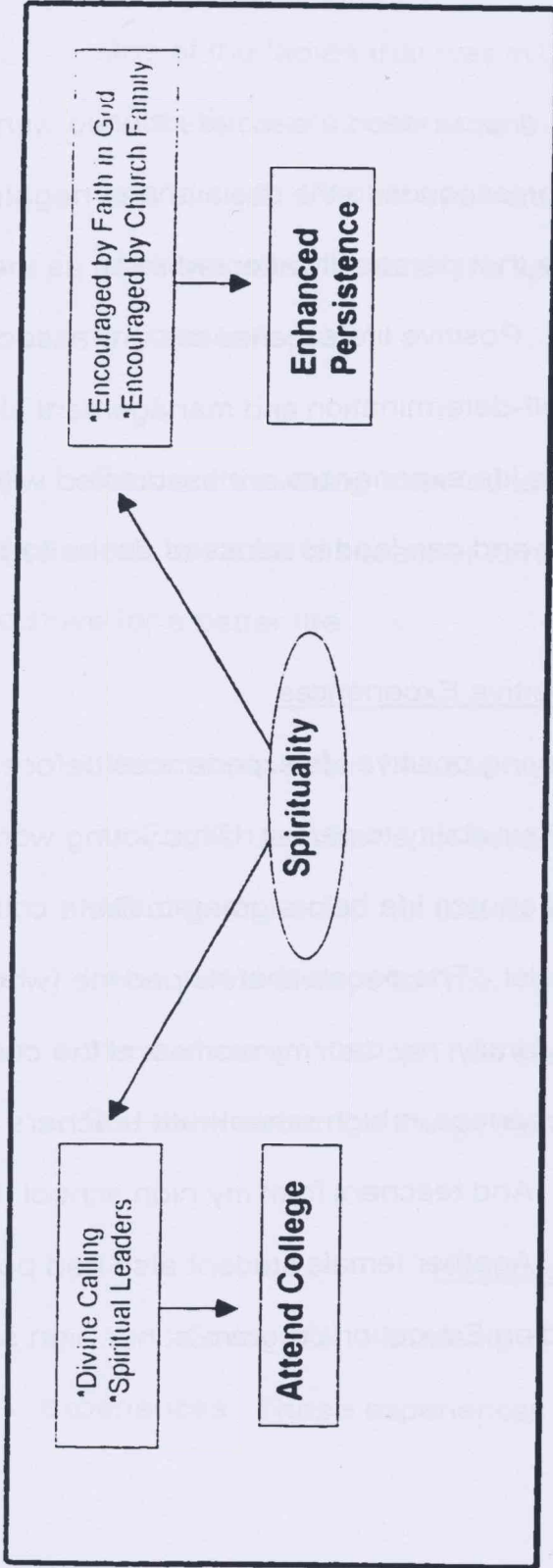


Figure 2: The role of spirituality in attending and persisting at a Bible college

Life Experiences

Life experiences is the third grounded concept associated with freshman year experiences. This theme corresponds to the positive and negative experiences in the students' lives that personally affected them as they experienced their freshman year. Positive life experiences are associated with personality attributes, such as self-determination and management skills, which can lead to persistence. Negative life experiences are associated with the lack of these same personality attributes and can lead to a loss of desire to persist.

Positive Experiences

Some students felt that having positive life experiences before beginning college had a positive affect on their ability to persist. This young woman had the benefit of a real stable home and church life before going to Bible college. She believed these helped her to persist. "The people that helped me [who] were really positive in my life were my family, my dad, my mom, and the church." This female student had positive experiences in high school with teachers who encouraged her to go to college. And teachers from my high school, they'd just encourage me to stay in school." Another female student also had positive experiences as a result of her Indian Education program at her high school:

At my high school they had a real good Indian Education [program]. One of the ladies that was in charge of it for two years she wasn't Indian but she's been around Indians all her life so she understood us and stuff. We always went to the Indian youth conferences and when we were there all the speakers always said, "You guys have to go to college."

Finally, this young man found one of his English classes a positive life experience because his teacher turned him around and helped him see the need to strive for a better life.

I think about when I was in high school I used to get in trouble by my English teacher a lot because I never did [anything]. But he was determined to not just let me go, he'd always talk to me you know. He'd always tell me, "A long time ago you could get a job in the mailroom. You can't do that anymore. Times have changed." So I think about the things that he said that inspired me.

Negative Experiences

Some of the students in the focus group struggled with negative life experiences. These experiences included gang affiliation, discouraging high

school teachers, legal problems, and raising a child out of wedlock. Negative experiences hindered persistence.

This young male student struggled with a desire to return to gang life, a lifestyle he was involved with prior to his religious conversion. At times he was torn between his new-found Christian faith and his desire to be with his gang friends he had left behind.

I was involved in gangs even before I got saved and they would call me and tell me, "Hey, so and so got shot and you know you need to come down here. We're going to take care of it." I was just barely saved and I wanted to get back into it. I'd get upset. I'd get mad and I'd say, "I really don't need this Bible college. My friends are getting shot at home and I need to be there."

This female student also struggled with prior gang affiliation and was forced to contend with their attempts to compel her back into gang activities even though she had moved several hundred miles away.

I think the negative influence . . . my first year here was [that] I had only been saved three years. Prior to that I was involved in gang activity and when I came here to college nobody knew except my parents. They knew where I was. They knew the address. I told

my parents. Don't tell nobody where I'm at, not for a while. During that first year my gang came and found me and pressured me into going back in and so I think for the first two months of the first year I struggled with that.

This male student had a very negative life experience in high school because of the racial prejudice he encountered from some of his teachers

... I spent seven years in high school ... doing nothing really, and [the teachers] always told me, they said, "[Name], you're nothing but a stupid Indian. You really can't do anything ...

This student had legal problems before coming to the Bible college which caused him to have to go through drug rehabilitation at Teen Challenge, a Christian substance abuse program. An unsupportive family complicated all of this. This made it difficult for him to persist past his freshman year. He relayed his experience to the group: "I think for me it was my [drug abuse] past and being back on probation and court. Coming out of Teen Challenge I still had some court issues and my family was always putting me down. ...

Finally, this young single mom had the pressure of single parenting responsibilities because she had given birth to a child out of wedlock and was raising the child without the father's help. Because of this she sometimes had to

stay home and care for her small child especially when her little girl got sick and had to be hospitalized

just now my daughter's been in the hospital. and it takes a toll on you when it seems like all the time your daughter's getting sick and you prefer it's you because I've been through it. I've had to stay in the hospital. I've gotten stuck so many times with a needle . . . waking up every four to five hours. My little kid going through that, it's like maybe I should just quit . . .

Attributes

Focus group participants also discussed personality attributes that correspond to life experiences. These attributes were self-determination and personal management skills. Possessing these attributes was associated with persistence and not possessing them was associated with the loss of desire to persist.

Self-Determination

Self-determination was identified as a key intrapersonal strength that can lead to successful persistence beyond the freshman year. This male student indicated how his own focused tenacity and self-discipline helped him persist beyond his freshman year.

I have seen a lot of students come through and one thing about all the people that are succeeding is that determination--a determination not to give up, a determination not to give in, a determination not to let everything else overwhelm you. Cause to be honest sometimes . . . God gives me that personality where [if] something gets in my way, I just put my head down and I run at it.

Similar sentiments were echoed by these two students who maintained the importance of self-determination and individual responsibility in being able to persist as students. "I think it's up to the individual if they want to succeed or not. . . . it's up to the individual where they want to be in five years . . ."

Commitment, perseverance. . . . if you don't make it here you [aren't] going to make it out there. Cause what you're showing here as fruit is pretty much what you'll show out there. I believe that. You make it what you want. However, you want it to be through God.

Self-Discipline

The second personality attribute that influenced persistence is self-discipline. Self-discipline was instrumental in helping students to organize their

time and resources in such a way that they had a greater chance of persisting beyond their freshman year. The discussion also suggested that students who were not self-disciplined were less likely to persist at Bible college.

These students indicated that time management was an essential part of the self-discipline skills needed by students to persist. One female student emphatically declared to the group that Bible college students must learn to master their time effectively. "You know it's basic knowledge of . . . how to do your homework, when to say "no" to going out with your friends" Another female student made similar comments, "Overall, it would be putting God first in your life and using your time management . . . really disciplining yourself." Two other participants also stressed the need for students to be accountable as well as careful with the company they keep in order to make the best use of their time:

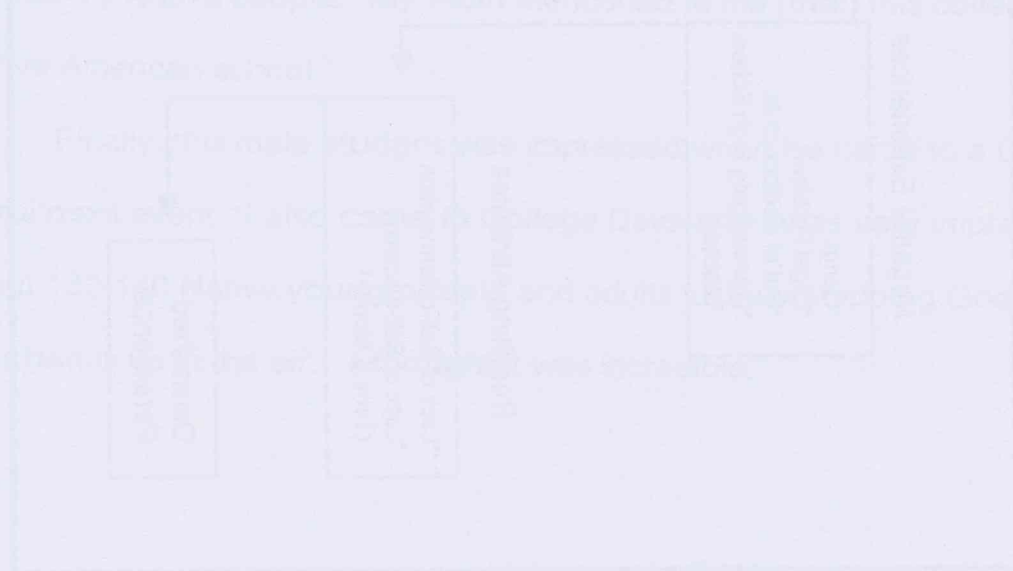
Maybe other things are like . . . learning how to budget your time. balance it out. Some students think, "Well, this is college life. I get to do whatever I want." And they're not accountable to anybody.

If you're lazy and love to sleep, love to mess around, and get in the mall all the time and then you're going to start to be like [your undisciplined friends].

Also, self-discipline included the careful budgeting and use of money.

This student was concerned that many students at the Bible college did not know how to handle money properly. . . . they need to know how to balance a check book. They need to know how to spend their money wisely. . . . it's part of being able to live on your own, to be able to have so many quarters for laundry."

Figure 3 shows the role of life experiences and their relationship to persistence at a Bible college. In this figure, negative life experiences are associated with negative personality attributes that cause a loss of desire to persist. Conversely, positive life experiences are associated with positive personality attributes that enhance persistence. Thus, students who have had positive life experiences may be more likely to develop the positive attributes of self-determination and self-discipline needed to help persist during the freshman year of college.



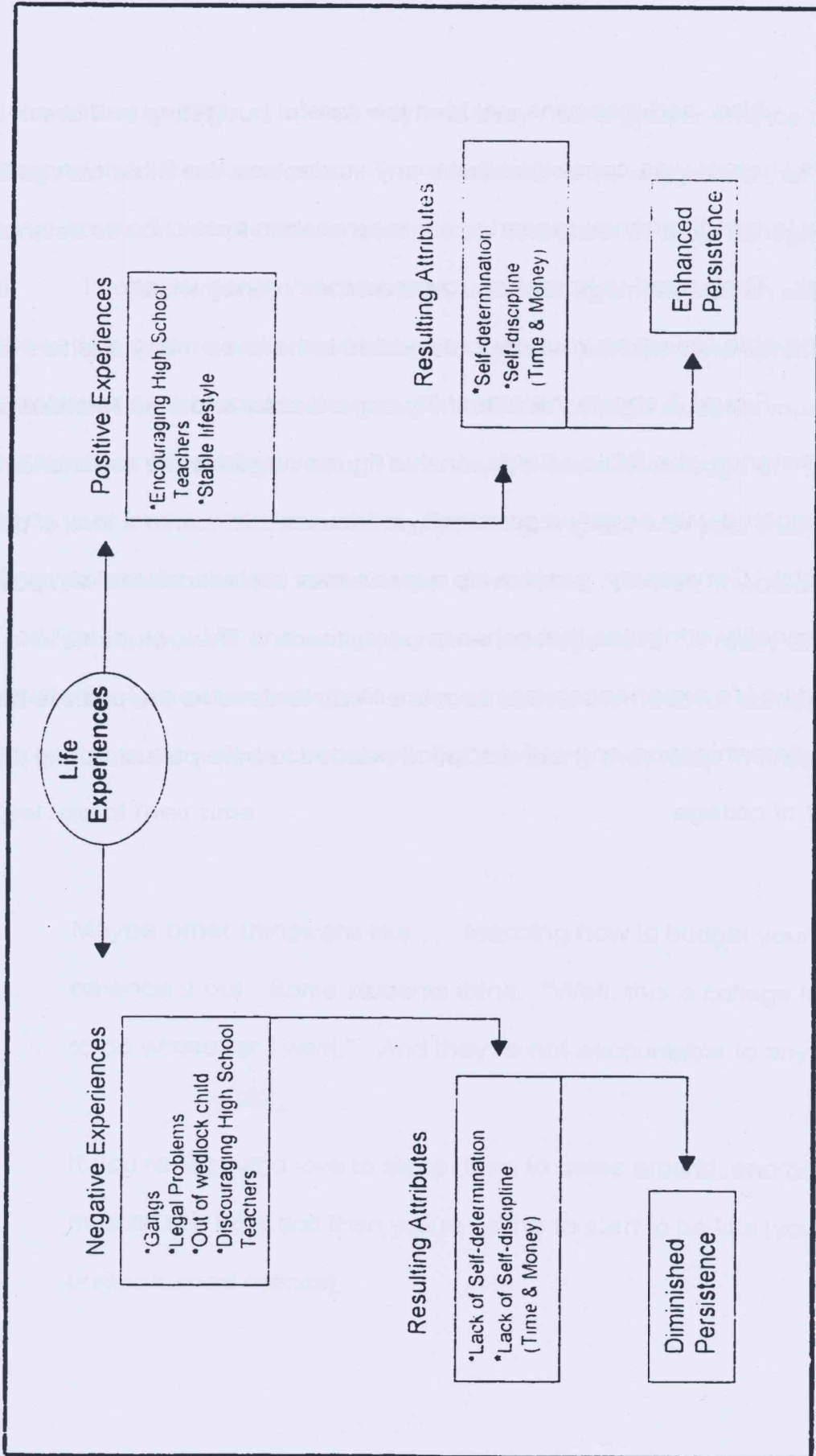


Figure 3: Positive and negative life experiences and their relationship to persistence at a Bible college

Institutional Culture

The final grounded concept is the influence of institutional culture. This concept captures how students chose the institution and how they persevered based on their interactions within the college's environment and culture.

