

ADJUSTMENT, AUTONOMY, AND CULTURAL IDENTITY OF NATIVE
AMERICAN STUDENTS ATTENDING INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

By

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the relationships among cultural identity, adjustment, and autonomy among Native American college students. Participants consisted of 72 (56 women, 15 men) students recruited from a Native American tribe. In an online study, they completed measures of adjustment (Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire), autonomy (a subscale of the Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being), and cultural identity (People of Color Racial Identity Attitude Scale). This study found that Native American students who rated themselves higher on the internalization (bicultural identity) subscale had higher academic adjustment, social adjustment, and were more attached to their institution of higher education. Scores on the internalization subscale were not related to autonomy. Results are discussed in terms of the implications for Native Americans at institutions of higher education and the need for more research.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

American Indian or Alaskan Native refers to “a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment” (Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity, 1997, p. 58789). Native American is used to refer to people of indigenous descent. Generally both terms are used interchangeably based on personal preference (Horse, 2005). A person’s identification as a Native American is highly personal and involves the way an individual feels about him or herself and the experience that person has as a Native American (Horse, 2005).

“According to the 2010 Census, 5.2 million people in the United States identified as American Indian and Alaska Native, either alone or in combination with one or more other races” (Norris, Vines, & Hoeffel, 2012, p. 1). Therefore, only 1.7% of the United States population identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native (Norris et al., 2012). From 2011 to 2012, only 252,314 American Indian/Alaskan Natives were enrolled at an institution of higher education (Ginder & Kelly-Reid, 2013). This represents less than 1% of students enrolled at institutions of higher education. This statistic exemplifies the underrepresentation of Native American students in postsecondary education. Further, it points to the importance of conducting research specifically focused on Native American students.

Previous research involving Native American students at institutions of higher education has largely focused on factors that promote persistence in these students (e.g.,

Flynn, Olson, & Yellig, 2014; Thompson, Johnson-Jennings, & Nitzarim, 2013). The isolation and alienation Native American students feel when entering institutions of higher education have been documented (Huffman, 2001). Therefore, there is the need for persistence research on Native American students. One explanation offered for the attrition of Native American students is that of cultural conflict. Researchers examining Native American students at institutions of higher education hypothesize that the differences between Native American cultures and the mainstream culture are especially problematic for Native American students (Cajete, 1999; Huffman, 2003). Native American values, such as collectivism, present time orientation, and behaviors that communicate respect among all members (e.g., not being involved in others' personal affairs), are in direct contrast with the mainstream culture (Cajete, 1999). These values are essential to many Native American students' cultural identity. Therefore, not only are Native American students struggling to adjust to new environments, peers, and expectations, but they also experience difficulties with their identity.

The research on persistence in Native American students at institutions of higher education has identified factors that assist these students as they pursue their education (e.g., Flynn et al., 2014; Thompson et al., 2013). Most notable, however, is how some Native American students have been able to use cultural factors, such as the desire to contribute to the Native American community, to persist at institutions of higher education (Drywater-Whitekiller, 2010). Thus, the use of cultural factors has resulted in resiliency for some Native American students (Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003; Wexler & Burke, 2011).

Cultural factors, such as family connectedness, allow Native American students to withstand cultural differences and academic demands, as well as to persist until degree completion. Although cultural factors help Native American students persist, these factors also may hinder them. For example, Native American students may have difficulties when encountering the mainstream culture because their own cultural background is vastly different. This suggests that the cultural discrepancy between Native American culture and the mainstream culture may cause problems for Native American students in academic, social, and personal-emotional adjustment as well as with their attachment to the institution of higher education. Thus, their ability to navigate and adapt in the mainstream culture may be hindered by cultural factors associated with being Native American students.

The research on adjustment in Native American students at institutions of higher education is scarce. Studies that are available have mainly focused on ethnic identity and its relationship to the adjustment of Native American students (Huffman, 2001; Watson, 2009). This follows the assumption that ethnic identity and the cultural factors that accompany that identity are associated with adjustment. Huffman (2001) and Watson (2009) found that those who have a more integrative (i.e., bicultural) identity fare better than those who identify as strictly traditional.

The current study hypothesized that to become well adjusted in academic, social, and personal-emotional areas, and to feel connected to the university environment, Native American students would have a cultural identity that is bicultural. Specifically, Native American students who have a higher bicultural or integrative identity will have higher

levels of adjustment than those with other ethnic identities. Because it has been shown in previous research that those who have a higher integration of both their traditional culture and mainstream culture have become better adjusted than those who do not (Huffman, 2001; Watson, 2009), this study looked at how this might occur.

One theory about how this occurs is that Native American students go through a process in which they come to a decision about how their culture will affect them while at an institution of higher education (Flynn et al., 2014; Huffman, 2001). Native American students who are bicultural have been found to have a more positive adjustment than those with other ethnic identities (Watson, 2009). Their ability to be partially autonomous, both from the mainstream setting and from their own cultural background, may contribute to better adjustment because they can cross cultural bounds more easily. Being more autonomous, in this study, did not refer to fully disconnecting from Native American culture; rather, it referred to students being more selective in the way Native American values affected them. The assumption of this study was that the more awareness Native American students had of their own culture and the mainstream culture, the better they integrated the two. Thus, being autonomous would allow Native American students to integrate appropriate social, emotional, and academic strategies of the mainstream culture into their traditional ethnic identity, and this may result in better adjustment.

Because the qualitative technique is commonly used to gather data from the Native American population, it is difficult to replicate. Further, it becomes more difficult to create a theoretical framework around adjustment when there is a lack of empirical

data focused specifically on Native American students, a lack of operationally defined concepts, and a lack of valid measures that can reliably be used with Native American students attending postsecondary education.

For these reasons, this study used quantitative data to study the overall adjustment in Native American students at institutions of higher education. Specifically, I examined the degree to which biculturalism and the academic, social, and personal-emotional adjustment, and the attachment to the institution of higher education of Native American students were related. I then examined the degree to which autonomy, biculturalism, and other ethnic identities were related.

Before considering adjustment, it is important to review the cultural background Native American students bring with them to institutions of higher education. This will provide a frame of reference when discussing cultural dissonance and how this dissonance leads to the decision to become autonomous or to remain independent from the mainstream culture of higher education institutions the Native American students are attending.

Native American Culture

When discussing Native American culture, it is important to point out that Native Americans are affiliated with their own federally recognized tribe(s), and each tribe is unique. There are 566 federally recognized Indian tribes and about 326 federally recognized American Indian Reservations (U.S. Department of the Interior: Indian Affairs, 2015). Because tribal cultures are unique and an individual's adherence and affiliation to tribes vary, it is difficult to generalize about American Indian students

(Guardia & Evans, 2008). Some commonalities in worldview, however, can be seen cross-culturally (Guardia & Evans, 2008).

Native American students show their cultural identity, respect for their culture, knowledge of their culture, and their connection to each other through their adherence to “Indian behaviors” (Burk, 2007). For Native Americans there are specific levels of ethnic identity that are used to describe the adherence a person has to his or her native culture. Building off the works of others (Herring, 1996; LaFromboise, Trimble, & Mohatt, 1990), M. T. Garrett and Pichette (2000) identified the following ethnic identities: traditional, marginal, bicultural, assimilated, and pantraditional.

M. T. Garrett and Pichette (2000) described the traditional, marginal, bicultural, pantraditional, and assimilated identities. Native Americans who are considered “traditional,” “may or may not speak English, but generally speak and think in their native language; hold only traditional values and beliefs and practice only traditional tribal customs and methods of worship” (p. 6). Helms (2010) also referred to this as immersion/resistance. The “marginal” identification refers to Native Americans who “may speak both the native language and English; may not, however, fully accept the cultural heritage and practices of their tribal group nor fully identify with mainstream cultural values and behaviors” (p. 6).

