



Department of Education, University of Oxford

“I just have to do this.”

Native American Student Perceptions of the US College Application Process

Julianne Downing
Supervisor: Dr. Kelsey Inouye
Academic Year 2022-2023

word count: 19,869

Dissertation submitted to the University of Oxford in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of MSc in Education (Higher Education)

Acknowledgements

Land Acknowledgement

Being from the United States of America, I have lived my life on stolen land.

I acknowledge that I was born, raised, and educated in Sacramento, California, which is Nisenan land that was never ceded. The Nisenan People are still among us in Northern California, though they are almost invisible. The original tribal families have yet to recover from the near genocide of their people.

I wish to also acknowledge the Southern Maidu people to the North, the Valley and Plains Miwok/Me-Wuk Peoples to the south of the American River, and the Patwin Wintun Peoples to the west of the Sacramento River. Further, I wish to acknowledge the Wilton Rancheria, the only federally recognized tribe in Sacramento County.

I earned my bachelor's degree at the University of Notre Dame on the traditional homelands of Native peoples including the Haudenosauneega, Miami, Peoria, and particularly the Pokegnek Bodewamik / Pokagon Potawatomi.

Learn more about territory acknowledgements and the histories of the places where you live, learn, and work at https://native-land.ca/resources/territory-acknowledgement/.

Professional Acknowledgement

I extend immense thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Kelsey Inouye, who was consistently kind and supportive in her feedback (especially when challenging my thinking or pushing me to strengthen my writing). Thank you for always making room for me to be a whole person, not just a master's student.

Thanks also to Dr. Ashlee Bird and Dr. Brian Collier for providing key advising in the early stages of this project. They are living embodiments of the "once your teacher, always your teacher" sentiment often expressed at the end of courses, and I am extremely grateful for their time and guidance.

Personal Acknowledgement

With loving thanks to my parents, Joe and Rebecca Downing, who have made every ounce of my education possible. To Neil for supporting my journey from Notre Dame to Oxford. To my dear friends in the 2022-2023 Higher Ed cohort who were always there to talk things through, Luisina, Xishu, and Lori Lee. And to Sydney, for sending me a photo of her cat (Mr. Snuggles) every morning of my dissertation grind for motivation and a smile.

Abstract

The project presented here explores how Native American students perceive the process of applying to college in the United States in the twenty-first century. Little research has been done on student perceptions of the application process in general, and even less scholarship has been dedicated to the Native American experience of applying to college. Without research in this area, universities, governments, and outside organizations remain unable to provide targeted support to ease the challenges Native American college applicants face.

The dissertation combines two theories—Markus and Nurius' (1986) possible selves lens and Cotton et al.'s (2017) resilience framework—to create a more complex analytical theory, which allows for the findings to be analyzed in chronological cross-sections, revealing the changes and continuities of participants' experiences and perceptions over time. Informed by the theoretical framework, the data consists of ten semi-structured interviews which asked participants to recall their memories, experiences, feelings, and stories from their college application process in three stages: before applying, while applying, and after applying.

The findings reflect the participants' overwhelmingly challenging and isolating application experiences; nine out of ten characterized their experience as wholly negative. The most striking message in the findings was that participants viewed attending college as a necessary life step; no matter how frustrating or even impossible the application seemed, the participants persevered. As one participant put it, speaking as her high school self, "I just have to do this."