Ethnicity of Students

Students were very cognizant of the ethnic makeup of the college they attended before arriving on campus. For a number of students, the presence of other Indian students was instrumental in their decision to enroll at an Indian Bible college. This female student wanted to attend an Indian college so she wouldn't feel alienated. "I got the idea of going where there was a bunch of Natives so I wouldn't feel alienated, I guess."

Likewise, this male student wanted to be around Native American students because at home he felt cut off from his ethnic heritage, "Living in Florida . . . there was nothing but Caucasian people and Puerto Ricans and I missed my Native people. My mom mentioned to me [that] this college [is] a Native American school."

Finally, this male student was impressed when he came to a College Days recruitment event, "I also came to College Days and I was very impressed to see about 130-140 Native young people and adults just worshipping God, holding their hands up in the air. I thought it was incredible."

Small Size

Several students mentioned the small size of the college as a positive influence in their college choice. In addition to the Christian orientation, the attraction of the Bible college was its size to this student. "I chose [the Bible college] because it was a small college. I've always known about the college and I just wanted a place that was Christian." Another participant noticed the people and the location as well as the small size. "When I went looking to go back to school I found [the Bible college], and I primarily like the small campus 'cause the other colleges I went to there was many students, but it was the small campus, the people and the location."

This female student wanted a small college atmosphere with Native American educators. "... plus the small college atmosphere and to see Native American educators really impressed me." This male student heard about the small size of the college through one of the college's recruiters. "I knew I wanted to go to a small college. I found out about [the college] when [Instructor] brought a team up. They talked about it a lot."

Student-Teacher Ratio

Closely related to size was the issue of student/teacher ratio that this female student felt was an added plus, since she felt that she would receive better attention from her instructors in a school with a good student/teacher ratio

"Everybody is saying about the closeness . . . with your teachers, talking to them personally and having discussions. [At] universities there's a lot of students there and maybe [you] have questions, but the teachers just leave the classroom."

This male student had similar feelings about the student/teacher ratio being a positive influence on his college choice:

I had been here a couple times because my older brothers had graduated already. I was able to observe some of the instructors and graduates. . . . another thing was the student/teacher ratio was pretty good compared to like the bigger universities where you like had. I don't know, 100 to 1.

Finally, this female student shared her need to avoid becoming just another number or face in the crowd to her instructors:

I didn't want to be just a number or known as [my] last name. I like the closeness and [I'll] be getting the help with all [my] teachers as well. Because sometimes you'll get into bigger colleges and you'll get frustrated and back out because you don't know what you're doing.

Recruitment Strategies

Many of the focus group participants were very impressed with the efforts to recruit them as students. One cited one of the college's former recruiters as being very instrumental in her coming to the college:

... every time I'd see [the recruiter] he'd [say,] "Well, here's the card and here's a brochure and here's this and that." He was like one of the main ones who would just keep asking me about coming to school here too.

This male student found that a musical group from the college who went out often to minister and recruit students was very effective in making him want to attend the college.

A group from [the Bible college], I believe they were the Sounds of Praise or the Tribalaires, they came down to [Name of community] and there was an advertisement in our church and surrounding area and we went out to the boarding school and as we were there we noticed that these students, there was something unique about them. They were "on fire." They loved God and . . . that's when I had thoughts about coming to [the college.]

This young man met one of the student recruiters on his home reservation and was persuaded to enroll at the college in part because of the student's efforts

I met [Name of Student] . . . he was telling me about this school . . . and I got interested in this school. I wanted to see how it was like and everything, and I applied for this school. I got the brochures and everything about this school and I knew that this was where I had to be. I'm glad that I've been able to come to this school. The campus life and everything is great. It's a small campus and everything but I really enjoy being here. A lot of new people I've met and I just enjoy it

Finally this female student, who was attending an Indian boarding school at the time, told of her contact with one of the college staff recruiters and how he was a positive motivator for her to attend the college

All of a sudden, next thing you know [Name of recruiter] was calling me at the dorms and asking me--telling me to fill out applications and stuff like that. . . . one of the ladies from the office, the school that I went to, I guess she called him or something . . . everything

just worked out. So everything happened really fast. So I'm like "I guess this was where I was supposed to be."

Positive Influence of Programs

As students shared their stories and experiences they found things about the institutional culture that were both positive and negative. In particular, some of the programs had a positive effect on retention and were cited by students as helping them to persist.

As a small campus of less than 100 students, the college has limited programming focusing on activities that specifically undergird the institution's stated mission found in the American Indian College Catalog 1998-2000, p. 13:

American Indian College exists to prepare Native Americans for a life of ministry, which in Scripture is synonymous with service. The objective of the College is to prepare Christian leaders who will in turn prepare others for service, and who will contribute to the unity of the Body of Christ. (II Timothy 2:2; Ephesians 4:11-13).

Since college sees itself as a training ground for AI/AN ministers, it emphasizes activities such as chapel, missions trips, as well as local outreaches to expose students to the college's main purpose of training Christian leaders. Thus, the bulk of the college's activities have a religious emphasis.

Chapel Services

Students were required to attend chapel as part of their total spiritual enrichment. Chapel services took place four days per week, although a few years ago there was a Sunday night chapel service as well. The chapel services strived to spiritually challenge the students while giving them a community worship experience that brought the entire campus together at least once a day in the morning. Chapel services were meant to supplement regular Sunday and Wednesday night worship services. For this female student, chapel services were a mainstay and she reflected positively on their influence in her spiritual formation:

For me it would have to be the chapel services that we had Monday through Friday and also on Sunday night and those were the encouraging times that we would come together as the student body and basically kind of run our own service with the help of an instructor . . .

This male student also saw chapel as a very positive experience. He especially recalled the Sunday night chapel services from a few years back:

I also think that the chapel services are really good, but they had these Sunday night services here on campus and they were some

of the most powerful times that I've ever experienced, that I always looked forward to . . . we had time to linger in the presence of God. We could stay till nine, ten, eleven, twelve. Sometimes we'd stay in the chapel praying until eleven or twelve and God would move upon us. We weren't in a hurry.

Finally, this male student mentioned that he missed chapel services when he was at home on break and he looked forward to returning in part to be in chapel:

. . . going back [home] to that atmosphere wasn't too healthy for me in the spiritual sense. I really wanted to go back to school and be a part of chapel again, just to be a part of the friends . . . and when we came back from Christmas break it was like . . . I hadn't seen them for a year or something like that.

Ministry Outreaches

Closely related to chapel was the ministry outreaches conducted by the college that are student-directed and range from visits to local reservation communities to summer trips as far away as the Philippines and Outer Mongolia. For this young man, ministry trips were an integral part of the collegiate experience, "The first year it was the ministries--the different ministries that we get on the weekend and the trips that we had. That kept me here."

This other male student also viewed outreach ministry activities as an important part of his total college experience:

Our school does outreaches and, at first, we didn't have any type of outreaches. I like to minister and I was kind of slumped about it because we didn't get to do anything. But then . . . we started going to lots of ministries, going to [the] homeless, going all over Arizona here and there and teams are going all over. . . . that really encouraged me and helped me to carry along, because as Christians that's a joyful thing to be able to minister.

Finally, this young man saw the ministry outreaches in conjunction with the church he attended as having had a life-changing focus for him as he saw the need to look beyond himself and towards the needs of his fellow Native people:

I find that the church that I go to now and . . . the outreaches that go on at the school and stuff, it really gave me a focus on Native American ministry. I remember back home that wasn't my goal, that wasn't my point. It really wasn't part of life. To me it was just part of the American dream you know: going out there, hardly ever work, put money on the table, put food on the table, whatever

you know, support your kids or try to make it yourself. It wasn't ever about my own people. . . . my heart and passion about what God is doing with Native Americans and how He just increases that passion for the lost and just to do what we do. It's like [Name of instructor] favorite phrase: "Life without ministry is boring." And really, that ministry is a part of life--should be, you know. I'm glad that I see what God does.

Lack of Programming

Although some of the programming created positive experiences for some focus group participants, the lack of programming created a very negative experience for some others. This very social student was displeased with the lack of activities that were available on campus to the students. Having come from a very active lifestyle she found difficulty adapting to what she perceived as a very quiet campus:

I used to hang out with my friends until like eleven, twelve and then finally go home and not even go to sleep at all sometimes. That's just the person I was, and I hardly slept. I would like to have fun and here it's like so quiet. Everybody is in their room. You hardly see anybody outside at times. It's like, what's going on? And come to find out there's nothing to do. The gym's there, but nobody's

there. It's like there's nothing at all. Everybody's in their room I don't know what they're doing there, but they're there. That was probably the hardest thing for me to adapt to. Because I was always involved with activities . . . on the go. But here, it's like you stop--to do what?

In the course of expressing their frustrations about the lack of activities, some students made suggestions as to how to improve campus life including these two female students who thought that more activities and sports were needed to "spice up" campus life:

I mean we have like College Days and stuff and then that's just for a couple of days but they really don't see how it is. . . . one of the girls here . . . came down for College Days and she saw everybody running around and what not, having fun. But she had told one of the students here that she never imagined seeing the other side . . . where everybody is just walking around and bored. . . . I would do . . . more activities: volleyball, softball, but basketball season's over--just more activities I guess.

This student thought that part of the answer to alleviating boredom was to keep the college's gym open more often, "I think the gym should be open . . .

have the students know. "Yes it's open. You're free to go in and play games and do whatever you want to do." Finally, this male student advocated an all-school outing as a break from the monotony of everyday routine.

Man, like one weekend let's go out and let's do something-- just break--let everybody hang out . . . cause our school ain't that big . . . We can all go out. If I was president I'd be like, "Let's have some fun every now and then." That's what I'd do.

Close Friendships

As a small, residential campus students, faculty, and staff are all in close proximity to each other and interact closely on a daily basis. Previously, many students recounted how the size of the college and student/teacher ratio helped them to decide to enroll in the college. Once students became a part of the college community, some of them recounted how close friendships was a very positive influence on them persisting at the college. For example, this male student recalled how the sense of community was especially important to him during his freshman year. ". . . the experience here. Knowing that there was a lot of friends here and being around them. . . . the community feeling of it." This other male student responded to the previous participant's remarks, "Mine is kind of similar to his as well. I came back because I enjoyed being around a lot of people here and I myself wanted to do something with my life."

This female student confided to the group that when she first came to the college she was lonely, but the friendships she made at the school quickly remedied that:

I have no friends, well I had no friends when I came up here. I didn't know anybody. It was a new experience where I was dumped off and I knew nobody and had no family around. It was a . . . whole new world for me but I quickly made friends and I became really tight with an individual and I guess my encouragement came knowing that I wasn't the only one who felt lonely here. . .

This male student felt like he was forming life-long friendships during his freshman year:

. . . it's like I found someone who was the same tribe as me and we just like clicked because we had a lot of things to talk about and I didn't know she'd lived in [State]. We just like really clicked and she's become like one of my best friends now. . . . it was my freshman year and you just build like lifetime friendships as you go off to college. I really enjoy that a lot.

Religious Differences

Having close friends with a common social and religious bond was extremely important for the students. However, for devout students, having other students on campus who did not share their religious fervor made it very discouraging at times. Even though it is a Bible college and students who attend there are required to subscribe to a statement of faith, sometimes students enroll who do not adhere to the same value system as other students. This student reflected back on how the presence of students who did not share his Christian value system was very disappointing:

It's kind of hard to answer this question because I've been here about four years and it asks how you did not succeed, what discouraged you. I think the only thing that really discouraged me were times when people who were not Christians slipped through the cracks and they got into the school and you were expecting them to be Christian and you were expecting them to be these really nice people. [Name of Administrator] or [Name of another Administrator] and all these guys, they have good judge of character. They are really good at filtering out the bad people [Yet] you have these people come on and put on the halo act for about maybe two or three days and all of a sudden you see them cussing, doing things that you wouldn't think they'd be doing. That

happened my freshman and sophomore year where [it] was really discouraging. People who I thought shouldn't be here were here.

This female student had similar thoughts and expressed her surprise at finding students at a Bible college who did not share her religious fervor:

The part that I saw negative on this campus as a Christian Bible college was to see a lot of the secular things going on. It really discouraged me, disappointed me to see them doing these things and not being able to say anything about it, but to pray for them. Because I'm not here to oversee them and tell them they're going the wrong direction. They have to learn for themselves and I didn't want the students here to see me as a mothering hen you know, always hanging over them, disciplining them and telling them right from wrong. If you're in college you're an adult, you don't need to be reminded of those things. You should have learned them at home. Those are their own choices. So it was a struggle for me and a lot of times I went back to my room and I would cry and pray and say, "God this is a Bible college! This shouldn't be happening. The things that I saw." I wanted to go home or I wanted to go to a different Bible college where I wouldn't see that. But the Lord told me that this happens everywhere

This female student concurred with the others by saying that she didn't expect to see students involved in some of the things they were doing and that seeing the questionable practices of some students was a very negative experience:

The Christian atmosphere kind of related to what [Student] was saying. Coming from the church . . . we really got disciplined about what was right or wrong, not to be "of the world" and doing worldly things. When I first came here some students were running movies, like rated "R" and was listening to secular music in the dorm rooms. I was like, "What is going on?" And it really discouraged me . . .