M. T. Garrett and Pichette (2000) described “bicultural” individuals as being accepted in both mainstream culture and in their tribal cultures. Helms (2010) also referred to this as individuals who scored higher on the internalization subscale. These individuals also are knowledgeable of, and can effectively use, the values and behaviors

of both cultures. An “assimilated” Native American only embraces and participates in the mainstream culture. Helms (2010) referred to these individuals as people who scored higher on the conformity subscale. In addition to these four identifications, M. T. Garrett and Pichette (2000) added “pantraditional,” and this describes an individual who is characterized as an assimilated American Indian who wishes to reconnect and reconfirm cultural ties. Pantraditional individuals can be characterized as Native Americans who have previously separated from their Native culture of origin or those who were not raised in their culture (M. T. Garrett & Pichette, 2000). Consequently, pantraditional individuals seek to reconnect with their cultural values and people. These levels are a general reference to the continuum of cultural identification a person may have with the Native American culture. It is important to note that different terminology is used when talking about Native American ethnic identities. Some terms to be aware of are: integrative or internalization (biculturalism); separation, immersion/resistance, immersion-emersion, and American Indian cultural identification (traditional); dissonance (marginalization); and conformity or European-American identification (assimilation).

Traditional values, appropriate behaviors, modes of communication, and beliefs are often learned in childhood (M. T. Garrett & Pichette, 2000). This occurs through enculturation. The core values learned in enculturation for Native American people consist of respecting the differences among each other, quietness, patience, collectivism, feeling a part of the group, nonverbal orientation, present time orientation, and a holistic

orientation (Cajete, 1999). It is essential to have an in depth understanding of these values to understand Native American students' worldview.

Collectivism, family, and tribes. Native American culture consists of keeping harmony and balance, especially within the community and with family. Because of the emphasis on interdependence, many Native American cultural values are centered on maintaining community and creating harmony and respect among its members.

Native American tribal members perceive themselves as part of a whole rather than individuals, and this results in communities that are highly interconnected (J. T. Garrett & Garrett, 1994). The tribe is important in shaping the cultural identity of Native American students by providing cultural norms. For example, in many tribes, achievements of the group are valued more than those of individual members (Burk, 2007; Gilgun, 2002), and participating in behaviors, such as bragging, are frowned upon (J. T. Garrett & Garrett, 1994). Because Native American culture promotes oneness, the family is highly regarded (M. W. Garrett, 1995).

Native Americans have a broader definition of family than that of mainstream culture (M. W. Garrett, 1995). Pewewardy (2002) noted that many Native American students see their "family as an extension of themselves" (p. 33). M. W. Garrett (1995) further noted that the family commonly operates as an extended family that shares responsibilities and contributes to the child rearing of other family members.

Pewewardy (2002) noted that because Native American students are highly interdependent, both with family and the tribal community, these students tend to be field dependent. He concluded that the students tend to be holistic learners, intuitive, and

often listen to others, especially elders, before making decisions. Many verbal and nonverbal behaviors are used to communicate respect in these social dynamics.

Communication. J. T. Garrett and Garrett (1994) noted that traditionally raised Native American students follow communicative rules that are often used to show respect toward others. Thus, the culture emphasizes specific nonverbal communication, such as not engaging in direct eye contact, especially with elders and authority figures. They further noted that Native American students also are not encouraged to ask questions or analyze context aloud. The students are encouraged, however, to observe, actively listen, and practice patience. Consequently, Native American students are prone to being soft spoken and take more time to think and respond to situations (J. T. Garrett & Garrett, 1994). Native American students also tend to remain silent in situations that are uncomfortable or when they are experiencing anger (Cajete, 1999).

Social. A major theme in Native American culture is having a responsibility to the welfare of others (Gilgun, 2002). That does not include, however, interference with others' lives (M. W. Garrett, 1995). According to M. W. Garrett (1995), "the true significance of a Native American approach to relationships lies in the balance struck between an all-encompassing sense of belonging with one's people and the practice of noninterference" (p. 190). Specifically, he noted that noninterference is an act of caring and respecting a person's choice and right to self-determination.

Native American students also have a tendency to exercise caution in new and unfamiliar social situations and personal encounters (Cajete, 1999). These students may become silent and may present with "the stereotypical portrayal of a 'stoic Indian'"

(Cajete, 1999, p. 143). He noted that this is likely due to the fear of how Native American students think their behaviors and thoughts will be appraised by others.

Native American students often use humor in their social interactions. J. T. Garrett and Garrett (1994) described the importance of humor for Native American people. J. T. Garrett and Garrett (1994) noted that laughter, for Native American students, creates and maintains connectedness. Further, laughter also is considered a healing practice among Native Americans. Native American people have a distinct sense of humor. J. T. Garrett and Garrett (1994) described Native Americans as having a dry wit and using exaggeration quite often. Further, it is common for Native Americans to subject themselves to the group to be teased, and this serves as a way to keep people humble and connected.

Consequences of Enculturation

Many Native American cultural values and behaviors are in direct opposition to mainstream cultural values. For example, Native American values are rooted in collectivism, and the wellbeing, and the enhancement of the community (Herring, 1996). Mainstream values are based on individualism with an emphasis on individual responsibility, wellbeing, and self-actualization (Herring, 1996). This cultural conflict is a particular risk factor that affects Native American college students, and it can even lead to students discontinuing their educational endeavors (Huffman, 2001). In contrast, Native American cultural values can assist Native American students in persisting at institutions of higher education demonstrating the resilience of Native American students (Wexler & Burke, 2011).

The development of resiliency is instrumental in the persistence of American Indian students at institutions of higher education. The cultural differences, however, still create unique problems for these students. Native American students may successfully persist in their educational endeavors, but cultural discontinuity may be a particular risk factor for nonpersistence and maladjustment.

Research on Persistence in Native American Students

Research that has examined persistence in Native American students suggests that enculturation (defined as “the process by which individuals learn their home culture” [Little Soldier, 1985, p. 185]) affects these students in two distinct ways (e.g., Flynn, Duncan, & Jorgensen, 2012; Huffman, 2001). In a qualitative study, Flynn et al. (2012) found that some Native American students are able to employ cultural factors, such as using their Native American identity as a source of pride in accomplishments, to persist and be resilient. The transculturation hypothesis suggests that minority populations often use their culture as an asset (Lewin, 1948; as cited by Huffman, 2001). Native American students demonstrate this by using their cultural identity to foster confidence, purpose, and self-worth (Huffman, 2001). For example, in a qualitative study, Huffman (2001) found that Native American students used their cultural background to obtain strength and confidence. Further, in a quantitative study, Thompson et al. (2013) found that factors, such as the support from their immediate caregivers and the need to contribute to their community, positively related to persistence intentions. Specifically, the more support Native American students received from primary caregivers and the higher perceived value of their education to the needs of their community, the higher persistence

intentions. Therefore, cultural factors can be hypothesized as a means through which resiliency is cultivated for Native American students at institutions of higher education.

The second effect that enculturation has on Native American students is that it may hinder their experience at institutions of higher education. In a qualitative study, Huffman (2001) found that cultural factors proved to be barriers between Native American students and the mainstream culture. These barriers resulted in alienation and loneliness for the Native American students. The theory of cultural conflict is offered to describe the barrier between Native American culture and mainstream culture. The cultural conflict theory posits that differences in cultural values, behaviors, and political status between Native American students and the mainstream culture result in difficulties for Native American students (Huffman, 2003). According to this theory, when chronic inconsistencies are present between the internal values of Native American students and the external values of mainstream students, the discontinuity can lead to an unhealthy self-concept and social maladjustment (Cajete, 1999). Some culturally traditional students may find the cultural discrepancy between their culture and mainstream culture too difficult to overcome (Huffman, 2001). He further noted that this might result in Native American students choosing to exit early from higher education. It is hypothesized that one of the greatest challenges facing Native American students is the crossing of cultural boundaries and interacting in both cultures successfully and simultaneously (M. W. Garrett, 1995).

The development of resiliency is instrumental in the persistence of American Indian students at institutions of higher education. The cultural differences, however,

still create unique problems for these students. Native American students may successfully persist in their educational endeavors, but cultural discontinuity may be a particular risk factor for nonpersistence and maladjustment. Both quantitative and qualitative research have identified particular factors that may contribute to the persistence or nonpersistence of Native American students.

Resiliency Factors and Risk Factors

Family and community factors. Family support is an instrumental factor that assists Native American students in their educational pursuits at institutions of higher education. For example, some studies have found that family support is highly instrumental in the completion of college in Native American students, specifically, through emotional support (e.g., Bingham, Adolpho, Jackson, & Alexitch, 2014).