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements **2**

Abstract **3**

Table of Contents **3**

Chapter 1: Introduction **5**

1.1 The Basics 6

1.2 Statement of the Problem 6

1.3 Motivation 7

1.4 Background and Context: Higher Education in America 8

1.5 Research Questions 9

1.6 A Short Note on Position 9

1.7 Organization and Outline 9

Chapter 2: Literature Review **11**

2.1 A Patchwork Literature 11

2.2 Historical Underpinnings 11

2.3 A Snapshot of Native Americans in Higher Education 13

2.4 A Blended Theory: Possible Selves + Resilience Framework 15

2.5 Barriers to Applying to College 17

2.6 Stitching the Pieces Together 21

Chapter 3: Research Design **23**

3.1 Methodology 23

3.2 Methods 25

3.3 A Longer Note on Position 27

3.4 Ethics 30

Chapter 4: Findings **33**

4.1 The Interviews 33

4.2 Self, Identity, and Emotions 33

4.3 Family and Community 38

4.4 High School 40

4.5 Other External Factors 43

Chapter 5: Discussion **46**
5.1 From Findings to Discussion 46
5.2 Chronological Cross-Sections 46
5.3 Locating this Project in the Literature 50
5.4 A Return to the Research Questions 51
5.5 Actionable Recommendations 54
Chapter 6: Conclusion **56**
6.1 In Summary 56
6.2 Limitations 57
6.3 Directions for Future Research 58
References **6**
Appendix A: CUREC 1A **72**
Appendix B: CUREC 1A, Approval **88**
Appendix C: CUREC 1A, IDREC Amendment Form **89**
Appendix E: Recruitment Materials **92**
Appendix F: Participant Information Sheet **94**
Appendix G: Written Consent Form **99**
Appendix H: Interview Protocol **101**
Appendix I: Table of Codes **103**

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The Basics

This dissertation explores how Native American students perceive the process of applying to college in the United States in the twenty-first century. An important first task is defining what is meant here by "Native American." The US Department of the Interior, which houses the Bureau of Indian Affairs, explains,

> *…the term 'Native American' […] has been gradually expanded within the public lexicon to include all Native peoples of the United States and its trust territories, i.e., American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, Chamorros, and American Samoans, as well as persons from Canada First Nations and indigenous communities in Mexico and Central and South America who are U.S. residents. (BIA, 2017)*

There are important and controversial conversations ongoing about who "counts" as Native American—do you need to have a Tribal ID, or be a member of a federally recognized Native Nation (Huyser, 2020; Krakoff, 2012)? Is it a question of blood quantum (Schmidt, 2012; Tallbear, 2008)? Given the history of Euro-Americans imposing definitions on Native Americans, this dissertation defines Native American as an umbrella term referring to any person who personally identifies themself as Indigenous or hailing from an Indigenous culture, and who is a US resident.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Today's experience of applying to college in the US is generally considered a very stressful one, for anybody. Students and their families must balance the load of finishing the final years of high school, taking standardized tests, filling out applications, writing personal essays, and completing many complex forms ranging from family financial status disclosures to housing preferences. The college application process privileges those with more time, greater resources, familiarity with higher education, and knowledgeable mentors. Native American students are statistically more likely to come from under-resourced high schools (Woods, 2020), more likely to live below the poverty line (Sarche & Spicer, 2008), and more likely to be first generation college students if they do enroll (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2022a); the limited data also reveals ongoing financial challenges including food insecurity and homelessness (National Native Scholarship Providers, 2022; Nittle, 2022). Native Americans thus face unique structural and material barriers which compound the stresses inherent to

applying to college. Beyond this, some Native students may not want to engage with colleges and universities, or they may be cautioned against it by their loved ones and advisors, given the long and treacherous history of Native American education in the United States.

Little research has been done on student perceptions of the application process in general, and even less scholarship has been dedicated to the Native American experience of applying to college. Without research in this area, universities, governments, and outside organizations remain unable to provide targeted support to ease the challenges Native American college applicants face.

1.3 Motivation

There has been research around widening participation, increasing access, and including nontraditional students in higher education for nearly 40 years. The field is gaining an interest in looking at specific groups of nontraditional and/or disadvantaged students, but Native American experiences of higher education remain severely under-researched. This project is valuable because it fills the gap in higher education scholarship examining Native American student experiences of applying to college—there is some surrounding literature of other nontraditional student groups' experiences with the college application (other racial groups, first-generation students, rural students, students of low-socioeconomic status), but a total absence of literature on this topic in Indian Country. My project is interview based, not only filling this gap, but filling it with Native voices and lived experiences.