Faculty Validation and Encouragement

Not surprisingly, the focus group participants had much to say about the faculty. As a Bible college, the majority of the faculty members are ordained ministers within the Assemblies of God. In addition to their individual subject specializations, many of them are viewed in their pastoral roles, frequently called upon for counsel and spiritual guidance by the students. Faculty are usually addressed as "Brother" or "Sister" and their surname rather than "Dr." or "Professor." This serves to maintain proper decorum and intimacy at the same time. This woman appreciated her instructor's attempts to encourage her when

she was struggling with the contents of one of her classes: "When I hear Brother [Instructor] he's always saying, 'You can do it!'" Likewise, this female student lauds one of her instructors for the caring way in which he took time to visit her dying father in the nursing home:

Brother [Instructor] was a real major role player in my freshman year, not only on campus academic and class-wise. I lost my father my freshman year and he took time, even in the middle of the night, to come to the nursing home to pray, to meet my family, to call me on the phone. [He] and his wife were praying for us at home and then even when I returned to campus afterwards he was there to encourage me and to tell me, "Just hang in there. Get through the semester," and everything would be OK. So he really impressed me with his encouragement, his support, just his knowledge.

This woman credits her "positive" instructors as well as another that she sees as a mother figure:

I would probably say Sister [Instructor] and Brother [Instructor] because they're both very positive people and they really do encourage you when you need to be encouraged, yet they lift you up. I would probably include Sister [Instructor] as well because

she's almost like a mother. She really knows how to respond to certain situations and tells you just what you really need to hear.

This female student mentioned that one of her instructor's jokes and stories were even uplifting to her: "... just the encouragement between the teachers that I talked to. Brother [Instructor] was one of them with his jokes and his stories."

Faculty Invalidation

This study has already shown that faculty members provided validation, which enhanced the retention of students beyond the freshman year. This is consistent with Rendón's (1994) research in which she indicated that faculty who validate may have a positive impact on student retention and success. Conversely, as the following exemplars show, faculty who did not validate students were seen as negatively influencing retention. In other words, students indicated that just as positive feedback fueled their desire to persist, negative feedback negated that desire:

Yeah, he was teaching [Subject] and he really made it rough for me. I really did not like him. He was very hard, he would always say, I guess he was trying to encourage, but he didn't know how to encourage. He kind of made me feel like I was dumb. I couldn't get [the Subject]. I was never going to get it. He would always

walk around looking mean. I just didn't like that. So he was really negative.

Another student said that her instructor failed to validate by communicating poorly with her and other students.

I had problems with my [Subject] teacher, too. She writes assignments and notes on the board and doesn't give us enough time to copy it and she'll just wipe it off the board or she won't repeat herself. When you ask her she says, "You should have got it the first time." [But she] didn't give us enough time! It seems like there's no communication there, no interaction, and wanting a tutor in that area is like getting nowhere, just hitting a brick wall. I wanted to drop out and withdraw from that class. When you're absent from being sick and you go and talk to her, she just ignores you. So you try to get the assignments from her and you can't get it so you go to the students and some of [them] have notes and they'll give it to you, but it's not what the teacher expected. That's been real hard for me--the [Subject] teacher not communicating

This male student described how he felt shut-out and ignored by most instructors when he first came to the college and only received validation from a very few. It was lonely . . . it was like a desert . . .

Culturally Insensitive Faculty

Experiences with culturally insensitive faculty were closely related to the experiences of students who did not receive faculty validation. Although many students at the college were very fond of their faculty--most of whom were Anglo, some students expressed frustration at faculty members. Frustration arose with instructors who were culturally insensitive and did not seem to understand the different dynamics that operate in the lives of AI/AN students. This student shares her frustration with culturally untrained faculty:

. . . new teachers that come [and] don't know anything about Native Americans. They don't know their lifestyle. Anglos, they interrupt you when you're speaking. They cut you off when you're still speaking. I don't know if I'm speaking for everybody but when a Native American [is] speaking to somebody, you listen and when they speak to you, you listen and you never look them straight in the eye. Some of the people are, "Look at me when I'm talking to you!" Or you know they don't listen to what you say. They don't wait for you to stop and they interrupt you as fast as they can.

because they have a thought but they don't hold onto it. Sometimes I find that very offensive like "are you angry with me?" I start thinking about what's going on with this person and I jump back and I step back for a while and try to rethink. "What did I say? What did I do? Why is this person attacking me like this?" I know we need to adjust to them, but I wish the instructors that come on would have a little experience with the Native American people, be on a reservation, or do something, not just come in from the cities and just think, "I'm going to be with these Native Americans because they're like people from Africa or Mexico because I've been there." We're different: we're indigenous. I think they need to understand that.

This other female student had similar concerns to the previous student and recounts how the college was originally founded to provide AI/AN students with a culturally-sensitive learning environment to study for the ministry.

The faculty . . . kind of lose that vision . . . we started this school because a student was discouraged and he wanted to learn Bible courses. He wanted to learn from instructors and that's how it started . . . now instructors feel like it's "me-me-me, I-I-I" "My class, MY CLASS, starts at this time. God can touch you when you

go to lunch. 'Wait a second! You can't tell God to bless me or God to move in my family's life at a different time. You're not God!'

This other female student wished that Anglo instructors at the college would have a better cultural understanding of AI/AN students.

I wish a lot of times our instructors could be like that instead of you know, saying, "Well, we're white." I know a lot of the instructors always compare their students with their children and to me that's like, "Excuse me! We're not trying to live up to your standards or anything like that. We're Native."

Difficulties With Residential Staff

Students also cited some concerns with residential staff members as well. This student was concerned that some staff members, especially students who worked for the school and didn't have sufficiently strong communication skills:

I grew up in foster homes, boarding schools, been locked up, and in rehab, and for me the rules and stuff had never been a problem. It's just that how will you tell somebody having leadership qualities and being qualified to lead. When I came here it was just like people were younger than I was. It was OK for me to have rules

because I've had them all my life. Like the way you talk to somebody. 'Give me the key!' Communication and training for leaders in different areas because people come from different areas, people come from different backgrounds and different situations. If you have somebody who's twenty-one and doesn't really know how to lead people, you get offended--and a lot of times I'd just keep it in. But if you keep it in, you are going to blow up one of these days. But my first year was just people acting smart, different [staff members] and stuff and just thinking they knew everything.

This female student thought the residential staff was overzealous at times in their enforcement of rules, such as curfew times:

I don't know how to explain it but . . . if you wanted to come in late like because I have family here and I would be out with them [the staff would ask] "Why? Why can't you come back early?" Then I'd think, "Like who are you to ask me? I know you're a [residence staff member] and that you're responsible, but I'm responsible telling you who I'm with and when I'll be back." My family will make sure that I'd come back, and that was pretty much it. It was just like being questioned a lot.

This male student felt that the residence staff failed to become adequately involved with dorm students:

I would like to see more of our resident staff get involved with our students . . . I understand the resident staff have families and stuff, but they were called here to work with the students and I'll use this year in particular. I've never seen our resident staff get involved with our students yet. I've never seen it.

Finally, this male student expressed his concern that some residence staff remained in their roles too long and that these staff members needed to be rotated from time to time because they gradually became ineffective in their jobs when left in the positions for too long:

I've been here and the same people have been in charge. . . . sometimes . . . it's good to get new leaders just to give them a break. I mean they get stressed out and burned out and . . . sometimes people need a break, especially when you're dealing with students . . . We need fresh blood in there, fresh leaders, student leaders.

Concerns With Rules

Some students were unhappy with the rules of the college. In some cases, students were shocked by what they thought were archaic and overly strict guidelines on campus. This male student compared the campus to juvenile hall:

I was kind of in culture shock when I first got here, and I felt like I was trapped in a little gate. I felt I was in juvenile hall or something. . . . the rules, the school, different rules that they made--curfew. At home I wasn't used to curfew, checking your room and making sure you were there. I felt like I was back in juvenile hall or something.

This female student found adapting to the rules of the college very difficult during her freshman year. In her frustration she mentioned that her ten-year-old brother seemed to have more freedom than she does:

I think that a lot of the negativity was from . . . so many rules. It was constant, constant rules, rules, rules! I don't know. It was just like, I'm fresh out of high school, I'm eighteen years old and I have absolutely no freedom any more. I have less freedom than my ten year old brother does." I don't know, I had a hard time with it, 'cause it was just constant all the time. Everything was real strict . . . it was just weird like that.

This female student also found living under the College's rules very difficult for her:

Personally, I think a lot of the things that were discouraging to me was the fact that I had to live by someone else's rules, when I thought when I moved out of someone's house I moved into a bunch of rules. I did not like the idea of having to feel caved in, like you're just locked away.

Not all students thought the campus's rules were too strict. In fact, some students thought that enforcement of the guidelines needed to be strengthened. One female student was quite firm in her declaration that the rules should be consistently enforced:

I think rules need to be enforced and I think that's one of the things that has been lacking is that we have been treating, especially freshmen, like babies. We've been treating them like kids. "Oh, it's their first year. We should comfort their needs." Well, you come to this college knowing you're away from home. You better start living as an adult. When you come here, before you sign that document, when you're filling out that application, you're saying, "I'm going to follow these rules. I'm going to follow everything [the

college] has to offer me and I read the regulations.” You’re signing that, and nobody is forcing you to sign that contract there.

Another young woman agreed with her statement and added a few additional comments:

I totally agree with that because what discouraged me honestly was when we had gotten the Eagle’s Roost [student handbook] and I had read everything--and I’m not against dating, me of all people would be, no. I think there is a reason why God made marriage. There is a reason why there is courting and everything. But it’s like when I read the rules, that discouraged me because I have an old [student handbook] and I compared it to the new one and I was thinking, “Wait a minute, if you can go out and do this, then why have that rule?” Before it was like no [physical contact] . . . when the instructors bring in their old friends back [they’ll say], “Well, back in the days we weren’t allowed to hold hands.” I’m thinking, “Yes, amen!” We need that . . . some people may think [I’m] too radical on that part, but it’s like no, you know there was rules. Why were they changed from 1970 [until] now? . . . no matter where you’re at you have to have rules and if you break those rules, what’s the point of having these rules?

Clearly, the rules at the Bible college were seen differently by various students. The opinions expressed by the focus group participants were quite dichotomous and showed that rules were an issue both for students who wanted more freedom as well as those who wished for more structure within the college's environment.

Figure 4 details the role of institutional culture in choosing a college and persistence. Both the positive and negative influences are displayed in the model.

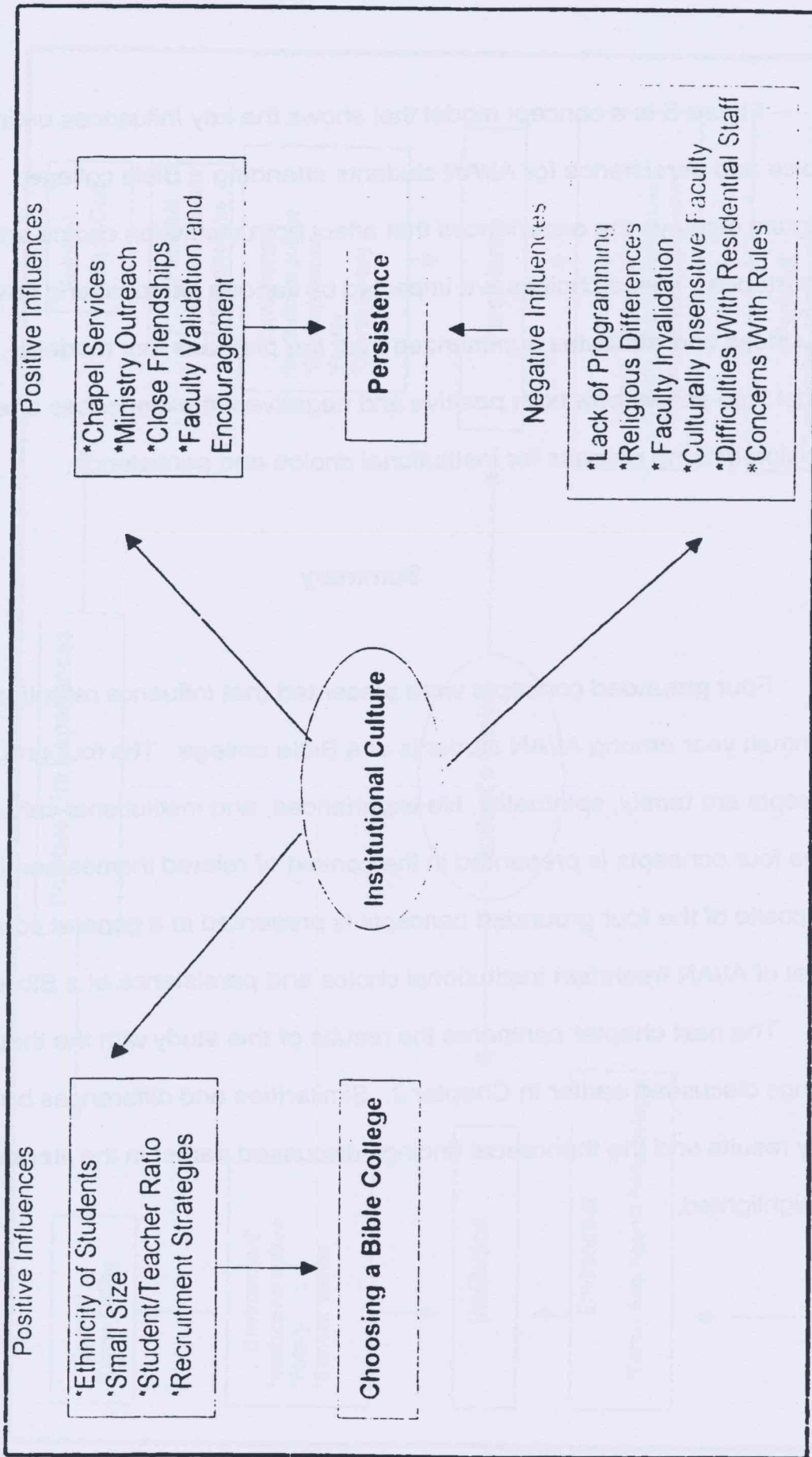


Figure 4. Positive and negative influences of institutional culture in choosing a college and student persistence

Figure 5 is a concept model that shows the key influences on institutional choice and persistence for AI/AN students attending a Bible college. The diagram displays the experiences that affect both institution choice and persistence. These choices are impacted by various personal and environmental influences and attributes summarized from the previous four models. This model also shows how both positive and negative life experiences affect the decision-making process for institutional choice and persistence.