The home communities of Native American students, both directly and indirectly, affect them in their persistence at institutions of higher education. In a quantitative study, Thompson et al. (2013) found that having connections to the Native American community was positively correlated to the persistence intentions of Native American students. They also found that feelings of alienation and separation were negatively correlated with persistence intentions in Native American students. Qualitative studies have found that Native American students' need to give back to the community is a significant resiliency factor, and, sometimes, this may be a primary reason they are attending institutions of higher education (Drywater-Whitekiller, 2010; Wexler & Burke, 2011). Other qualitative studies have found that escaping negative factors, such as drug abuse and alcoholism in their home communities, motivated students to persist at

institutions of higher education (Flynn et al., 2014; Jackson et al., 2003; Wexler & Burke, 2011).

Research also suggests that familial and community factors can be a hindrance to Native American students while attending institutions of higher education (Flynn et al., 2014; Jackson et al., 2003). For example, qualitative studies suggest that Native American students experience both supportive and negative interactions with family members in regards to continuing their education and acculturating to the mainstream culture (Flynn et al., 2014; Jackson et al., 2003). This is referred to as paradoxical cultural pressure in which students receive support for attending institutions of higher education (Jackson et al., 2003). Native American students also feel, however, as though they are perceived as a “sell out” for valuing educational and vocational success similar to that of the mainstream culture (Jackson et al., 2003). Additionally, Native American students reported that missing important cultural events, neglecting familial responsibilities, and the absence of other Native Americans at institutions of higher education, make it more difficult to persist (Flynn et al., 2012).

The current research literature emphasizes the importance of family and community support for Native American students while attending institutions of higher education. This emphasis is in alignment with the collectivist orientation many Native American students value. The research on family and community factors for persistence in Native American students also supports the assumption of these factors having both positive and negative consequences (e.g., Jackson et al., 2003).

Academic and institutions of higher education factors. In a quantitative study, the quality of relationships that existed between Native American students and the faculty members at institutions of higher education was found to be an instrumental predictor of academic learning (Lundberg, 2007). Further, Guillory and Wolverton (2008) found that quality relationships between Native American students and faculty members led students to perceive the institution of higher education to be more receptive of them. Jackson and Smith (2001) found that the quality of relationships between faculty and Native American students depended on “how well faculty knew the participants, how personable the faculty were, and size of classes” (p. 38). Because the existence of these relationships is of great importance, the absence of them can be equally detrimental to the success of Native American students. For example, when these relationships are not present between the faculty and Native American students at institutions of higher education, academic isolation can occur (Buckley, 1997).

In a quantitative study, Tate and Schwartz (1993) surveyed 84 Native American social work majors and found that some students believed their obligations to their family were not understood by the faculty nor did they understand their academic needs. Buckley (1997) found similar results in a qualitative study in which Native American students reported having fewer courses that were specific to their cultural career needs than those of their peers. Further, some students reported that the faculty was unfamiliar with their cultural orientations and was, therefore, unable to support the ideas of Native American students (Buckley, 1997). Other factors have been identified in quantitative studies that seem to aid Native American students at institutions of higher education.

Students who rated themselves higher on overall academic ability, for example, rated themselves higher in the following areas: motivation to achieve, confidence in intellectual ability, mathematical ability, and expectancy for success at the postsecondary level (House, 2001).

Okagaki, Helling, and Bingham (2009) found that Native American students, when compared to mainstream students, placed greater importance on the instrumental value of education. Additionally, Native American students with higher bicultural efficacy were found to have a stronger academic identity and a higher belief in the necessity of higher education than those with lower bicultural efficacy (Okagaki et al., 2009).

Qualitative research has identified several factors that negatively impact the success of Native American students; one of the most basic issues, however, is how these students, compared to their peers, are unfamiliar with higher education objectives and the common aspects that govern these institutions (Schmidt & Akande, 2011; Wexler & Burke, 2011). For example, some Native American students reported being unaware of class registration policies and that courses were only attended during short time frames versus traditional secondary education hours (Wexler & Burke, 2011). Wexler and Burke (2011) also found that some Native American students reported a lack of “traditional” background education (e.g., unfamiliar with classic literature, such as *Romeo and Juliet*).

Other qualitative studies found that institutions of higher education would be more successful if they used different educational techniques, such as oral-based teaching and putting more emphasis on group experiences (Schmidt & Akande, 2011). Flynn et

al. (2012) found that some Native American students reported being unfamiliar with the demanding workload of postsecondary education compared to that of secondary education. Further, they found that some Native American students reported having a lack of effective study skills and lacked an understanding of functioning as a student, in general. Lastly, Native American students may perceive members of the mainstream culture as making assumption about them based on their misunderstanding of American Indian behaviors (e.g., lack of eye contact, a person speaking on behalf of the Native American student, obligations to ceremonies or rituals) (Flynn et al., 2014). For example, Native American students who avoid or do not maintain eye contact could be mistaken as students who lacks self-confidence (Flynn et al., 2014).

Social factors. The cultural conflict between the mainstream culture and Native American culture creates a hindrance in relationship formation between those in the mainstream and Native American students. Qualitative studies have found that, for Native American students, not relating to their peers was the critical factor in their continued isolation (Huffman, 2001; Jackson et al., 2003). Because of their different upbringing, Native American students are accustomed to being in the presence of those who are similar to themselves (Huffman, 2001; Jackson et al., 2003), which may hinder their relationships and comfort with those in the mainstream setting. Jackson et al. (2003) found that those reared on a reservation were accustomed to the unique ways of talking and ways of behaving that are present in Native American communities; this made it difficult for Native American students to fit in with their peers. Further, studies

have found that Native American students often feel alienated, isolated, lonely, and discriminated against (Flynn et al., 2014; Huffman, 2001).

Flynn et al. (2012) found that Native American students reported social connection as a significant factor in their experiences at institutions of higher education; for some, the use of cultural centers enabled them to become part of a social group. Guillory and Wolverton (2008) found similar results in which Native American students reported the cultural center allowed them to connect with other Native American students and enabled them to build a community that mirrored that of their home communities. The Native American students became even more resilient when students from the mainstream culture encouraged and involved them in study sessions (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). Further, in a quantitative study, Lundberg (2014) found that the perceived institutional support Native American students felt for their social, academic, and nonacademic obligations contributed to their interpersonal development. This emphasizes the importance of faculty, peer, and institutional support for Native American students' success in higher education.

The current review suggests that factors, such as family and community support, quality relationships with faculty and peers, institution factors, and the availability of cultural centers, can influence the persistence of Native American students (e.g., Flynn et al., 2012, 2014; Jackson et al., 2003). Discussing the literature of persistence in Native American students is important because these factors may facilitate overall adjustment. There is no specific mention of overall adjustment, however, in the persistence literature. There are, however, some studies that have quantitatively studied the overall adjustment

of Native American students and some qualitative studies that have addressed adjustment in their findings. It is important to be familiar with the present research as it provides information about the patterns that have emerged concerning adjustment and the variables studied in conjunction with overall adjustment (Okagaki et al., 2009).

Adjustment

Native American students are not alone in transitioning and adjusting to institutions of higher education. Many students may experience difficulties when going through the process of transitioning. American Indian students, however, are faced with cultural issues that may affect the adjustment of these students. For example, in a quantitative study, Patterson, VanZile-Tamsen, Black, Billiot, and Tovar (2013) employed a sample size of 139,176 students attending postsecondary institutions, which included individuals who identified their ethnicity as White; African American; Hispanic; Asian or Pacific Islander; Native American, Alaskan Native, or Native Hawaiian; biracial or multicultural; and other or unknown. Native American, Alaskan Native, or Native Hawaiian comprised 2,098 members of the sample (Patterson et al., 2013). Patterson et al. (2013) found that Native American/Alaskan Native/Native Hawaiian students and Asian students' overall health ratings were statistically lower than those of African American students and Caucasian students. These researchers also found that American Indian/Alaskan Native/Native Hawaiian students indicated greater rates of health issues in the past 12 months. Specifically, this group of students reported more instances, on average, of problems such as colds, chronic health problems, and chronic pain. Compared to the other ethnic groups in the study, Native American/Alaskan

Native/Native Hawaiian women reported higher rates of health issues (Patterson et al., 2013).