Another reason this project is valuable is because it redirects attention to *applying* to college and the inequities at play even as students hit submit on their applications. Much literature on increasing access and widening participation in higher education begins with admissions decisions—this assumes that everyone who wants to participate or should be able to participate has been able to successfully submit at least one application to college.

Influential literature which addresses equity but considers admissions—rather than applications—the starting line (for example, Brennan & Naidoo, 2008; Brighouse & Swift, 2006; Clancy & Goastellec, 2007; Knight, 2009; McCowan, 2007, 2016) erases the experiences of many students. If we are going to discuss the structural components which limit equitable participation in higher education, there must be an acknowledgement that there are barriers which exist well before an admissions officer makes a decision.

I want to be clear: I am *not* suggesting that if more people could apply to college and if more people could get in, then this would miraculously build equity in higher education. In fact,

widening participation has been shown to not build equity, as it typically amounts to "either cutting the same cake in a different way, or increasing the size of the cake but still distributing it unfairly" (McCowan, 2016, p. 658). Moreover, and specific to the population of Native American students in the US, increased participation in universities does nothing to touch the long history of abuse, dispossession, and colonization. On the contrary, to many, to participate in an American education is to participate in the system that served as the cloak for "civilizing" and stripping Native Americans of their traditions, languages, and families.

1.4 Background and Context: Higher Education in America

Higher education in the United States (often referred to as college) is the first period of voluntary education after a student completes their compulsory secondary education (high school). Higher education institutions in the US are defined along several axes. First, educational institutions are either private or public, referring to the source of their funding: private education is funded directly through student tuition fees, while public institutions receive money from the government. Second, they differ in the length of their programs and the degree they are qualified to confer onto students: community colleges (or junior colleges) are typically two-year programs which grant an associate's degree, while the more common four-year colleges or universities grant a bachelor's degree. Third, there is the important element of location: if you attend college within your home state, you benefit from "in-state" (meaning lower) tuition fees, whereas if you attend college in a different state, you will pay much higher "out-of-state" tuition fees.

Attending college is an esteemed coming-of-age ritual for Americans (Blumenkrantz & Goldstein, 2014), even when it comes at great financial or opportunity cost (Bogost, 2020). Native American students, who are frequently overlooked in or actively excluded from American societies, may feel the push and pull of participating in college as a rite of passage; on one hand, it may seem that attending college is an important way to earn qualifications, prestige, or legitimacy, while on the other hand, it may seem that higher education has historically not only *not* supported Native Americans, but indeed functioned as a mechanism of erasure (Adams, 1995).

Awareness of the big histories of education in Native America is essential to understanding a more targeted inquiry, and so we must reach back into the nineteenth century for broader context. For decades, the United States federal government used boarding schools as disguises for white supremacist, culturally genocidal campaigns of assimilation (Adams, 1995; Brayboy et al., 2015; Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014; Grande, 2015; Mejia, 2021). Though these campaigns directly abused children and young teens, the schoolroom context created a lasting mistrust

which has transferred to multiple educational settings, including higher education. As historian David Treuer (Ojibwe) has put it, "Education was something that was done *to* us, not something that was provided *for* us" (quoted in Wong, 2019, emphasis in original).

1.5 Research Questions

(1) How do Native American students experience the college application process in the United States?
(2) How do Native American students describe the barriers to applying, if there are any?
(3) How do Native American students' perceptions of the college application process change over time?

1.6 A Short Note on Position

I am a white woman; I am not Native American. I am keenly aware of the power dynamic and political realities of my race and privileges, especially in relation to the topic of this dissertation and to my participants as individuals.

Throughout the conception and production of this dissertation, I have endeavored to remain very conscious of my identity. I have grappled with the implications of studying lived experiences which I do not share. I have included this brief note to communicate that I did not randomly or thoughtlessly choose to center my project on the lived experiences of Native American students. Throughout my bachelor's degree I studied Native American histories in my coursework as an American Studies and Peace Studies major, and one of my chief extracurricular activities was my role as a non-Native ally in the Native American Student Association, where I engaged in student activism alongside my classmates.