Summary

Four grounded concepts were presented that influence retention past the freshman year among AI/AN students at a Bible college. The four grounded concepts are family, spirituality, life experiences, and institutional culture. Each of the four concepts is presented in the context of related themes and ideas. A composite of the four grounded concepts is presented in a general concept model of AI/AN freshman institutional choice and persistence at a Bible college.

The next chapter compares the results of this study with the theoretical findings discussed earlier in Chapter 2. Similarities and differences between the study results and the theoretical findings discussed earlier in the literature review are highlighted.

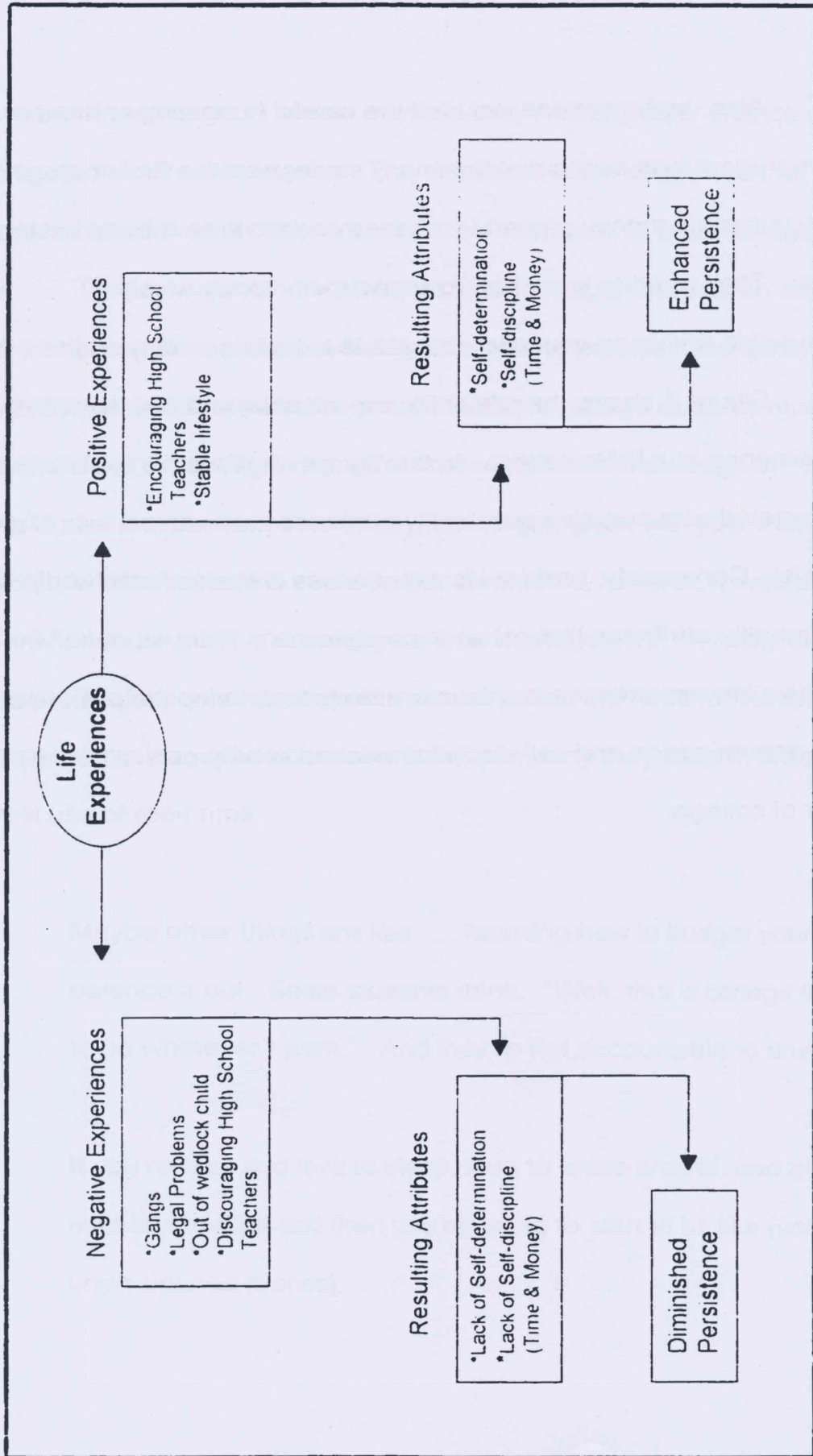


Figure 3: Positive and negative life experiences and their relationship to persistence at a Bible college

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter the research findings will be discussed vis-à-vis the major theoretical perspectives presented in Chapter 2. The theories of Astin, Bean, Tinto, Wright and Tierney, and de Anda will be compared with the research findings in an effort to highlight similarities and differences. Other perspectives will also be cited as they shed additional relevant light on the topics advanced by this study.

Population Samples

In order to make an accurate comparison between the study's research findings and the major theorists presented in the theoretical orientation section of Chapter 2, it is necessary to look at the population samples used by those theorists. The degree of similarity or dissimilarity to the sample used in this study's research findings may suggest the applicability of these other models to the present one.

Astin's Population Sample

Astin's (1985a) theory of student involvement is drawn from his analysis of institutions from across the complete spectrum of selectivity and student

academic achievement. He looked at schools ranging from the most elite institutions (Harvard, Yale, Princeton, MIT, etc.) to the least selective community colleges and private liberal arts colleges. Thus, his theory is based on a fairly comprehensive look at American college and university students, of which AI/ANs are but a very small part. Overall, Astin's (1984, 1985a & 1985b) theory of student involvement is a mainstream model drawn from a population very dissimilar to AI/ANs. The reader should keep this caveat in mind when making comparisons between Astin's Involvement Theory and the retention of AI/AN students at a small Bible college.

Bean's Population Sample

Bean's (1980) sample of students was also quite different from those involved in the study at AIC. What follows is a listing of the criteria used for those involved in his study:

Only students meeting the following criteria were included: age, under 22 years; race, Caucasian; citizenship, U.S.; ethnicity, excludes Chicanos and Puerto Ricans; marital status, single. Four organizational variables were also controlled by selection: current semester is the student's first; transfers were excluded; only freshmen were included; and only full-time students were included.

The sample was biased toward higher ability students. The selected sample was composed of 40 percent in the top quartile of the ACT scores; 40 percent in the second quartile; 18 percent in the third quartile; and only 2 percent in the lowest quartile. National ACT norms of 1977 run as follows: top quartile, 17 percent; second quartile, 28 percent; third quartile, 26 percent; bottom quartile 29 percent (ACT, 1977). The bottom quartile was clearly underrepresented, especially as compared to the national norms (p. 161).

Clearly, the demographic characteristics of Bean's (1980) students and those from this present study are highly dissimilar. Bean's sample included only Caucasian students and did not include Chicanos and Puerto Ricans who are more analogous in academic achievement to AI/AN students than Caucasians. Also, Bean's (1980) study drew heavily from students (80%) in the upper two quartiles of ACT scores whereas 93% of the AIC students who took the ACT came from the bottom two quartiles. Bean's (1980) study only used first-semester freshman students, whereas the AIC sample included only students that were at least second-semester freshmen. Finally, Bean's (1980) study focused on students attending a major midwestern university whereas this research focused on students in a small Bible college in the southwest. Overall, the populations involved in this study and those of Bean (1980) are extremely heterogeneous and any comparisons of finding must be tentative at best.

Tinto's Population Sample

Like Astin (1984, 1985a & 1985b) and Bean (1980), Tinto's (1975, 1987, & 1993) research draws upon a model predicated on mainstream college and university students. Although Tinto's model is still considered the definitive model for factors contributing to student departure, many higher education researchers such as Rendón et al. (2000) and Tierney (1992) argue that the use of a mainstream model of student departure on minority student populations (such as Hispanic and AI/ANs) is fraught with difficulties because of the cultural dissimilarities of many minority students with mainstream college students.

Wright and Tierney's Population Sample

Tierney's (1992) study used a critical ethnographic approach that included interviews of over 200 faculty, administrators, students, staff, and policy analysts from ten different institutions that had a sizable population of AI/AN students. The interviews dealt with "organizational aspects of Native American participation in the institution." (p. 15).

The sample used in Tierney's (1992) study is more closely comparable to the one used in the present study than the samples used by Astin, Tinto, or Bean. In Tierney's (1992) study, the focus was specifically on Native American students, just as this study focused on Native American students. The main difference between the two population groups is that the sample in this study

(1992) study were practitioners of traditional Native American religions, thus there may be some differences as a result of that. Also, in the present study only students participated in the focus group discussions, whereas Tierney (1992) interviewed non-students as well.

de Anda's Population Sample

de Anda's (1984) research was predicated upon the earlier work of Valentine (1971) who posited that individuals who could successfully navigate both the mainstream culture and their distinct ethnic culture were at an advantage over those who could not successfully negotiate the mainstream culture.

Valentine's (1971) work was predicated on the experiences of Afro-Americans, a minority group that has also traditionally experienced great difficulties in the realm of higher education. However, de Anda (1984) does not limit Valentine's bicultural model to Afro-Americans, but suggests its usefulness in understanding cross-cultural dynamics with such groups as Asians and Hispanics. Therefore, even though de Anda's (1984) bicultural socialization model has its roots in understanding Afro-American socialization issues, it may have some applicability to use with AI/ANs since they also have experienced some of the cultural marginalization and alienation issues encountered by Afro-Americans.

In the next section the four thematic influences (family, spirituality, life experiences, and institutional culture) revealed in this present study are examined in light of the five theoretic orientations contained in the literature review.

Comparison With Four Grounded Concepts

The four grounded concepts (family, spirituality, life experiences, and institutional culture) discussed and summarized in the concept models in Chapter 4 are at the core of understanding AI/AN retention beyond the freshman year at a Bible college. Each of these concepts is now compared with the theoretical orientations discussed in Chapter 2.

Family

The first grounded concept discussed in Chapter 4 was the influence that the family had both upon institutional choice and persistence. Comparisons will be made here between the research findings of this study on the influence of the family and the views espoused by those researchers discussed in the theoretical orientation found in Chapter 2.

Comparison With Astin

Astin's theory of student involvement (1985a, 1985b, & 1984) does not mention the role of the family but instead focuses existentially on the role

of the student, and the importance of the student to become involved. For Astin, the key to involvement is the amount of effort expended by the student in the academic and social domains. No mention is made of the family in terms of institutional choice or retention. Thus, it would seem that according to Astin the family is incidental to the process of successful academic achievement. No recognition is made of the family's role (either positive or negative) in the process. The student is the one who is responsible for insuring that (s)he has a successful academic experience.

Comparison With Bean

Bean's (1980) findings are existential as were the findings of Astin (1985a), which showed that the student rather than exogenous sources determined the level of involvement. Bean's (1980) research suggested that students make decisions about their education and level of involvement on their own. He did not indicate that the family was a significant influence in attrition, although in some of his later research, Bean (1990) determined that family circumstances and finances could affect retention. This is consistent with the findings of this study which showed that family responsibilities and financial concerns had an impact on the decision-making of students once they matriculated. AI/AN students at the Bible college felt pulled away from persisting when there were family problems or financial concerns.

Comparison With Tinto

Tinto (1975, 1987, & 1993) notes that the family's background will have an impact on the student's ability to persist. This is consistent with the results gained in this study involving AI/AN students. In this study students indicated that the level of supportiveness they gained from their family influenced their desire to persist. AI/AN students who had non-supportive family members encountered greater difficulties in persisting beyond the freshman year.

Tinto (1993) defines family background "as measured by social status, parental education, and size of community." (p. 115). Several of the Bible college students indicated that their parents also attended a Bible college and that they felt this positively influenced them in their attempts to persist. Since this study did not look at students who did *not* persist it would be difficult to predict whether family background that did not include some college graduates had a negative impact on students who dropped out.

Comparison With Wright and Tierney

Like the present study, Tierney (1992) and Wright and Tierney (1991) recognized the importance of the family structure within AI/AN societies. These researchers recognize the importance of family influence both in institutional choice and persistence. They also recognize how AI/ANs often will put family needs ahead of their own education. For example, in another related article, Tierney (1991) indicates that AI/AN students are known to return home for family

religious ceremonies even if that means missing a class or exam. Tierney (1991) succinctly summarizes this by saying, "Family obligations are paramount for most Indian students." (p. 36).

This study at a Bible college showed that AI/AN students encountered a great deal of cognitive dissonance when weighing their educational aspirations against family needs. The study interviewed persisters beyond the freshman year who indicated that family needs caused them to consider dropping out. Although the Bible college students were Christian, and not followers of Indian or Eskimo religious beliefs, they still had strong family ties and often had to decide when to allow family obligations to override their desire for a college education.

Since Tierney's (1992) study focused on AI/AN students, it is not surprising that his findings in the area of family influence are similar to those encountered in this study. The ethnic family dynamics are very similar between Tierney's (1992) study and this study even if the spiritual dynamics differ somewhat.