The findings of Patterson et al. (2013) serve as an example of the type of issues that Native American students may face while attending postsecondary institutions. Native American health issues, such as increased alcohol use, drug induced deaths (for women), and suicides, are well known (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011). Little quantitative research, however, specifically focused on the Native American student population (Patterson et al., 2013). One explanation for this lack of data may be that Native American students are often included within another category because they comprise such a small percentage of those enrolled in college (Patterson et al., 2013). Therefore, their data may not be analyzed separately. As a result, little quantitative research focuses specifically on American Indian students. This is especially evident in studies that address the adaptation of these students in the areas of academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and their connection and belongingness to the institution.

Academic adjustment. Academic adjustment, as described by Watson (2009), is “the degree to which the student is able to cope with the educational demands associated with college” (p. 128). Previous research suggests that higher ratings on the cultural identity confusion scale is negatively correlated with Native American students’ ability to adjust to the academic demands of institutions of higher education (Watson, 2009). Huffman (2003) found that students who were raised on reservations reported more academic difficulty than those who were not raised on reservations. Huffman (2003)

found that grade point average (GPA), however, was equivalent between reservation and nonreservation-reared Native American students. This suggests that the perception of difficulty is fundamentally different between reservation and nonreservation-reared students (Huffman, 2003).

Watson (2009) conducted a quantitative study with a sample of 76 Native American students. Using regression analyses, he found that students who were higher on the internalization subscale had higher levels of academic adjustment. Internalization is defined as the student's ability to conceptualize and accept a positive Native American identity, while also embracing and incorporating some aspects of the mainstream culture of the higher education institution (Watson, 2009). He also found reported rates of academic adjustment were lower when the students were higher on the racial identity subscale of dissonance. Dissonance is defined as the confusion that occurs when the student becomes aware internally of the different treatment he or she is experiencing in response to his or her race (Watson, 2009). Essentially, the cultural differences between Native American students and their peers are being brought to consciousness (Watson, 2009). This different treatment Native American students perceive is not necessarily due to race, but may be due to culturally appropriate behaviors that differ between Native American students and mainstream students. The higher students rated themselves on the internalization cultural identity, the better their academic adjustment (Watson, 2009), and this pattern was evident in multiple areas of adjustment.

Social adjustment. “Social adjustment reflects the degree to which students have integrated themselves into the social structures of university residencies and the broader

university, are taking part in campus activities, meeting new people and making friends, as opposed to experiencing difficulties with loneliness or missing of family” (Credé & Niehorster, 2012, p. 135). When using regression analyses, Huffman (2003) found that higher rates of personal-social difficulties were significantly related to higher rates of difficulty with the transition to college for Native American students. Watson (2009) found Native American students who identified more with the dissonance racial identity reported lower social adjustment, and students identifying more with the internalization identity reported higher levels of social adjustment. Cultural identity, according to the findings of Huffman (2001) and Watson (2009), is an influential factor in the social adjustment of Native American college students at institutions of higher education. Cultural identity also may be related to the personal and emotional adjustment of Native American students. There is little quantitative research, however, conducted in this area.

Personal and emotional adjustment. Personal and emotional adjustment is focused on “a student’s intrapsychic state during his or her adjustment to college, and the degree to which he or she is experiencing general psychological distress and any concomitant somatic problems” (Baker & Siryk, 1999, p. 15). According to Baker and Siryk (1984), psychological factors (e.g., stress and anxiety), and physical factors (e.g., sleepiness) are potential reactions to the general experience students have at institutions of higher education. Watson’s (2009) quantitative study suggests these personal and emotional reactions are a consequence of Native American students’ cultural identification. He found that Native American students who scored higher on the identity of dissonance or immersion-emersion subscale (defined as the tendency to depart from

the mainstream culture and immerse themselves in their Native American culture) scored lower on personal-emotional adjustment. Specifically, those who withdraw into their Native American culture and those who experienced “confusion caused by racial dynamics being brought to consciousness” had lower personal-emotional adjustment (Watson, 2009, p. 129). Identity confusion has been found to be a source of stress for Native American students, and some quantitative studies have shown other psychological (Cole et al., 2013) and physical maladjustments (Patterson et al., 2013) in this population.

In a quantitative study of 156 self-identified Native American students, Cole et al. (2013) explored the relationship between depression and suicidal ideation using perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness as separate mediators. The results found that perceived burdensomeness was a significant predictor of suicidal ideation. Further analysis indicated the relationship between symptoms of depression and suicidal ideation was significantly mediated through perceived burdensomeness. Thwarted belongingness was not a significant mediator of depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation. This suggests that Native American college students who reported higher rates of depressive symptoms reported higher levels of perceived burdensomeness and, in turn, this could lead to elevated levels of reported suicidal ideation (Cole et al., 2013). According to the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC, 2013), the suicide rate was considerably higher for Native Americans/Alaskan Natives across all ages in the U.S. population. Further, the SPRC (2013) noted that for American Indians/Alaskan Natives in the age range of 10 to 24 years old, suicide was the second leading cause of death. This makes depression an especially troublesome maladaptation among Native

American students. Native American students who value collectivism and interdependence may be especially susceptible to perceived burdensomeness, which affects their personal adjustment.

Ward and Ridolfo (2011) studied Native American students' tobacco, alcohol, and illegal drug use. When compared to the general college population (Wechsler et al., 1994, 2002; as cited by Ward & Ridolfo, 2011), Native American college students' alcohol use was similar to their peers. When Native American students were compared to their peers (Emmons et al., 1998; as cited by Ward & Ridolfo, 2011), Ward and Ridolfo (2011) found that they were classified as current smokers at a higher rate. Further, when compared to non-Native American students, Native American students had a greater likelihood of using illicit drugs (excluding marijuana) and a greater likelihood of polydrug use in the past year (Ward & Ridolfo, 2011).

The research focusing on the mental health and physical health of Native American college students at institutions of higher education is lacking. Quantitative studies do, however, suggest areas of concern for Native American students, such as perceived burdensomeness being a significant mediating factor between symptoms of depression and suicidal ideation (Cole et al., 2013). There also is concern with the higher likelihood of tobacco use, illicit drug use, and polydrug use when compared to their peers (Ward & Ridolfo, 2011).

Institutional attachment. Institutional attachment describes the extent to which students feel affiliated and attached to an institution of higher education (Credé & Niehorster, 2012). Using regression analyses, Watson (2009) found that the higher

Native American students rated themselves on the dissonance identity subscale, the lower they were on the institutional attachment subscale. The higher they rated themselves on the internalization subscale, however, the higher they scored on the institutional attachment subscale. Further, Okagaki et al. (2009) found that Native American students with higher bicultural efficacy had a higher belief in the necessity of education and had more of an academic orientation in higher education settings. This suggests, once more, the importance of cultural identity resolution for Native American students at institutions of higher education.

Implications of Adjustment Research

The research on adjustment in Native American students at institutions of higher education indicates that cultural discontinuity and cultural identity resolution may be instrumental predictors of adjustment across multiple areas (Watson, 2009). A racial identity of internalization (bicultural) appears to be correlated with better overall adjustment, and a racial identity of dissonance appears to be a problematic identity for Native American students (Watson, 2009). In a qualitative study by Jaime and Rios (2006), some students noted that it was important for Native American students to have a strong cultural identity because it provides a sense of security and fosters a centeredness in these students. This suggests that Native American students have a need to remain grounded in Native American culture, and this closeness to their community provides a resiliency factor for these students. Overall adjustment, however, requires an integration of the mainstream culture, too.

According to M. T. Garrett and Pichette (2000), “the bicultural individual who is competent possesses a high degree of resiliency through a strong sense of him- or herself in one or more cultural contexts” (p. 9). Watson (2009) also found that those who internalize both mainstream and Native American culture reported better adjustment at institutions of higher education. Some qualitative research (e.g., Flynn et al., 2012; Jackson et al., 2003) has alluded to instances where Native American students experience an existential shift toward autonomy. Further, these authors suggest that better adjustment in Native American students resulted after this occurred. There are no identified studies that address autonomy, adjustment, and cultural identity in the same study and how the three concepts may be related. There are some hypotheses, however, that may be proposed based on other literature addressing Native American students’ experiences while attending institutions of higher education.

Autonomy

Previous qualitative research suggests a point in Native American students’ experiences when they make a decision to integrate mainstream values and expectations while compartmentalizing their Native American values (Flynn et al., 2014; Huffman, 2001). Therefore, there is a point where Native American students begin to think more independently of their Native American culture without losing their identity. This serves Native American students because they are able to integrate both cultures and become capable of crossing cultural boundaries and interacting successfully in both (Flynn et al., 2014; Huffman, 2001). It is hypothesized that to reach this point of “self-discovery,” resiliency is needed (Huffman, 2001).

Huffman (2001) noted that transcultural Native American students reached a point in which they went through a stage of self-discovery. These students were able to successfully cultivate a strong cultural identity in their Native culture, which freed them of cultural identity anxiety. This led to Native American students being able to comfortably integrate mainstream values that were beneficial for them (Huffman, 2001). He suggested that those with resiliency and those who cultivated a strong Native American identity were able to engage with the mainstream culture without fear of losing their cultural identity. This demonstrates the individual's ability to step outside the cultural bounds and act independently in order to gain resources needed to become adjusted to the institution of higher education. The findings of Flynn et al. (2014) were similar in that Native American students moved toward independence and internalized the values, behaviors, and expectations of the mainstream culture. This allowed Native American students to function in both cultures (Flynn et al., 2014). Thus, Native American students became more autonomous.

Summary

Native American students may come from a cultural background that can be vastly different from that of students who come from a mainstream background. Native American values, such as collectivism, nonverbal behaviors that indicate respect, and present time orientation, are in contrast with the values of the mainstream culture (Cajete, 1999). Native American students show their identification, respect, and knowledge of their culture through their adherence to "Indian behaviors." Because of this difference, Native American students may have a more difficult time adjusting to the demands of

postsecondary education than other students. Native American students often report feelings of isolation and alienation (Huffman, 2001) and difficulty fitting in with peers (Jackson et al., 2003). These adjustment issues are only a few among many. This presents a particular problem for Native American students who are trying to obtain their degree. Because the mainstream cultural values and worldview are perpetuated through the curriculum, this leads to the assumption that Native American students will assimilate fully to the mainstream culture (Burk, 2007). This assumption can result in early departure from the institution of higher education for some Native American students. Some students, however, have managed to persist until degree completion.

The persistence literature involving Native American students has shown that the values and the cultural background of these students provide resiliency, but also may hinder their experiences while at institutions of higher education (e.g., Flynn et al., 2012). This complex interaction can affect the adjustment of Native American students. Although different terms are used (i.e., internalization), the research on the adjustment of Native American students at institutions of higher education suggests that the cultural identity of biculturalism leads to more academic orientation (e.g., Okagaki et al., 2009), higher social adjustment, and having a higher institutional attachment (Watson, 2009). This posits that Native American students do not need to neglect their cultural background to become adjusted at institutions of higher education. Furthermore, these cultural ties provide Native American students tools of resiliency, so they are able to persist at institutions of higher education.

In qualitative studies, it is suggested that students who come to a point in which they decide to incorporate mainstream values and develop the ability to operate in both cultures are those who have better adjustment (e.g., Flynn et al., 2014). At that point, Native American students seem to become more independent of their cultural background and obtain some mainstream values and culturally appropriate behaviors. This is different than assimilation because they are only adopting some values from the mainstream that can be beneficial to them in academic and social settings. Thus, they are somewhat autonomous to both the mainstream culture and their own cultural background. This enables them to cross cultural boundaries and act appropriately in both cultures and to simultaneously feel a belongingness in them. Further, this ability to be autonomous, for bicultural students, may lead to greater adjustment in the academic, social, and personal-emotional areas and to feel a greater sense of belonging in the university setting. The current study suggested that, for Native American students, biculturalism resulted in greater adjustment at institutions of higher education. Additionally, autonomy was explored to understand this relationship.

Purpose of Study and Hypotheses

There is a relationship between an ethnic identity of biculturalism and better adjustment among Native American students (e.g., Watson, 2009). Those who are bicultural tend to do better at institutions of higher education than other ethnic identities (Huffman, 2001; Watson, 2009). For example, Watson (2009) found that those who identify more with a cultural identity of internalization (i.e., bicultural) were more adjusted academically and socially, and had a greater feeling of attachment to the

institution of higher education. Further, Native American students with higher bicultural efficacy were found to have a higher belief in the necessity of higher education than those with lower bicultural efficacy (Okagaki et al., 2009). The purpose of this study was to replicate these findings and expand upon previous studies by examining these adjustment factors with a different Native American tribe. Because all tribes are different, the previous study by Watson (2009) may not be generalizable. Therefore, replication is important. To further understand the relationship between cultural identification and adjustment, I also explored whether the factor of autonomy was related to the internalization subscale.

The following hypotheses were offered:

Hypothesis 1: Native American students who report higher ratings on the internalization subscale would have higher adjustment in the academic, social, and personal-emotional areas and feel a greater sense of belonging in the university setting. A negative correlation was predicted between adjustment and the other identities (conformity, immersion/resistance, and dissonance).

Hypothesis 2: Autonomy would be higher in individuals who are higher on the internalization subscale.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Participants

The participants (restricted to those 18 to 45 years old) were recruited from an Education Department on a reservation where they receive financial aid for higher education. The sample included self-identified Native American college students. See Table 1 for demographic statistics. All age groups were almost equally represented with the exception of 26 to 29 year olds (8%). Freshman (30%) were the most represented class in this study, and over half of the participants in this study were women (79%). As seen in Table 1, over half of the population indicated being raised on the reservation (55%). Prior to data collection, this study gained approval from the Institutional Review Board at Middle Tennessee State University (see Appendix A). Further approval was received for the addition of items. See Appendix B.

Materials

Demographic form. The demographic form contained the following items: age (i.e., 18 to 21; 22 to 25; 26 to 29; 30 and over); were you raised on the reservation? (*yes* or *no*); year of schooling (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, Graduate, and other); and gender (see Appendix C).

Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ). The SACQ, by Baker and Siryk (1999), assesses the adjustment of college students while enrolled at institutions of higher education. The SACQ assesses overall adjustment along with the

Table 1

Demographic Information

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Age (N = 72)</i>		
18 to 21 years old	26	36.1
22 to 25 years old	21	29.2
26 to 29 years old	6	8.3
30 to 45 years old	19	26.4
<i>Class (N = 70)</i>		
Freshman	21	30.0
Sophomore	14	20.0
Junior	3	4.3
Senior	16	22.9
Graduate	14	20.0
Other	2	2.9
<i>Gender (N = 71)</i>		
Men	15	21.1
Women	56	78.9
<i>Reservation Raised (N = 71)</i>		
Yes	39	54.9
No	32	45.1

adjustment in four specific areas: academic adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, social adjustment, and attachment to institutions of higher education (Watson, 2009).

The personal-emotional subscale measures how a student fares physically and emotionally. The social subscale measures “the interpersonal-societal demands inherent in adjustment to college” (Baker & Siryk, 1999, p. 1), such as making new friends and meeting people (Watson, 2009). The attachment to the institution subscale is “designed to explore the student’s feelings about being in college” (Baker & Siryk, 1999, p. 1). The SACQ has 67-items and is a self-report measure. This scale can be given individually or administered in groups (Baker & Siryk, 1999). Each item is rated on a 9-point Likert-type scale. The responses range from *applies very closely to me (1)* to *doesn’t apply to me at all (9)*.

The SACQ was standardized on college freshmen in their first and second semester. Reliability was measured over six different administrations for the original questionnaire, which consisted of 52 items (Baker & Siryk, 1999). For the academic adjustment subscale, alpha coefficients ranged from .82 to .87; the social adjustment subscale’s coefficients ranged from .83 to .89; .73 to .79 was the range for the personal-emotional subscale; .84 to .88 was the range for the attachment subscale; and .92 to .94 was the range for the full scale (Baker & Siryk, 1999). After items were added, the final version of 67 items was administered at three different universities over several years. The reliability coefficients remained acceptable. The alpha coefficients for academic adjustment ranged from .81 to .90; .83 to .91 was the range for the social adjustment subscale; .77 to .86 was the range for the personal-emotional adjustment subscale; .85 to

.91 was the range for the institutional attachment subscale; and .92 to .95 was the range for the full scale (Baker & Siryk, 1999). Watson (2009) conducted a study with 76 Native American community college students using the SACQ. This researcher reported internal reliability coefficients for the academic adjustment (.86), social adjustment (.73), personal-emotional adjustment (.75), and institutional attachment (.76) subscales (Watson, 2009).