Comparison With de Anda

de Anda's research did not specifically address the role of the family per se, but did indicate the importance of bicultural navigation for members of minority groups trying to gain access to the majority culture. The findings of the present study showed strong family influence in both institutional choice and persistence for AI/AN students in a Bible college. Using de Anda's perspective,

one could see that the strong influence of the family is a vital part of the AI/AN culture that must somehow be reconciled with the majority culture. de Anda (1984) recognizes that cultural transition is greatly facilitated by "[t]he degree of overlap or commonality between the two cultures with regard to norms, values, beliefs, perceptions, and the like." (p. 102). It is quite possible that AI/AN students at the Bible college were able to persist because the institution acknowledges and respects the role of the family's influence in both institutional choice and persistence. This may have served to minimize cultural distance between the student's home environment and the college.

In the next subsection discussion turns to spirituality, the second concept in this study related to AI/AN persistence beyond the freshman year at a Bible college.

Spirituality

Spirituality is the second key concept in both institutional choice and persistence. The Bible college students indicated that the role of God and various spiritual leaders had a major part in determining their choice of institution. Many students indicated that they felt specifically "called by God" to attend a Bible college. In some other cases, the calling came more indirectly through the influence of a spiritual leader such as a pastor or other church leader.

Comparison With Astin

Astin's research (1985a, 1985b, & 1984) did not specifically mention spiritual influence upon college students. However, Involvement Theory does not necessarily preclude religious influence. It would seem that students who felt a divine call upon their life, or who had been highly influenced by significant religious figures in their life, might display a higher degree of involvement in their education than those who didn't. For these students, sensing a divine call or being inspired by spiritual leaders or their church family might lead to a greater level of involvement, thus enhancing the likelihood of persistence past the freshman year.

Comparison With Bean

Bean's (1980) research into student attrition did not investigate the spiritual dimensions of students. In fact, there is no analogous area in his findings that can be compared with the findings in the present research regarding spiritual influence on the students.

Comparison With Tinto

Tinto's (1975, 1987, & 1993) research does not directly discuss the influence of spirituality in the lives of students. However, there are several places in Tinto's model where spirituality can be included. For example,

family background is one of the pre-entry attributes that affect institutional departure in Tinto's paradigm (see Figure 6 on next page). If the student comes from a religious family and spirituality is pervasive in family dynamics then spirituality could affect the student through family dynamics.

Tinto's model (1975, 1988, & 1993) also discussed goals/commitment in which intentions and external commitments could also be affected by the spiritual influence. If a student has set a goal or commitment to ministry and feels called by God to attend a Bible college this could affect the student's persistence in both this research as well as Tinto's model. External commitments could refer to one's relation to the church family at the church attended by the student. A strong and supportive relationship with the church family could help the student remain focused on the goal of persistence.

Overall, though Tinto's model does not specifically address spiritual influence in the life of a student, it can accommodate the role of spirituality in the life of a college student as (s)he navigates through the educational system.

Comparison With Tierney and Wright

Wright and Tierney (1991) also show an understanding of the importance of spiritual influence in the lives of AI/AN college students. Students in the present study indicated that religious influence was very high in terms of both institutional selection and persistence. However, Wright and Tierney (1991) do have some major differences in their understanding of religious influence vis-à-

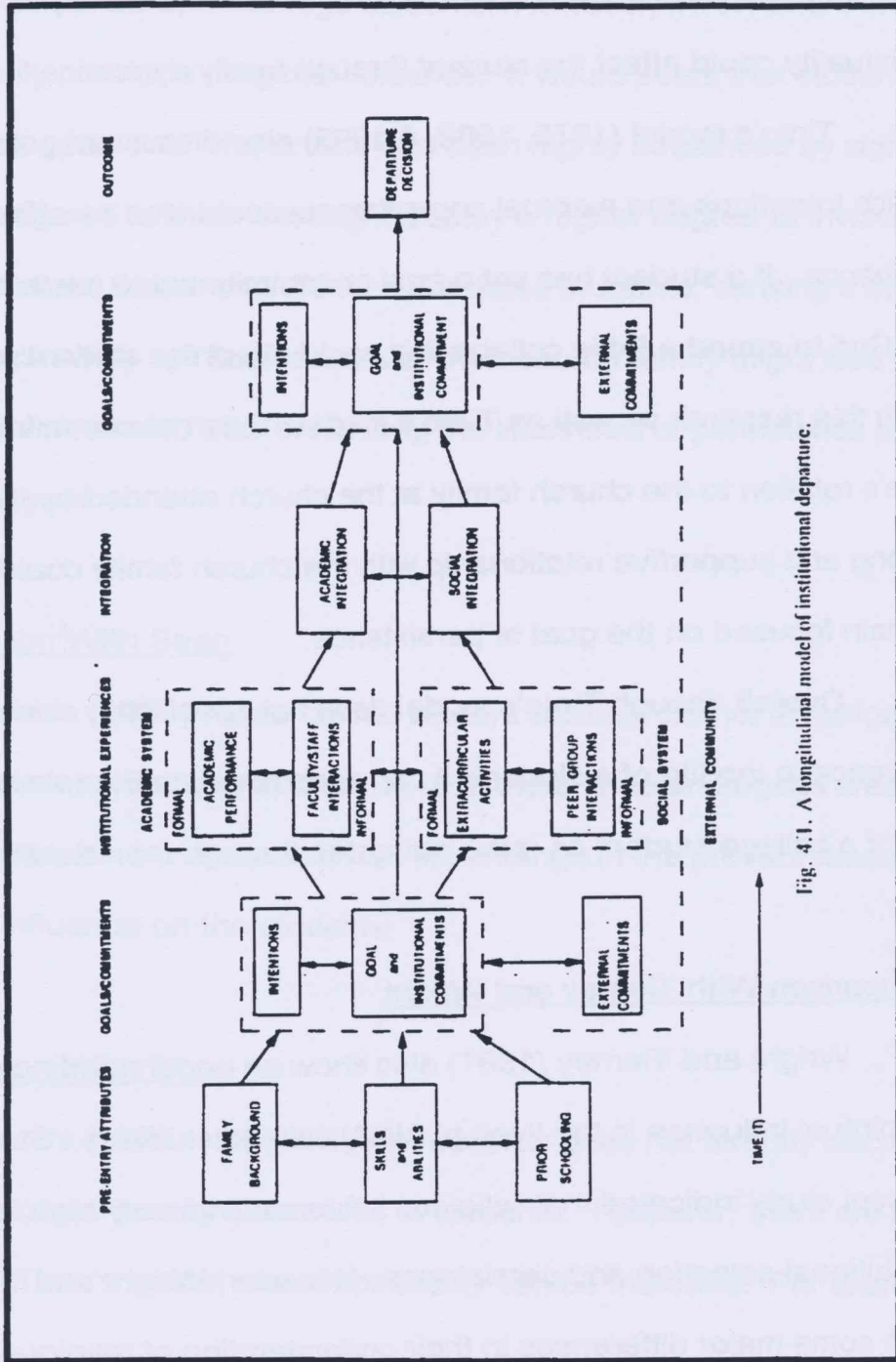


Fig. 4.1. A longitudinal model of institutional departure.

Figure 6. Tinto's longitudinal model of institutional departure.

Note: From *Leaving College* (p. 114), by V. Tinto, 1993, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. © 1987, 1993 by the University of Chicago Press. Reprinted with permission.

vis this study. Wright and Tierney (1991) equate much of historical Christianity with an oppressive anti-Indian force within American education. They cite the previous forced assimilation policies requiring that these Indians be "Christianized" through forced conversion to Christianity. Thus, Christianity is seen as a negative, enslaving force that has been extremely detrimental to AI/AN lifestyle. Wright and Tierney (1991) suggest that most AI/ANs desire to maintain their traditional Native religious beliefs and long to study in settings that will uphold that. As an example they cite the popularity of tribal colleges among AI/AN students and their high success rate, in part because of their continuity with Indian cultural and religious traditions.

Historically AI/ANs have endured many indignities designed to enforce a plan of cultural eradication in favor of Christianity. Indeed, traditional Indian religions are still the religions of choice for many Native people. However, in the present the students who attended a Bible college were committed to Christianity and did not see it as an agent of oppression. The students who participated in Tierney's (1992) and Wright and Tierney's (1991) research were Indians attending primarily public institutions and tribal colleges.

The religious differences in this study and the research of Tierney (1992) and Wright and Tierney (1991) suggest that it is unwise to suppose a religious homogeneity among AI/ANs. In addition to various different tribal religions, many AI/ANs are adherents to Christianity as well as other faiths. However, the main

similarity that both views support is that religious influence is very important to both Christian and traditional Indian religion practitioners.

Comparison With de Anda

de Anda's (1984) model did not touch specifically upon spiritual influence in her research on bicultural socialization. However, there are a couple of points of convergence where the bicultural model can accommodate spiritual influence. In de Anda's (1984) model she postulates six factors that will have an impact on the minority person's ability to become bicultural. The first of the six factors involves how much overlap exists between the two cultures "with regard to norms, values, beliefs, perceptions, and the like." (p. 102). In the present study spiritual influence was seen as very important in both institutional choice and persistence. In part this may be because spiritual influence would be expected in the affective realm of a student aspiring to go to a Bible college. Students attending a Bible college would expect the Bible college to be very consistent with their own spiritual values, perceptions, etc. Thus, students whose spiritual value system closely approximates that of the Bible college would be less likely to encounter cultural dissonance. Indeed, students who had pastors, church leaders, and other church members to spiritually encourage them with their faith in God already had some cultural connection with the spiritual environment of the Bible college.

The second major point of convergence would be the third factor of the bicultural model that refers to “[t]he amount and type (positive or negative) of corrective feedback provided by each culture regarding attempts to produce normative behaviors.” (p. 102). In a Bible college, students who have a strong degree of spiritual influence in their lives will find it much easier to adapt to the disciplined lifestyle that is often expected in such settings. In other words, students who have been strongly influenced spiritually by pastors and church leaders will be more likely to respond to (spiritual) corrective feedback that tries to bring about proper normative behavior such as a sober, chaste lifestyle that includes times of disciplined prayer and Bible study in addition to regular academic studies.

The next subsection compares the theme of Life Experiences uncovered in this study with the researchers discussed in the literature review.

Life Experiences

In this study the third concept related to student perspectives was Life Experiences. Students were impacted through both their positive and negative personal life experiences. Positive experiences enhanced institutional choice and retention whereas negative ones worked against choosing a Bible college and also diminished the desire for retention beyond the freshman year.

Comparison With Astin

In the present study, self-determination and personal management skills were discovered to be influential in students who persisted. The presence of these attributes was related to persistence while the lack of these qualities corresponded to a loss of desire to persist. It would seem that students who had a high level of self-determination would tend to exhibit a great deal of involvement according to Astin's theory. Astin (1985a) points out that involvement can be measured both quantitatively and qualitatively. Thus, it seems that the student with strong self-determination would probably invest more time (quantitative) as well as effort (qualitative) in order to become involved and succeed. Such a person might also manifest strong personal management skills such as handling time and money (see Figure 3, p. 143).

Other students cited negative life experiences as having had a negative impact on their desire to persist past the freshman year. These experiences included gang affiliations, discouraging high school teachers, court problems, and raising children out-of-wedlock. If Astin's theory is correct, these negative experiences interfered with college involvement, making involvement at the Bible college more difficult. To the extent that these negative experiences still had a hold on students, retention could be much more difficult if a student was investing energy in more than one direction.

As the model in Figure 5 (p. 174) shows, positive life experiences, such as encouraging high school teachers and a stable lifestyle also had a positive

impact on both institutional choice and persistence. Perhaps students who have had positive experiences and developed self-determination and personal management skills would manifest greater levels of involvement as well.

Comparison With Bean

Bean's (1980) model does not have any nexus with the findings on life experiences among AI/AN students at a Bible college. Therefore no comparisons can be made here.

Comparison With Tinto

Tinto's model (1975, 1987, & 1993) has three points of convergence with the findings of this present study in regards to life experiences. First, in Tinto's model pre-entry attributes included skills and abilities. This would certainly include personal management skills such as handling time and money (see Figure 3, p. 143). Next, Tinto discusses goals and commitments both before and during college. These goals and commitments could include self-determination, a positive attribute associated with life experiences in the present study.

In Tinto's (1975, 1987, & 1993) longitudinal model of institutional departure, students must attain both academic and social integration. Some of the Bible college students indicated that their positive and negative experiences impacted their ability to persist. Students with negative experiences may have encountered difficulty in attaining good social integration.

Thus, the findings of this research regarding life experiences fit within Tinto's (1975, 1987, & 1993) longitudinal model of institutional departure.

Comparison With Tierney and Wright

Tierney's (1992) and Wright and Tierney's (1991) work did not emphasize life experiences because of the critical ethnographic orientation of their study. In fact, in the critical theorist approach used by Tierney (1992), the emphasis is not on individuals but on correcting the system by empowering the participants:

As opposed to a focus on individuals, decision-making, and overt issues of conflict, the critical view takes into account the inherently political natures of decision-making, the overt and covert conflict that exists, and the subjective interests of different constituencies. (p. 38).

Thus, Tierney's (1992) findings do not emphasize individuals and the life experiences that drive them to the same extent as this study.

Comparison With de Anda

de Anda's (1984) model contains six factors, two of which are relevant to discuss on life experiences as espoused by the findings in this study.

First, de Anda's (1984) second factor relates to the degree to which members of ethnic groups can navigate into the mainstream culture through cultural translators and mediators. Students coming into the college environment with issues from their negative life experiences may need the help of a cultural translator, described as "an individual from a minority individual's own ethnic or cultural group who has undergone the dual socialization experience with considerable success." (pp.103-104). If a cultural translator is not available, the help of a mediator or model may help facilitate the process.

The second relevant example from de Anda's (1984) research is the third factor that includes: "[t]he conceptual style and problem-solving approach of the minority individual and their mesh with the prevalent or valued styles of the majority culture." (p. 102). For AI/AN students attending the Bible college, possessing the positive attributes of personal management skills and a strong sense of self-determination were determined to be important to persistence. Clearly, these are values espoused by mainstream higher education as well. Thus, those students who espoused values that mesh well with mainstream higher educational values have a stronger likelihood of persisting beyond their freshman year.

The final concept to be examined in this next section is the influence of institutional culture. This concept was found to be important both for institutional choice as well as persistence.

Institutional Culture

In this study students indicated that institutional culture influence had an impact both on college choice as well and desire to stay in college. This wide-ranging theme embraced such characteristics as the predominant ethnicity of the students, institutional size, positive and negative aspects of programming, faculty characteristics, etc.

Comparison With Astin

Astin (1985b) indicated that higher levels of persistence occur when students are enrolled full-time, live on campus, and are involved in extra-curricular activities. In other words, strong immersion into the campus's culture can be very influential in enhancing retention. The students in this study were in a residential campus in which most students are enrolled full-time and where attempts are made to involve students in extracurricular activities, especially those promoting ministry.

A number of students indicated that they enjoyed the small school atmosphere with the favorable student/teacher ratio that created a "community feeling." The majority of students live in the dorms. Both of these student characteristics are consistent with Astin's Theory of Involvement. Since some residential students expressed concern about the residential staff, this suggests that dorm life can be a influential in retention.

Bean's (1980) research distinguished students by gender. The findings for men and women were somewhat different. For women, Bean determined that the three statistically significant factors related to attrition were institutional commitment, institutional quality, and routinization.

For men, four variables were determined to be statistically significant, including institutional commitment, routinization, satisfaction, and communication (rules). The present study did not attempt to distinguish influences based on gender. However, the total number of distinct factors discovered by Bean to be statistically significant for either men or women was five. They are discussed below in terms of their correlation to the present study involving AI/AN persistence beyond the freshman year.

1. Institutional Commitment. Under close scrutiny some similarities between Bean's (1980) study and this present one emerge. Institutional commitment was determined by the students at the midwestern university to be important to attrition. Students with low institutional commitment were more likely to dropout than those with a higher level of institutional commitment. Some of the AI/AN students who took part in the present study indicated that they chose the Bible college because they felt divinely led to attend the school. As a result of that leading they developed an institutional commitment to the Bible college. Although many of the AI/AN students who participated in the focus groups identified unsatisfactory attributes of the college (i.e. insufficient activities, difficult

relations with residential staff, some faculty who don't validate, etc.) there was still a strong sense of institutional commitment to the College.

2. Routinization. Students at the Bible college discussed their feelings about the routinization of the college sometimes in negative terms, especially when discussing the lack of activities. A number of students complained about the lack of activities and boredom as a point of frustration. Although those students managed to persist in spite of that, it certainly raises the question as to whether other students have left the Bible college because of routinization.

3. Satisfaction. Bean (1980) defined satisfaction as, "The degree to which being a student is viewed positively." (p. 160). For the women in Bean's (1980) study, satisfaction (or the lack thereof) was strongly linked to attrition. However, in the present study, focus group participants did not talk about satisfaction as defined by Bean. Focus group participants at the Bible college talked about their level of satisfaction with the college, their instructors, and with institutional life, including dormitory life and extracurricular activities. The focus group participants did not specifically discuss their level of satisfaction with being college students at AIC as defined by Bean. Because of this, it is difficult to make real comparisons between Bean's students and the AI/AN students on the issue of satisfaction.

4. Academic Quality. The Bible college students did not talk much about the academic quality of the school although several students indicated that they felt the academic demands were lighter than expected. However, there were an

insufficient number of students to infer this as a focus group assertion. By contrast, some students were very vocal about the instructors at the college. They spoke of how instructors who validated students made their experience at the college better, whereas instructors who were culturally untrained or didn't validate students caused institutional dissatisfaction.

5. Communication. For male students in Bean's (1980) study, communication about rules was important to the extent that students who did not feel rules were adequately explained, or properly communicated, were highly prone to dropping out. Bible college students in the focus groups had different concerns with the rules than those in Bean's (1980) study. Some students felt that the college's rules were too strict while others felt that the rules were not strict enough. Discussion in the focus groups did not center on the perception of the meaning of the rules, instead the discussion focused on the rules themselves and whether or not the participants agreed with them. Thus, here it is difficult to make comparisons between findings in Bean's and in this study.

Comparison With Tinto

Tinto's model (1975, 1987, & 1993) deals with institutional departure and therefore has a great deal of common reference to some of the phenomena discussed by the concept of institutional culture in this study. Much of the Tinto model addresses the impact of the institutional environment upon the student and how decisions about institutional departure are formulated. In Tinto's

model, he talks about institutional experiences that have both formal and informal components. Academic performance is a formal part of the academic system and relationships with faculty and staff are tied more to the informal part of the system, although there is some overlap into the formal system as well.

1. Academic System. The AI/AN focus group participants indicated that within the classroom experiences they were more comfortable when they were validated and when the instructors were culturally aligned with the students. Faculty who did not show cultural sensitivity, or who did not validate students, were seen as dysfunctional to the educational process. Non-validating and culturally insensitive faculty tended to be discussed in terms of their formal role as classroom teachers. However, students who lauded individual faculty members often mentioned them in conjunction with informal roles of advising, pastoral counseling, and even nursing home visitation to one of the student's fathers.

This would suggest that the Bible college students wished to see faculty expand beyond their formal role as classroom instructors to that of personal mentors and occasional pastoral caregivers.

2. Social System. Tinto's construct includes not only an academic system but a social system as well. Clearly, the Bible college students noticed the apparent social system as well. Participants spoke much of the campus community and the importance of extra-curricular activities available to them. The social system of the campus community, including other students, was

helpful as a support to students needing friendship as well as emotional and spiritual support in times of distress. Peer group interactions (informal social system) became more formalized when students had to deal with residential staff. The Bible college's residential staff was criticized at times for their strictness and lack of communication skills. This may have been in part because of the difficulty in seeing peers in leadership positions, and the conflict of dual relationships with other students who were also residential staff.

The more formal aspect of the social system includes extracurricular activities found on campus. Students spoke highly of the mission activities but complained about the lack of other opportunities to become involved. The focus group participants complained that boredom and inactivity made leisure time very unsatisfactory. Just as Tinto notes the importance of extracurricular activities in the collegiate experience, the experiences of the AI/AN Bible college students shed confirming light on that aspect of Tinto's theory.

3. Academic Integration. Integration has two components: academic integration and social integration. Tinto's model favors neither one nor the other, but instead suggests both components are essential for students to integrate into the collegiate environment. The AI/AN Bible college students never used such a term as "academic integration" to describe their experiences, but they did indicate the importance of having instructors who were culturally sensitive and validating. Those instructors were seen as helping students to persist.

In the Tinto model (1975, 1987, & 1993) the onus is on the student to integrate into the fabric of the institution. In other words, the "successful" student is the one who is able to acclimate to the institution. Herein lies a fundamental difference between the assertions of Tinto and those of this study. The AI/AN students spoke about the need and appreciation for faculty who validated them and were culturally sensitive to their needs and cultural backgrounds. Rendón (1994) indicated that faculty who validate demonstrate a genuine concern for teaching students and are personable and approachable, treat students equally, structure learning in such a way that the students are empowered, and provide needed help and feedback to the students. In other words, faculty who validate place the student's interests as paramount. According to the exemplars in this study, this is a value system that the AI/AN students in the Bible college would appreciate.

Thus, AI/AN Bible college students may not see academic integration as something to aspire towards in the same way that mainstream college and university students do. Based on this study's data it seems that the AI/AN students expected the college to make academic adjustments to the students instead. This is certainly consistent with Tierney (1991 & 1992) and Tierney and Wright (1991) who contend that institutions should adapt to the needs of AI/AN students instead of expecting the students to adapt to a mainstream model that may violate their cultural heritage.

4. Social Integration. Students seemed reasonably satisfied with the ministry-related activities on campus such as chapel services and mission trips. However, they strongly complained about the lack of additional extra-curricular offerings for them. Many participants suggested that there was far too little to do and that opportunities for closer bonding with other members of the Bible college community were being lost. Focus group participants emphasized that boredom was very detrimental to their college experience. The need for more social integration into the campus is clearly underscored in this study's findings and is consistent with Tinto's (1975, 1987, & 1993) assertion that social integration is an important part of the decision on whether or not a student remains in school or departs from the institution.

Overall, the influence of institutional culture seems to be consistent with Tinto's (1975, 1987, & 1993) model of institutional departure. Out of the four concepts presented in this study, the concept of institutional culture had the strongest resonance with Tinto's model.

Comparison With Tierney and Wright

The influence of institutional culture was the theme providing the largest nexus between the findings of this study and those of Tierney (1992) and Wright and Tierney (1991). Critical ethnographers such as Tierney focus on structures and power, appropriate topics when discussing the influence of the institutional culture. Focus group participants in this study indicated that the

cultural influence of the college was significant to them both before matriculation as well as throughout their freshman year experience. Students cited the presence of other AI/AN students, the small size, student/teacher ratio, and recruitment strategies as having been instrumental in the formulation of a decision to attend the Bible college. Interestingly, Tierney (1992) and Wright and Tierney (1991) present very similar findings in the choice of tribal colleges by many AI/AN students. Tribal colleges are somewhat analogous to the Bible college because they are smaller institutions, have small classes, and recruit in ways with which AI/AN students are comfortable. Perhaps most importantly, tribal colleges are institutions specifically designed for Indian students by Indian educators.

1. Tribal Colleges. A number of educators have lauded tribal colleges for their innovation, vision, and ability to thrive in a financial climate that would frustrate the most innovative team of educators (Hill, 1994; Tierney, 1992; Wright & Tierney, 1991; Houser, 1991; Stein, 1990; Boyer, 1989; Badwound & Tierney, 1988). With all the setbacks they must endure, they still manage to thrive and provide a quality, culturally relevant education for their respective constituencies. The Bible college students seemed to be drawn to the Bible college for many of the same reasons that tribal members are often drawn to their respective tribal colleges: size, student/teacher ratio, Indian population, and cultural relevance.

2. Spiritual Life on Campus. The focus group participants indicated that the chapel services, ministry outreaches, close friendships, and faculty validation

cultural influence of the college was significant to them both before matriculation as well as throughout their freshman year experience. Students cited the presence of other AI/AN students, the small size, student/teacher ratio, and recruitment strategies as having been instrumental in the formulation of a decision to attend the Bible college. Interestingly, Tierney (1992) and Wright and Tierney (1991) present very similar findings in the choice of tribal colleges by many AI/AN students. Tribal colleges are somewhat analogous to the Bible college because they are smaller institutions, have small classes, and recruit in ways with which AI/AN students are comfortable. Perhaps most importantly, tribal colleges are institutions specifically designed for Indian students by Indian educators.

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2. Spiritual Life on Campus. The focus group participants indicated that the chapel services, ministry outreaches, close friendships, and faculty validation

and encouragement helped them to remain there. This parallels how tribal colleges are able to retain many of their students because of their emphasis on preserving and teaching traditional tribal values, including, as Boyer (1989) points out, traditional Native religious beliefs. Boyer (1989) indicates as well that mainline Christian denominations also have ensured themselves a permanent berth on many of the reservations.

The importance of religious values being stressed in schools with a high AI/AN population is vital since many Native people do not see a bifurcation between spiritual values and everyday life. To many of them, there is a seamless integration between the two (Colbert, 1999; Demmert, 1996; Tierney 1992; Wright & Tierney, 1991; Boyer, 1989). Having a school that stresses spirituality as part of its institutional culture seems to be important to both Christian and non-Christian AI/AN students.

3. Close Friendships. Some of the students interviewed in Tierney's (1992) study spoke of having AI/AN friends, roommates, etc. In some cases the friends or roommates were tribal members the student had known back home. The Bible college focus group participants explained the importance of the small school atmosphere and close friendships—often with other AI/AN students. The support of other AI/AN students seems to be helpful in both of these settings. However, Melchior-Walsh (1994) found that the existence of a federated Indian college within a Canadian public university was still insufficient to serve as insulation against socio-cultural alienation. Students attending that institution

had the resources of a homogeneous community within the university and still encountered racism from some of the mainstream population of the university.

Indeed, this seems to be part of the reason that Tierney (1992) and Wright and Tierney (1991) are such strong advocates of tribal colleges where there is a more homogeneous population of students that can provide a nurturing, supportive environment for the students.

4. Faculty Validation. Another major part of positive institutional culture influence is the presence of faculty who validate. Focus group participants identified several faculty members who consistently sought to validate their students through effective teaching, out of class advising, and spiritual counseling. Conversely, students who were not validated or who had experiences with culturally insensitive faculty were more likely to lose their desire to persist as students. Once again, this is a consistent finding with Tierney's research (1991 & 1992). In regard to culturally insensitive faculty Tierney (1991) says, "A lack of understanding in the backgrounds and culture of Indian students is one of the key problems related to Indian student retention." (p. 38). He cites examples of faculty members who made the effort to bridge the distance between their respective cultures and those of their students. Unlike Tinto (1975, 1987, & 1993), Tierney (1991 & 1992) and Wright and Tierney (1991) believe that the institution must undergo systemic reform to be able to serve AI/AN populations better. Tinto's (1975, 1987, & 1993) model advocates the need for students to take the initiative to undergo the rites of passage and properly align

their goals and commitments so that they can successfully navigate the educational pipeline.

The focus group participants showed more affinity towards the call for systemic change than for a model that expects students to adapt to the institution. Focus group participants lauded efforts by faculty to better understand them as students and criticized those who lacked a basic understanding of AI/AN cultures. Moreover, the AI/AN Bible college students seemed to resist attempts to "Anglicize" them. This may explain the perception of some that the rules were too strict. The AI/AN Bible college students clearly wanted to maintain their identity and status as Native people and they appreciated those who understood that.

Comparison With de Anda

Four of the six factors associated with successful bicultural socialization in de Anda's research were found to be relevant to findings in this present study. The first factor is "[t]he degree of overlap or commonality between the two cultures with regard to norms, values, beliefs, perceptions, and the like." (p. 102). Indeed, the closer two cultures are to each other, the easier the socialization process becomes. Focus group participants noted that certain cultural features preferred by AI/AN students were evident at the Bible college. For example, the ethnicity of the students was important for AI/AN students who wished to study with other AI/ANs. The small size of the college, student/teacher

ratio, and recruitment strategies were instrumental in helping students make a decision to attend the Bible college. Once they matriculated they noticed the chapel services, ministry outreaches, close friendships, and faculty validation.