Beyers and Goossens (2002) found evidence for concurrent validity. They found that “high levels of adjustment to university were associated with higher levels of academic motivation, lower levels of loneliness, fewer depressive symptoms, and higher levels of general adjustment” (p. 534). Further, higher levels of academic adjustment and academic motivation were positively correlated. They found that the higher personal-emotional adjustment was, the lower depressive symptoms were; the higher social adjustment was, the lower the scores were for loneliness. The social adjustment subscale and the institutional attachment subscale were related to students’ responses on the social activities checklist; the institutional attachment subscale was related, but to a lesser degree. Finally, they found that students’ scores were lower on the personal-emotional subscale when students were seeking counseling and academic assistance.

Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being (PSW). The PSW by Ryff (1989) is used to assess the psychological wellbeing of an individual (Seifert, 2005). The Ryff Scale consists of 120 items and assesses domains, such as autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Ryff, 1989). Specifically, these scales are used to assess “self-acceptance;

the establishment of quality ties to other; a sense of autonomy in thought and action; the ability to manage complex environments to suit personal needs and values; the pursuit of meaningful goals and a sense of purpose in life; and continued growth and development as a person” (Seifert, 2005, p. 1). Each item is rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale with the responses ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.

The internal consistency coefficients of the original scales (20 items per parent domain) for all six domains ranged from .86 to .93 (Ryff, 1989). The test-retest reliability for this same measure ranged from .81 to .88 over a 6-week period of time (Ryff, 1989). Since the original construction, shorter versions have been created including the 84-item and 54-item measures (Seifert, 2005). For the purpose of this study, only the autonomy subscale was used; this resulted in 20 items. According to Ryff (1989), a person who scores high on the autonomy subscale, “is self-determining and independent; able to resist social pressures to think and act in certain ways; regulates behavior from within; evaluates self by personal standards” (p. 1072). Those who score low on the autonomy subscale are “concerned about the expectations and evaluations of others; relies on judgments of others to make important decisions; conforms to social pressures to think and act in certain ways” (Ryff, 1989, p. 1072). Concurrent validity for some subscales have been evidenced for the PSW by comparing the measure against other measures of wellbeing, such as the measures of life satisfaction, emotional balance, depressive symptoms, how individuals feel about themselves, and having a sense of satisfaction with their life (Ryff, 1989). The autonomy subscale, however, seems to

measure a different aspect of wellbeing that did not correlate strongly with prior measures of wellbeing (Ryff, 1989).

People of Color Racial Identity Attitude Scale (PRIAS). The People of Color Racial Identity Attitude Scale (PRIAS) by Helms (2010) is used to assess how people, who are not a part of the white racial group, conceptualize their belongingness to their own race versus their reactions to the Caucasian race (Helms, 2010). This measure contains 50 items and is a self-report measure (Helms, 2010).

The PRIAS measures four different strategies that people use to view and respond to race (Helms, 2010). Specifically, it “assesses thoughts and feelings about oneself and members of one’s racial group, as defined by society, relative to one’s feelings about White people” (Helms, 2010, p. 4). This understanding is broken down into four schemas: conformity, dissonance, immersion/resistance, and internalization (Helms, 2010). Conformity refers to the “denial or lack of awareness of personal relevance of societal racial dynamics” (Helms, 2010, p. 4). The dissonance subscale “measures the confusion and disorientation that occur when racial dynamics are in the consciousness or awareness of individuals” (Helms, 2010, p. 4). The immersion/resistance subscale “measures physical and psychological withdrawing into one’s own racial/ethnic group” (Helms, 2010, p. 4). The final subscale is internalization, and this “measures the integration of positive own group racial identification with the capacity to realistically appreciate the positive aspects of Whites” (Helms, 2010, p. 4).

Individuals respond using a 5-point Likert scale to describe how strongly they agree or disagree with a statement in relation to their own attitudes (Helms, 2010). These

ratings determine a dominant status for each individual (Helms, 2010). Specifically, the individuals' responses result in an identity scale that is rated higher than the others (Helms, 2010). This dominant status describes the strategies used by individuals as well as the understanding individuals use to interpret their racial environment (Helms, 2010). To obtain the scores for each individual, the totals are calculated for each subscale; the highest rating is determined to be the dominant status (Helms, 2010). Because there is a lack of known measures that are used with Native Americans, the current study was modeled after Watson's (2009) study. The current study was similar to Watson's study in that the SACQ scale and the PRIAS were both used. To be consistent with the Watson (2009) study, the current study considered the racial identity subscales to be independent and continuous.

In a study with 76 Native American college students, Watson (2009) found internal reliability coefficients that ranged from .68 to .75 for the four subscales. Specifically, Watson (2009) found an internal reliability coefficient of .68 for the conformity and dissonance subscales, a reliability coefficient of .75 for immersion/resistance subscale, and a reliability coefficient of .70 for the internalization subscale. Bryant and LaFromboise (2005) found similar reliability coefficients of .61 (conformity), .73 (dissonance), .76 (immersion/resistance), and .77 (internalization) with 103 Native American high school students. Bryant and Baker (2003) found the reliability coefficients of .61 (conformity), .69 (dissonance), .83 (immersion/resistance), and .73 (internalization) in a sample of Native American college students. Due to the lack of research conducted with Native American students, these are the only known studies that

have used this scale with this population and, therefore, are the only statistics that can be reported for the Native American population. Shek and McEwen (2012) found that conformity, dissonance and immersion/resistance were negatively related to self-esteem, and the identity of internalization was positively related to self-esteem in a study with Asian American men.

Procedure

Before research was begun, approval from the Institutional Review Board for Middle Tennessee State University and the Native American tribe were obtained for the Spring semester of 2016. Participants were asked to participate in the online study via an email sent through the Education Department on the reservation (See Appendix D). The link sent to them was to a survey on Qualtrics. Informed consent was obtained before participants were allowed to proceed (See Appendix E). The participants filled out a demographic form and then completed the surveys in the following order: the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) (Baker & Siryk, 1999), the autonomy subscale of the Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being (Ryff, 1989), and the People of Color Racial Identity Attitude Scale (PRIAS) (Helms, 2010). After completion of the survey, the students were given an opportunity to put their name and contact information in a drawing for one of two \$50 credit cards.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for adjustment, racial identity, and autonomy variables are presented in Table 2. Alpha coefficients for all subscales also can be seen in Table 2. The current study found that all internal reliability coefficients were in an acceptable range.

Pearson correlations were performed for the SACQ subscales and the PRIAS subscales. As seen in Table 3, academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment were all positively correlated with each other. As can be seen in Table 4, the ethnic identity of conformity was negatively correlated to internalization and immersion/resistance. The immersion/resistance identity was positively correlated to the dissonance identity.

Hypotheses Testing

The first hypothesis proposed that Native American students with higher levels of internalization would have higher levels of academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and feel a greater sense of belonging to their university. Consistent with hypothesis one, higher scores on the bicultural (internalization) subscale were positively related to academic adjustment, social adjustment, and institutional attachment. The immersion/resistance ethnic identity was negatively correlated with the personal-emotional adjustment subscale. These results can be seen in Table 5.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire, People of Color Racial Identity Attitude Scale, and Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being, Autonomy Subscale

Scales and Subscales	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α
Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire			
Academic Adjustment	165.31	25.39	.89
Social Adjustment	126.00	21.37	.79
Personal-Emotional Adjustment	95.13	19.52	.82
Institutional Attachment	106.79	15.69	.76
People of Color Racial Identity Attitude Scale			
Internalization	44.44	4.80	.81
Conformity	26.13	7.05	.79
Immersion/Resistance	37.33	8.73	.87
Dissonance	33.87	7.25	.78
Autonomy	92.10	14.23	.85

Note. Autonomy was measured by the Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being, Autonomy Subscale.

N = 71 – 72.

Table 3

Correlations Among Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire Subscales

Adjustment Subscales	Academic Adjustment	Social Adjustment	Personal-Emotional Adjustment	Institutional Attachment
Academic	-			
Social	.47***	-		
Personal-Emotional	.60***	.33**	-	
Attachment	.62***	.82***	.36**	-

Note. $N = 70 - 71$.

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

Table 4

Correlations Among People of Color Racial Identity Attitude Scale Subscales

Subscales	Internalization	Conformity	Immersion /Resistance	Dissonance
Internalization	-			
Conformity	-.41***	-		
Immersion/Resistance	.11	-.34**	-	
Dissonance	-.14	.22	.48***	-

Note. $N = 71 - 72$.

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

Table 5

Correlations Among Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire Subscales, People of Color Racial Identity Attitude Scale Subscales, and Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being, Autonomy Subscale

Subscales	PRIAS				Autonomy
	Internalization	Conformity	Immersion/ Resistance	Dissonance	
SACQ					
Academic Adjustment	.37**	-.21	-.10	-.14	.43***
Social Adjustment	.29*	-.08	-.18	-.17	.18
Personal - Emotional Adjustment	.05	.07	-.31**	-.14	.43***
Institutional Attachment	.42***	-.12	-.21	-.21	.31**
Autonomy	.13	-.08	-.11	-.25*	-

Note. PRIAS = People of Color Racial Identity Attitude Scale. SACQ = Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire. Autonomy was measured by the Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being, Autonomy Subscale.

$N = 70 - 71.$

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

Hypothesis two proposed that students who scored higher on the internalization subscale (bicultural) would score higher on the autonomy subscale. As can be seen in Table 5, this hypothesis was not supported.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to replicate previous studies and to further explore the relationship between biculturalism in Native American students and their adjustment at institutions of higher education. Previous research with Native American students has focused largely on persistence factors (e.g., Flynn et al., 2014; Thompson et al., 2013). This research is of great importance when trying to identify what factors hinder or help Native American students to persist until graduation. What this research does not do, however, is address all areas of adjustment. Further, there is very little quantitative research available addressing Native American college students; therefore, the current study added to the quantitative research on the adjustment of Native American students at institutions of higher education.

Consistent with the findings of Watson (2009), the current study found that Native American students who rated themselves higher on the internalization (bicultural) identity subscale also rated themselves as being more adjusted in the academic and social areas, and they felt greater attachment to the institution they were attending. According to Helms (2010), people who rate themselves higher on the internalization subscale are able to integrate positive aspects of their own cultural group and have the ability to appreciate the positive characteristics of the mainstream culture. Through these processes, Native American students are able to have a higher level of adjustment.

Contrary to what was predicted, the identity of internalization was not associated with personal-emotional adjustment. This finding is consistent with the findings of

Watson (2009). This suggests that the internalization identity is not as critical as other factors to the personal-emotional adjustment of Native American students. This finding could be due to the content of the personal-emotional subscale questions. The questions on this subscale measure a broader construct than the items of the other subscales, which are more specific to the college environment. This means that there could be other factors that affect a student's rating on this subscale that are independent of the college experience. In fact, no other identity was associated with personal-emotional adjustment except the immersion/resistance identity.

The current study found a negative relationship between the immersion/resistance identity and personal-emotional adjustment. This is consistent with Watson's (2009) findings. This suggests that Native American students who withdraw into their own cultural group at higher levels than others are less psychologically and physically adjusted. According to Baker and Siryk (1999), low scores on the personal-emotional adjustment subscale are correlated with being more emotionally dependent on others, being more likely to seek counseling, having fewer coping skills, having conflictual reliance on caregivers, having more mental health concerns, and having more experiences with negative life circumstances. According to J. T. Garrett and Garrett (1994), interconnectedness is highly valued in Native American communities. Further, Gilgun (2002) states that having a responsibility for others is a major theme in Native American culture. This could be problematic for students on campus who identify more with their own culture because it may be even more stressful not having regular contact with their families and their support system. Also, when they do receive support on campus, it may

not be the type of support they have grown accustomed to at home. Additionally, for students who identify more strongly with their Native American culture, the contrast with the mainstream culture may be more pronounced and more stressful. These issues could be major factors as to why these specific students are less psychologically and physically adjusted.

Jaime and Rios (2006) described the importance of Native American students having strong ties to their own cultural background because it provides centeredness for these students. Huffman (2001) also found that some Native American students who persisted long enough at institutions of higher education came to a point where they decided to use their culture as an anchor, and they persisted and succeeded at college. The current study and the study by Watson (2009), however, suggest that only having this connection does not foster adjustment. Instead, integrating their own culture and mainstream culture allows for better adjustment across multiple areas. In fact, withdrawing to a greater degree into one's own culture resulted in lower levels of personal-emotional adjustment.

The reason for the differences between the bicultural identity and other cultural identities is unclear. Therefore, the current study hypothesized that autonomy was a factor that contributed to a bicultural person's ability to adjust rather than just persist. The current study did not find autonomy to be positively related to the internalization identity. This finding may be due to the fact that the autonomy measure has not been previously used with a Native American population. Therefore, the definition used for autonomy may not have been culturally appropriate for this population. Thus, the

definition used may not have captured what may be considered “autonomous” to Native American students. Another point to consider is that autonomy may not be the factor that allows those who are higher on the internalization subscale to have better adjustment.

Those who rated themselves higher on the dissonance identity were lower in autonomy. According to Ryff (1989), individuals scoring low on the autonomy subscale are “concerned about the expectations and evaluations of others; relies on judgments of others to make important decisions; conforms to social pressures to think and act in certain ways” (p. 1072). This suggests that individuals who rate themselves higher on the dissonance identity often make decisions based on social pressures and do not have an internal dialogue to make decisions based on their own thoughts. This is consistent with the definition of the dissonance identity, which is characterized as “the confusion and disorientation that occur when racial dynamics are in the consciousness or awareness of individuals” (Helms, 2010, p. 4). Native American students who are confused about their ethnic identity and have unresolved issues related to their race may have a more difficult time making decisions for themselves. They may be more susceptible to social pressures and rely on others’ thoughts to make decisions because they do not have an identity from which they can operate.

This study, as with others, was not without its limitations. The first set of limitations has to do with the sample. The sample size was relatively small; however, it is not unusual for research conducted with Native Americans to have smaller sample sizes (e.g., Watson, 2009). Further, this sample only included one tribe, which makes its generalizability limited. Factors, such as age restrictions, could have had an effect on the

sample as well. Researchers with Native American students have pointed out that these students have an unusual pattern of attending institutions of higher education (e.g., Jackson et al., 2003). Specifically, Native American students tend to take breaks from school, take longer to graduate, and reach completion at a later age (Jackson et al., 2003). This study employed a cut off age of 45 years old. This may have eliminated some individuals from participating.

The second set of limitations concerns the measures that were used. Because there are little quantitative data on Native American students, the current study used measures that have only been used with Native Americans in a few studies (e.g., Watson, 2009). Therefore, there is little evidence of reliability and validity for the SACQ and the PRIAS measures in this population, and there is no known study that used the autonomy subscale with Native Americans. This could have affected the results. Although there was no measure of validity in this study, the internal reliability coefficients for all of the measures were acceptable.

Despite these limitations, the current study did replicate the past findings of Watson (2009). Native American students who are more bicultural were better adjusted across multiple areas. This is important for the literature on Native American students because it shows the necessity of identifying good characteristics of other cultures and integrating them into one's own cultural identity to become better adjusted at institutions of higher education. Further, students who are better adjusted may have a higher likelihood of staying at their college until degree completion. Contrary to what was

hypothesized, autonomy was not related to the cultural identity of internalization. Thus, there is more research to be done concerning this identity.

For future research, it would be beneficial to identify other factors that are more characteristic of bicultural individuals than individuals with other identities. This research also needs to continue because of the lack of data on Native Americans. There also is a need for continued replication because there is a lack of reliable measures that can be used with this population. Because there are differences among Native American tribes, further replication would provide information about what measures work best with certain tribes.