However, students also noticed things about the Bible college that were uncomfortable for students such as culturally insensitive faculty, faculty who didn't validate students, concerns with rules, etc.

The second factor that de Anda (1984) identifies is "[t]he availability of cultural translators, mediators, and models." (p. 102). Faculty who validated students and assisted them with making the transition into college helped greatly in these roles. Participants enthusiastically praised faculty members who took the time to encourage them, help them through tough times in their lives, and counseled them when they felt like quitting. Faculty who did not help in this regard were seen as precluding the process of retention.

The third factor mentioned by de Anda (1984) involves "[t]he amount and type (positive or negative) of corrective feedback provided by each culture regarding attempts to produce normative behavior." (p. 102). Interestingly, some of the students complained about the rules, finding them either too strict or too inconsistently enforced. Some even suggested that the rules were too paternalistic. Many of the complaints centered on residential staff that were often themselves AI/ANs.

The fourth factor involved "[t]he conceptual style and problem-solving approach of the minority individual and their mesh with the prevalent or valued

styles of the majority culture." (p. 102). Focus group participants when detailing life experiences indicated that attributes such as self-determination and personal management skills were essential to successfully navigating through the collegiate experience. These values are also consistent with mainstream higher education.

de Anda's (1984) fifth factor involved "[t]he individual's degree of bilingualism." (p. 102). At the Bible college some of the students do speak their tribal language in addition to English although no formal data are available on the percentages. No data were obtained in the focus groups dealing with bilingualism or the issue of English as a second language. Thus, it would be difficult to infer anything about bilingualism from the present study since none of the students ever mentioned "language" as part of their freshman experience.

The sixth and final factor cited in de Anda's (1984) model is the dissimilarity in physical appearance between individuals in the minority culture and those of the mainstream majority culture. de Anda (1984) cites the similarity in appearance of European immigrants and the American population in their ability to "blend in" and quickly become members of the mainstream culture.

Once again, there is no data available in the present study that details the importance of physical appearance in helping students to adapt to the institutional environment at the Bible college. However as previously mentioned, many students chose the Bible college because of the presence of other AI/AN

students. This suggests that having others who “look like” themselves helps some AI/AN students to more quickly feel at home in their new environment.

The summary contained in the last section briefly presents the overall similarities and differences between the five major orientations found in the literature review and the results of this study.

Summary

Table 26 displayed on the next page is a matrix displaying the key concepts in this study and corresponding findings from the theoretical orientation. Corresponding similarities and differences from the five previously discussed research orientations are shown in relationship to the four key concepts (Family, Spirituality, Life Experiences, and Institutional Culture) uncovered in this study. The key similarities and differences are noted where they exist. Blank squares indicate that there are no analogous findings to be compared with this study.

Table 26

A Matrix Displaying the Key Concepts in this Study and Corresponding Findings from the Theoretical Orientation

	Astin	Bean	Tinto	Wright and Tierney	de Anda	Saggio
Family		Recognizes family circumstances and finances can affect retention	Recognizes the importance of family background in persistence	Notes the importance of the family and its needs on student retention		Family affects institutional choice and retention
Spirituality				Recognizes traditional Native American spirituality as important, sees Christianity as oppressive		Recognizes Christianity as integral religious faith
Life Experiences	Student involvement corresponds to positive attributes from this study					Positive and negative life experiences affect choice of institution and persistence
Institutional Culture	Faculty validation and student involvement are important	Institutional commitment, routinization, and satisfaction affect retention	Expects the student to adapt to the institution	Expects the institution to align itself with the needs of the students	Recognizes the importance of cultural models, translators, and mediators	Institution must adapt to the needs of AI/ANs

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This study has shown how pre-collegiate as well as freshman year experiences of AI/AN students have a significant impact on both institutional choice and retention beyond the freshman year. These experiences form a substratum upon which subsequent decision-making, goal formation, and desire to persist are predicated. The four categories of experiences uncovered in this study may indeed help researchers, practitioners, and policy analysts better understand the process by which AI/AN students negotiate through the pivotal freshman year.

The results of this research show that family, spirituality, life experiences, and institutional culture all have an impact on how freshman AI/AN Bible college students navigate through the educational pipeline. The experiences cited in terms of these four themes had both positive and negative implications on focus group participants who took part in this study. Following are recommendations to assist scholars, practitioners, and policy makers in facilitating an increased likelihood of retention for AI/AN students past their freshman year, particularly those attending small Bible colleges.

Family Influence

Scholars seeking to advance theoretical understanding must be cognizant of how the family's influence affects every aspect of the student's experience at an institution, even before (s)he has decided which institution to attend. As retention theory is advanced, scholars need to develop models that take into account the enormous influence the family has on both enrollment and persistence.

Institutions serving significant numbers of AI/AN students should keep the importance of the family's influence in mind when working with AI/AN students. Practitioners such as student affairs professionals must be aware that when they recruit AI/AN students they must attempt to involve various members of the student's family in the recruitment process since they have a strong influence. This may vary somewhat from tribe to tribe. For example, Bowker (1992) found that for Navajo females, the maternal influence was particularly strong. Therefore, the recruitment strategy must be tribal-sensitive and recruitment personnel must be appropriately trained in dealing with the diversity of the tribes represented at their respective institutions. Recruitment practices should be reviewed periodically as new tribal groups are added to the pool of applicants. Also, recruiters for religious colleges must be especially careful when recruiting students whose parents are not of the same religious persuasion. The recruiters should try to establish common ground with the family members who are of a

different religious background and attempt to establish the merits of the institution they represent, extolling the values that these family members will also appreciate.

Classroom instructors need to be aware that for AI/AN students the family's influence extends to the need for students to intervene in family emergencies, attend funerals, etc. Training should be provided to those educators working with significant numbers of AI/AN students so that they can be sensitive to these students, and accommodate the students' needs, thus helping them to remain in the educational pipeline.

Finally, policy analysts should also be aware of the enormous influence of the family. When funding amounts are established, governmental agencies must be cognizant of the family responsibilities falling on many students--especially students with family financial responsibilities. Since many AI/ANs fall at or near poverty level, expected financial contributions by the family are often quite low. Funding should be adequate enough so that AI/AN students will not be placed in the unenviable position of having to choose between their education and family financial responsibilities.

Spirituality

Those institutions serving a large AI/AN population need to be cognizant of the influence of spirituality on these students. This study showed that spirituality is an integral aspect of the lives of AI/AN Bible college students.

As higher education researchers continue to formulate theories of learning, persistence, student development, etc. involving AI/AN peoples, the important role that spirituality plays needs to be incorporated into new and existing models in order to more accurately reflect reality. Theories such as Astin (1984, 1985a, 1985b), Bean (1980, 1983, & 1990), and Tinto (1975, 1987, & 1993) either do not mention spiritual influence or do not adequately account for it. Tierney (1991, 1992) and Wright and Tierney (1991) do note the importance of spirituality in their writings, although they emphasize traditional Native religions rather than Christianity. Indeed, more research is needed involving the role of Christianity as a spiritual force among AI/AN students.

Practitioners such as student affairs professionals and instructors need to be aware of the influence of spirituality in the role of students so that program development, counseling, etc. can take this into account. Classroom instructors working with significant numbers of AI/AN students should be sensitive as well so that they will be able to reflect course content and their relationships with students accordingly.

Finally, policy analysts must be aware of the importance of spirituality as it affects a student's journey through the higher educational practice. Perhaps more financial aid can be made available for those students wishing to pursue religious vocations at the conclusion of their education. Not only should monies be available for those wishing to serve in traditional Native religious practices, but funding should also be made available for those who belong to Christianity and

other beliefs. This funding could make it possible for these students to pursue clergy positions in churches, parachurch organizations, and chaplain positions in the military, hospitals and prisons.

Life Experiences

Researchers who study AI/AN students in higher education need to continuously stay abreast of psychological and sociological trends that affect AI/AN students. More work on developmental and educational psychology needs to be done to further develop an understanding of how AI/AN students learn and develop affectively within higher education institutions. This would include studying AI/AN students within their home settings before they get to college so a holistic theory of how AI/AN students think about themselves and how they develop intrapersonally can be studied.

Researchers need to understand the ongoing dynamics of the reservation settings that include substance abuse, gang violence, educational settings, etc. Since many of the communities are in constant flux, sociologists need to constantly monitor trends and keep practitioners and policy analysts abreast of these problems. Researchers also need to understand AI/ANs who have healthy self-esteem and strong confidence. In other words, research should not only focus on those with difficulties, but those who have the intrapersonal tools to succeed should also be studied.

Teaching faculty and student affairs professionals need adequate training on how AI/ANs problem solve, deal with self-esteem issues, and how they deal with life experiences. Qualified individuals who will present solutions as well as problems should present workshops in these institutions. Practitioners who work with large AI/AN populations will need regularly updated information as higher education researchers investigate emerging trends. Institutions employing faculty and student affairs professionals who work with AI/AN populations should consider workshops and training before employment begins so that these individuals can be proactive in their understanding and problem-solving skills. Workshops and seminars should focus not only on the problem, but also highlight students who have strong intrapersonal skills and are able to persist. Using these students as models may bring clarity to a difficult issue.

Clearly, part of the role of policy analysts is to help create public policy that will improve funding to investigate AI/AN psychological and sociological problems. Policy analysts need to advocate for remedying these problems at the elementary and secondary education levels so that these problems are not so thoroughly ingrained by the time an AI/AN student reaches college or university age.

Institutional Culture

Researchers need to become more keenly aware of those pre-collegiate institutional culture experiences that impact AI/AN students and present these

findings to the higher educational community so that student affairs professionals and teaching faculty can implement the type of cognitive and affective experiences within the campus environment that will help retain AI/AN students.

Institutions wishing to draw a significant population of AI/AN students should strive to develop excellent faculty that understand the need to validate students (Rendón, 1994) and know how to serve as cultural mediators and translators (de Anda, 1984). Faculty and staff members who aren't culturally trained may preclude retention and so institutions need to hire carefully as well as train those faculty, staff, and administrators to be sensitive to the needs of AI/AN students. Indeed, the type of personnel that will meet those needs will be individuals willing to formulate strong, encouraging friendships with students (Tierney, 1991 & 1992; Wright & Tierney, 1991).

Activities such as chapel services and ministry outreaches had a strong appeal to the spiritual needs of the students. Institutions wishing to draw AI/AN students should recognize the strong spirituality that many prospective students have and create programming that will meet the spiritual needs of the constituency that they wish to draw. However, programming needs must go beyond just religious activities; schools need to develop athletic programs and other extracurricular activities that will increase involvement (Astin, 1984, 1985a, & 1985b) and both formal and informal integration into the social fabric of the institution (Tinto, 1975, 1987, & 1993).

Finally, institutions that will promote a student population that is as homogeneous as possible should develop a strong, central mission statement in its institutional expectations so that the students are not dichotomized by competing philosophies and divergent viewpoints on acceptable moral and cultural practices. This will be especially difficult since many institutions strive for a culturally diverse population even within the AI/AN constituency that they serve. This may be somewhat easier for tribal schools and institutions that draw from a specific tribe or region.

Policy analysts should advocate legislation that will adequately fund institutions that serve AI/AN students to ensure that the type of positive institutional experiences mentioned can continue to take place and be expanded, especially social and extracurricular activities that help integrate students into the institutional fabric. As Tierney (1991 & 1992) and Wright and Tierney (1991) point out, institutions must adapt to the needs of AI/AN students, not the other way around. Major structural changes in institutional administration will cost money and policy analysts need to document the need for legislative change that will help institutions to better meet the needs of these students.

Recommendations For Future Research

This study, while addressing a number of issues, still leaves many questions unanswered. Although research on AI/AN persistence has taken place

in the public sector of higher education (Brown, 1995; Melchior-Walsh, 1994; Benjamin et al., 1993; Boyer, 1989), strikingly little has been done within the private sector of higher education. This section addresses areas of research that either were not covered within the parameters of the study, or that were only touched upon in a very general way.

The Influence of AI/AN Educators

Several students indicated that they chose the Bible college because of the presence of other AI/AN students. However only one student indicated that studying with Native educators was important to her:

. . . I wanted to go to a college where there was Native Americans because during my junior high and high school years I was in a dominantly white high school and junior high, and since I was never raised around Native Americans I thought that this would be a good experience for me . . . to see Native American educators really impressed me.

Since this was the only mention of Native American educators, no general assertion can be made. Nonetheless, Falk and Aitken (1984) and Boyer (1989) strongly argue for their importance. This underdeveloped area needs further

exploration to find out if AI/AN students do make institutional choices and persist better when they have AI/AN educators.

Pre-Collegiate Program Experiences

Two female students cited both an Indian Education program and a summer bridge program, respectively, as having been very helpful pre-collegiate determinants in deciding to pursue a collegiate education. More research needs to be done to see if this is perhaps a more important determinant than what was indicated in the focus groups. Robert and Thompson's (1994) research at Berkeley showed that underrepresented minority students such as AI/ANs benefited from the summer bridge program offered at UC Berkeley. Further investigation into this area is needed to see if AI/AN students truly benefit from summer bridge programs and whether they are viable for Bible colleges.

Bureaucratic Experiences

Some students experienced difficulty navigating the higher educational system. For those who had difficulty getting help from tribal offices or even knowing how to fill out financial aid forms, it was extremely frustrating. However, the number was too small for inclusion in this study's findings. Nevertheless, this type of concern is consistent with the research findings of Padilla (1991) as well as Padilla, Treviño, Gonzalez, and Treviño (1997). Their findings indicate that the acquisition of both theoretical and heuristic knowledge is essential for

successful integration into the collegiate environment. The researchers define theoretical knowledge as propositional knowledge of the type found in books, journals, electronic media, etc. Heuristic knowledge is the type of knowledge needed to navigate around the campus community. This includes "how to" knowledge about financial aid opportunities, college and university customs, what professors to take courses from, etc. In other words, heuristic knowledge is "insider" knowledge. Many AI/AN students may be lacking in heuristic knowledge if they have difficulty with financial aid forms, dealing with tribal and educational agencies, etc.