This study and others like it are of great importance to the Native American population. This research provides information on a population that is often overlooked. By continuing this research, it creates an understanding and awareness about how cultural identity affects the adjustment of Native American students at institutions of higher education. This is important because it could lead to tribal changes within the school systems to better prepare students, both academically and culturally, for attending college. It also may provide information on how to better support Native American students while attending college. Further, this understanding could lead to better adjustment, retention rates, and enable Native American students to have experiences more similar to their peers while transitioning into college. Their presence at institutions of higher education is important because Native American students will have the opportunity to gather knowledge and tools that will be beneficial to their tribes and other

tribes in the future. The more information that is known about Native American students, the better the chances are that they will persist, succeed, and adjust.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

IRB
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
 Office of Research Compliance,
 010A Sam Ingram Building,
 2269 Middle Tennessee Blvd
 Murfreesboro, TN 37129



EXEMPT APPROVAL NOTICE

2/26/2016

Investigator(s): Megan Smith & Mary Ellen Fromuth
 Department: Psychology
 Investigator(s) Email: mks4p@mtmail.mtsu.edu
 Protocol Title: "Adjustment, Autonomy, and Cultural Identity of Native American Students Attending Institutions of Higher Education"
 Protocol ID: 16-1159

Dear Investigator(s),

The MTSU Institutional Review Board, or a representative of the IRB, has reviewed the research proposal identified above and this study has been designated to be EXEMPT.. The exemption is pursuant to 45 CFR 46.101(b) (2) **Educational Tests, Surveys, Interviews, or Observations**

The following changes to this protocol must be reported prior to implementation:

- Addition of new subject population or exclusion of currently approved demographics
- Addition/removal of investigators
- Addition of new procedures
- Other changes that may make this study to be no longer be considered exempt

The following changes do not have to be reported:

- Editorial/administrative revisions to the consent of other study documents
- Changes to the number of subjects from the original proposal

All research materials must be retained by the PI or the faculty advisor (if the PI is a student) for at least three (3) years after study completion. Subsequently, the researcher may destroy the data in a manner that maintains confidentiality and anonymity. IRB reserves the right to modify, change or cancel the terms of this letter without prior notice. Be advised that IRB also reserves the right to inspect or audit your records if needed.

Sincerely,

Institutional Review Board
 Middle Tennessee State University

NOTE: All necessary forms can be obtained from www.mtsu.edu/irb.

APPENDIX B

Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board Addendum Letter

IRB
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
 Office of Research Compliance,
 010A Sam Ingram Building,
 2269 Middle Tennessee Blvd
 Murfreesboro, TN 37129



IRBN007 – EXEMPTION DETERMINATION NOTICE

Friday, February 26, 2016

Investigator(s): Megan Smith & Mary Ellen Fromuth
 Investigator(s) Email(s): mks4p@mtmail.mtsu.edu
 Department: Psychology

Study Title: Adjustment, Autonomy, and Cultural Identity of Native American
 Students Attending Institutions of Higher Education
 Protocol ID: 16-1159

Dear Investigator(s),

The above identified research proposal has been reviewed by the MTSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) through the EXEMPT review mechanism under 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) within the research category (2) *Educational Tests*. A summary of the IRB action and other particulars in regard to this protocol application is tabulated as shown below:

IRB Action	EXEMPT from further IRB review***	
Date of expiration	NOT APPLICABLE	
Participant Size	Click here to enter text.	
Participant Pool	Click here to enter text.	
Mandatory Restrictions	Participants must be age 18+	
Additional Restrictions	Only participants recruited through Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Tribal Council	
Comments	Click here to enter text.	
Amendments	Date 3/29/2016	Post-Approval Amendments Addition of questions to survey, revised survey on file

***This exemption determination only allows above defined protocol from further IRB review such as continuing review. However, the following post-approval requirements still apply:

- Addition/removal of subject population should not be implemented without IRB approval
- Change in investigators must be notified and approved
- Modifications to procedures must be clearly articulated in an addendum request and the proposed changes must not be incorporated without an approval
- Be advised that the proposed change must comply within the requirements for exemption
- Changes to the research location must be approved – appropriate permission letter(s) from external institutions must accompany the addendum request form
- Changes to funding source must be notified via email (irb_submissions@mtsu.edu)
- The exemption does not expire as long as the protocol is in good standing

IRBN007

Version 1.2

Revision Date 03.08.2016

- Project completion must be reported via email (irb_submissions@mtsu.edu)
- Research-related injuries to the participants and other events must be reported within 48 hours of such events to compliance@mtsu.edu

The current MTSU IRB policies allow the investigators to make the following types of changes to this protocol without the need to report to the Office of Compliance, as long as the proposed changes do not result in the cancellation of the protocols eligibility for exemption:

- Editorial and minor administrative revisions to the consent form or other study documents
- Increasing/decreasing the participant size

The investigator(s) indicated in this notification should read and abide by all applicable post-approval conditions imposed with this approval. [Refer to the post-approval guidelines posted in the MTSU IRB's website.](#) Any unanticipated harms to participants or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918 within 48 hours of the incident.

All of the research-related records, which include signed consent forms, current & past investigator information, training certificates, survey instruments and other documents related to the study, must be retained by the PI or the faculty advisor (if the PI is a student) at the secure location mentioned in the protocol application. The data storage must be maintained for at least three (3) years after study completion. Subsequently, the researcher may destroy the data in a manner that maintains confidentiality and anonymity. IRB reserves the right to modify, change or cancel the terms of this letter without prior notice. Be advised that IRB also reserves the right to inspect or audit your records if needed.

Sincerely,

Institutional Review Board
Middle Tennessee State University

Quick Links:

[Click here](#) for a detailed list of the post-approval responsibilities.
More information on exempt procedures can be found [here](#).

APPENDIX C**Demographic Form**

Part A: Please answer the following questions.

1. What is your age?
 1. 18 – 21
 2. 22 – 25
 3. 26 – 29
 4. 30 and over
 5. I do not want to answer this question.

2. What class are you in college?
 1. Freshman
 2. Sophomore
 3. Junior
 4. Senior
 5. Graduate
 6. Other _____
 7. I do not want to answer this question.

3. What is your Gender?
 1. Male
 2. Female
 3. I do not want to answer this question.

4. Were you raised on the reservation?
 1. Yes
 2. No
 3. I do not want to answer this question.

APPENDIX D

Recruitment Letter

Volunteers needed for thesis research

I am Megan Smith and I am from the Birdtown community. I have received approval from the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Tribal Education Department, and Middle Tennessee State University to conduct the following research.

I am looking for volunteers to participate in my thesis research. This is one of the last requirements I have to fulfill to receive my master's degree in clinical psychology. I will be studying the overall adjustment of Native American students at institutions of higher education. Questions about your cultural identity and sense of autonomy also will be asked.

To participate, you must be:

- Between the ages of 18 to 45.
- Enrolled at an institution of higher education.

Sgi!

If you are interested, please follow the link below.

https://mtsuppsychology.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_eXunRCUh1yWdYEd

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent

Middle Tennessee State University

Project Title: Adjustment, Autonomy, and Cultural Identity of Native American Students Attending Institutions of Higher Education.

Purpose of Project: You are being asked to participate in a research study because I am doing research with Native American students who are attending an institution of higher education. The purpose of this study is to further expand the knowledge-base of the relationship between Native American cultural identities and adjustment. I also will examine the relationship between Native American ethnic identities and autonomy.

Procedures: After reading this informed consent, if you decide to participate you will check the “yes” box below indicating your agreement. If you do not wish to participate check the “No” box. This survey will take about 30 minutes to complete. The survey will ask about your ethnic identity and your current adjustment. Limited demographic information (age, year in school, whether you were raised on the reservation, and gender) will be obtained. You are not required to answer any of the demographic information or any other questions in the survey. After you finish the survey, you will have the opportunity to enter a drawing for one of two \$50 Visa credit cards. An email address must be provided to enter the drawing. This email address will allow me to contact you if you are chosen as one of the two winners. This email address, however, will not be connected to your survey.

Risks/Benefits: There are no known risks. The benefit of this study is the expansion of the knowledge-base about the adjustment of Native American students at institutions of higher learning. This study examines the actual adjustment of these students and how they fare academically, socially, and personally-emotionally, as well as their commitment and involvement at an institution of higher education.

Confidentiality: All efforts, within reason, will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private but total privacy cannot be promised. Your information may be shared with MTSU or the government, such as the Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board, Federal Government Office for Human Research Protections, if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.

Principal Investigator/ Contact Information: Megan Smith- mks4p@mtmail.mtsu.edu or my advisor Mary Ellen Fromuth- MaryEllen.Fromuth@mtsu.edu

Participating in this project is voluntary, and refusal to participate or withdrawing from participation at any time during the project will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. All efforts, within reason, will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private but total privacy cannot be promised, for example, your information may be shared with the Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board. In the event of questions or difficulties of any kind during or following participation, you may contact the Principal Investigator as indicated above. For additional information about giving consent or your rights as a participant in this study, please feel free to contact the MTSU Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918.

Consent

I have read the above information and I believe I understand the purpose, benefits, and risks of the study and give my informed and free consent to be a participant.

By clicking below, you are giving your consent to participate in this study.

Yes
No