This may point to the need for additional help for AI/AN students before they arrive on campus. Fortunately, some of the Bible college students indicated that they received help from admissions staff when they had questions they needed to have answered, etc., which may explain why only a few students mentioned these types of concerns as a major concern. Nevertheless, this underdeveloped finding still points to the importance of training students both before and after they come on campus in how to navigate through the complex bureaucratic matrix that students must contend with even at small colleges. Perhaps replicating Padilla et al.'s (1997) study of Chicano/a students on an AI/AN population would be helpful.

Staff and Administrator Validation

Students overwhelmingly cited faculty validation and influence as having been very instrumental in helping them to navigate through the pitfalls of their freshman year. This study has already shown the relevance of those findings to Rendón's (1994) validation model as applied to culturally diverse students vis-à-vis faculty. At the Bible college smaller numbers of students also cited staff and administrators as having been helpful as well. The smaller numbers does not negate the influence of staff and administrators, but it does indicate that in this study students saw the influence of faculty as having been the most important experience of Bible college personnel. Additional research should be done to see how staff and administrators could play a more prominent role in validating AI/AN students.

Since Rendón's (1994) research on validation is predicated on non-traditional students (older students, first generation, ethnic minorities, etc.) it is especially appropriate for use in AI/AN Bible colleges. Her model should be reviewed to see how it can be appropriately applied by administrators and staff as well as faculty. For example, Rendón's (1994) model includes the following recommendations:

- Faculty and staff need to be oriented to the needs and strengths of culturally diverse populations.
- Faculty need to be trained to validate students.
- A validating classroom needs to be fostered.

- A therapeutic learning environment must be fostered both inside and outside the classroom.

These areas require administrative oversight to ensure that they are taking place within the institution. Thus, the role of administrators in validating culturally diverse students is also apparent. Also, research could be conducted to show how Rendón's (1994) model could be extended to include staff involvement in validation as well since they are also mentioned in the model.

Bachelor's Degree Attainment

More institutions serving large populations of AI/AN students should study the experiences that contribute to successful bachelor's degree attainment. This research lends itself well to focus group participation if enough alumni in the area can be encouraged to participate. It would be interesting to compare the experiences of post-freshman persistence with those of bachelor's degree completers to note similarities and differences.

Private Institutions Serving a Significant AI/AN Population

More research needs to be done on how AI/AN students do in private institutions, including how they do in Bible colleges. The Bible college in this study had a very high freshman retention rate at the time of this study (86%). It could serve as a model for other schools that wish to improve their retention rate of AI/AN students. A search of the Integrated Postsecondary Educational

Database (IPED) findings could identify other institutions, especially private ones, that have a large enough AI/AN population to warrant study.

Tribal College Comparisons

Additional qualitative studies could be done at tribal colleges to see if the experiences that preclude or enhance post-freshman retention are similar or different from the ones identified in this study at a Bible college. Generally, qualitative research focuses on localized and particularized data. As such, findings usually can't be generalized, but if a study is replicated in similar settings, then some analytical generalizations may be possible.

Additional Quantitative Research

More quantitative research needs to be conducted among AI/AN students as well since the results of quantitative studies can often be generalized. Astin (1982) lamented the lack of available data on AI/AN students nearly twenty years ago. More recently, researchers still claim that the database is too small to make sound assertions because of the relatively small size of the AI/AN student population (Wells, 1997; Pavel & Padilla, 1993).

Research on Faculty Background

Finally, additional research is needed to examine the backgrounds of faculty, staff, and administrators that serve high AI/AN populations. The research

should examine how much training these individuals have, identify their gaps in knowledge, and suggest ways that courses, workshops, in-services, and service learning can remedy any gaps found. Institutions that claim a high stake in educating AI/AN students must be willing to invest in properly educating their personnel so that they can meet the needs of these students.

Summary

This final chapter has focused on recommendations to scholars, practitioners, and policy analysts on how they can more effectively serve AI/AN students attending Bible colleges. There are many things that can be done to help improve retention rates of these students such as recognizing the importance of the family's role, understanding and encouraging spirituality, better understanding of the developmental aspects of individual AI/ANs, and cultivating an institutional culture that will both encourage enrollment and promote retention.

Much more research must be done to continue understanding how researchers, practitioners, and policy analysts can more effectively serve the AI/AN students. The influence of AI/AN educators, pre-collegiate programs, bureaucratic experiences, staff and administrator validation, bachelor's degree attainment, private institutions serving AI/ANs, tribal college comparisons, additional quantitative research, and faculty backgrounds are all areas that need further investigation.

Conclusion

The AI/AN student population in higher education is a unique group of diverse peoples that have a right to stand alongside other members of the academy and successfully participate on a level playing field. For a long time equitable access has been denied, and even those admitted to the academy have suffered from numerous setbacks that have precluded their successful passage through the educational pipeline. This study has shown that there are AI/AN students who can persist beyond the pivotal freshman year and details how some of them have done it at one institution, a Bible college. It is imperative that other institutions work harder to ensure that AI/AN students will be able to successfully become a part of American higher education. The academy will benefit immeasurably by doing so.

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Wright, B. and Tierney, W.G. (1991). American Indians in higher education. *Change*, 23, (2), 11-18.

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of American Indian and Alaska Native students in higher education. The study will focus on the academic, social, and cultural experiences of these students. The researcher will use a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of these students. The study will be conducted in a qualitative manner and will involve interviews with participants. The data will be analyzed using a grounded theory approach.

The researcher will use a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of American Indian and Alaska Native students in higher education. The study will focus on the academic, social, and cultural experiences of these students. The researcher will use a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of these students. The study will be conducted in a qualitative manner and will involve interviews with participants. The data will be analyzed using a grounded theory approach.

I agree to the terms indicated above and am willing to participate in a study of the above nature. I also certify that I am at least 18 years of age and have the legal capacity to give my consent.

Name of participant (if any) _____

Name of institutional designation (if any) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Questions or concerns regarding this study should be addressed to Dr. Laura E. Barton, Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Arizona State University. She is currently on a one-year leave of absence from the University. She is currently at the College of Education, 100 University Blvd., Tempe, AZ 85287 and can be reached at (480) 965-7500. Her e-mail address is lbarton@asu.edu. You may also contact the Arizona State University Office of Human Subjects Research at (480) 965-7500 for questions regarding this study.

Wright, B. (1997). *The Native American experience in higher education: Learning the cycle of racism II*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 414 100)

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Wright, B. (1997). *The Native American experience in higher education: Learning the cycle of racism V*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 414 103)

Wright, B. (1997). *The Native American experience in higher education: Learning the cycle of racism VI*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 414 104)

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Wright, B. (1997). *The Native American experience in higher education: Learning the cycle of racism VII*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 414 105)

Wright, B. (1997). *The Native American experience in higher education: Learning the cycle of racism VIII*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 414 106)

Wright, B. (1997). *The Native American experience in higher education: Learning the cycle of racism IX*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 414 107)

Wright, B. (1997). *The Native American experience in higher education: Learning the cycle of racism X*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 414 108)

Wright, B. (1997). *The Native American experience in higher education: Learning the cycle of racism XI*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 414 109)

Wright, B. (1997). *The Native American experience in higher education: Learning the cycle of racism XII*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 414 110)

Wright, B. (1997). *The Native American experience in higher education: Learning the cycle of racism XIII*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 414 111)

Wright, B. (1997). *The Native American experience in higher education: Learning the cycle of racism XIV*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 414 112)

Appendix A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I have been made fully aware of the purpose of this research study which is to study retention past the freshman year at American Indian College as part of a doctoral dissertation research project at Arizona State University, Tempe. I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time and for any reason during the course of my role as a focus group participant or interviewee without penalty of any kind. I also understand that participation or non-participation in the study in no way affects my status as a student at American Indian College. I further understand that for purposes of confidentiality and protection my name, and if requested, my tribal designation will be disguised as well. The researcher agrees to maintain my confidentiality during the research and subsequent to the completion of the project in any discussions, presentations, or publications. However, it is understood that participants in the focus group are not bound to maintain confidentiality although they are requested to honor the confidentiality of what takes place in the focus group meeting.

I agree to participate as a focus group participant knowing that the sessions will be audio-taped and transcribed. The researcher agrees to handle all audio-tapes and transcripts with the utmost of discretion to ensure confidentiality until after the completion of the research project. At the completion of the study the audio-tapes will be destroyed. In appreciation for your time and efforts, the researcher further agrees to pay each focus group participant \$15 for their participation in this research project, payable at the conclusion of the focus group meeting.

I agree to the terms included above and am willing to participate as a focus group participant. I also certify that I am at least eighteen years of age and legally able to enter into this agreement.

Name: (Please print) _____

I wish to have my tribal designation(s) disguised Yes _____ No _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

.....

Questions and concerns regarding this study should be addressed to Dr. Laura I. Rendón, Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Arizona State University. She is currently on a one-year leave of absence serving as the Veffie Milstead Jones Endowed Chair in the College of Education at California State University Long Beach and can be reached at (562) 985-5392. Her e-mail address is lrendon@csulb.edu You may also contact the Arizona State University Office of Human Subjects in Research at (480) 965-6788 for questions or concerns about this research study.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I have been made fully aware of the purpose of the research study which is to study the relationship between the leadership style of American Indian College as part of a doctoral dissertation research project at Arizona State University (ASU) under the supervision of my advisor, Dr. [Name], and for my participation in the study. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason during the course of the study. I understand that my participation in the study is not guaranteed and that I may be asked to participate in the study at a later date. I understand that my participation in the study is not guaranteed and that I may be asked to participate in the study at a later date. I understand that my participation in the study is not guaranteed and that I may be asked to participate in the study at a later date.

I agree to participate as a focus group participant, knowing that the session will be audio-taped and that the researcher agrees to handle all data confidentially. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason during the course of the study. I understand that my participation in the study is not guaranteed and that I may be asked to participate in the study at a later date. I understand that my participation in the study is not guaranteed and that I may be asked to participate in the study at a later date.

APPENDIX B

THE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

I agree to the terms outlined above and am willing to participate in a focus group interview. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason during the course of the study. I understand that my participation in the study is not guaranteed and that I may be asked to participate in the study at a later date.

Name (Please Print) _____

I wish to agree my trial design/protocol is approved Yes _____ No _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Questions and concerns regarding the study should be addressed to Dr. [Name], Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Arizona State University. She is currently on a one-year leave of absence serving as the interim director of the Center for Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Arizona State University. Her office is located at [Address] and can be reached at [Phone Number]. Her e-mail address is [Email Address]. You may also contact the Arizona State University Office of Human Subjects Research at (480) 924-0711 for questions or contact about the research study.

Appendix B

THE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. How did you make your decision to select AIC for your formal education?
2. Thinking back before you enrolled at AIC, who or what helped you to enroll and succeed in college? (Probe for significant people in student lives, positive academic experiences and academic preparation received in prior schooling. Allow students to elaborate on these experiences.)
3. Thinking back to before you enrolled at AIC, who or what made it difficult for you to enroll and succeed in college? (Probe for people who may have exerted a negative influence in student lives, difficult academic experiences, poor academic preparation received in prior schooling. Allow students to elaborate on these experiences.)
4. Within your personal and family life, who or what has really helped you to make it through the first year of college here at AIC? (Probe for significant influences in the student's personal life. Allow students to elaborate.)
5. With your personal and family life, who or what has made it really difficult for you to succeed the first year of college here at AIC? (Probe for negative influences in the student's personal life. Allow students to elaborate.)
6. Think about the faculty, staff, administration, and programs here at AIC. Can you identify any person or special program that has really helped you to succeed during your first year of college? Explain the positive influence of the person/program. (Note: Assist students to elaborate on the specific details of

what the person or program did to exert a positive influence. Do not ask for names of faculty, staff, or administrators. These should remain confidential.)

7. Think about the faculty, staff, administration, and programs here at AIC. Who or what has made it difficult for you to succeed during your first year of college?

Explain the negative influence of the person/program. (Note: Assist students to elaborate on the specific details of what the person or program did to exert a positive influence. Do not ask for names of faculty, staff, or administrators.

These should remain confidential.)

8. In your opinion, why do some students succeed here at AIC while others don't?
9. If you were in charge of AIC, what would you do to help students like you succeed during their first year of college? (Probe for specific ideas; let students elaborate.)

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Joseph John Saggio was born in Dayton, Ohio on April 9, 1959. He is the son of Joseph Charles and Shirley Ann Saggio. He graduated from Cabrillo Senior High School in Lompoc, California in 1977 after also attending SHAPE American High School in Belgium. He obtained his undergraduate education at California State University, Fresno where he graduated in 1981 *cum laude* with a B.A. in Speech Communication. He was licensed as a minister in the Assemblies of God in 1982 and served for three years as associate pastor at First Assembly of God in Palmdale, California. He was ordained to the ministry in the Assemblies of God in 1984. During that time he also obtained an M.A. in Religion (Contemporary Ministries) from Azusa Pacific University in Azusa, California in 1985. He served as pastor of Mountain Christian Life Church in Crestline from 1986-1993 in Crestline, California. Shortly thereafter, he obtained his M.A. in Religion (Biblical Studies) from Vanguard University of Southern California in Costa Mesa, California in May 1994. In 1994 he was appointed as Academic Dean at American Indian College of the Assemblies of God in Phoenix, Arizona where he is currently on a one-year leave of absence. He has taught courses in Public Speaking, Bible, Ministry, as well as the Freshman Experience Seminar. He entered the doctoral program in Higher/Postsecondary Education at Arizona State University in the Fall of 1995. He is the author of approximately twenty articles published in various religious publications. His wife Nancy, whom he married in 1984, is a licensed professional counselor and college instructor. They have two daughters: Rachelle Lynn and Leah Nicole. His research interests include New Testament Issues, Pastoral Theology, Biblical Backgrounds, Church History, Multi-cultural issues in Higher Education, American Indian Higher Education, and Qualitative Research in Education.

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