I hope you will read my longer note on positionality in Chapter 3, but I felt it was essential to make my identity clear as early as possible.

1.7 Organization and Outline

The goal of this chapter, Chapter 1, is to orient you to the contexts which have driven my project. Chapter 2 is a literature review. Because I have not encountered any pre-existing literature which looks at the experiences of Native American students applying to college in the US, I have stitched together relevant adjacent bodies of literature on Native Americans in higher education more broadly, and on barriers in the college application process. Chapter 3

speaks to the design of my project, including the chosen methodology and methods, an extended discussion on positionality, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 communicates the findings from my interviews and foregrounds direct quotes from the participants. The findings are grouped into four areas of influence during the college application process: the self, the family, the high school, and other external factors. Chapter 5 combines the resilience framework and the possible selves lens (as introduced in Chapter 2) to analyze chronological cross-sections of the findings. Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation and offers commentary on limitations and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 A Patchwork Literature

In exploring the literature, I did not encounter any pre-existing scholarship which aligns exactly (or even closely) with the topic of Native American students and their experiences of college applications. The literature review I present here is a patchwork one.

To begin, I offer a severely abbreviated historical survey of the US federal government's approach to interacting with Native American nations. I contend that events, policies, and attitudes from hundreds of years ago are relevant in understanding the dynamics of Native American students applying to college in the US today. Next, I gloss relevant literatures on Native Americans in higher education in general, and on the process of applying to higher education. Then, I introduce a blended theory of the resilience framework (Cotton et al., 2017) and the possible selves lens (Markus & Nurius, 1986), which in the discussion of the findings will ultimately allow us to identify factors which supported and hindered participants' applications, and offer us an opportunity to assess their experiences and perceptions chronologically.

From these areas, which notably do not overlap in the current scholarship, I stitch together three key takeaways: (1) that research at the intersection of Native American studies and higher education must begin by reaching back into Native American and US history, (2) that a combination of Cotton et al.'s (2017) resilience framework and Markus and Nurius' (1986) possible selves lens creates opportunities to observe the evolution of Native applicants' experiences applying to college, and (3) the scholarship on barriers to applying to college thematically orients itself around issues of the family, finances, and access to information.

2.2 Historical Underpinnings

> *From the beginning, Euro-American cupidities were so enmeshed that every attempt to 'civilize' was one to Christianize, and every effort to Christianize, one to capital-ize. At stake were not only the bounty of minds and souls for Christ but also the currency—the property—that the primitive accumulation of Red bodies signified for the state.* ***Education became the nexus between these capitalist and religious missions, manifesting the campaign to 'kill the Indian and save the man' under the auspices of schooling and the establishment of universities.*** *It wasn't long before investment in Indian education became the subtext for the appropriation of Indian land. (Grande, 2015, p. 4, emphasis added)*

As referenced in the introduction, any cogent discussion on any facet of Native Americans' relationship to higher education today must consider the long, many, connected histories of the Euro-American genocide against Native Americans. Today's realities in Indian Country are immensely influenced by the centuries-long pattern of education for extinction (Adams, 1995). To reduce a tremendously complex history, it is important to know about three major eras of US American/Native American relations: removal, assimilation, and termination.[1]

First, the removal era (~1820-1850) started with the Indian Removal Act (1830). It authorized the forced migration of over 46,000 Native Americans to "Indian Territory." Approximately 4,000 Indians died en route. The forced migration cleared desirable, natural-resource-heavy land for white US Americans to subsequently settle. Removal was presented as an "adoption of a suitable system for [American Indians'] security, preservation, and improvement" (McKenney, 2015, p. 248), but it is remembered as an "oppressive [measure]" (Harkins, 2015, p. 249) and a display of "American ineptitude, incompetence, and fraud" (Akers, 2015, p. 276).

Second, the assimilation era (~1860-1928) is epitomized by boarding schools, what Dunbar-Ortiz (2014) characterizes as "the most pernicious" of the US's "new colonial institutions" (p. 151). These institutions operated under Captain Richard Henry Pratt's famously evil principle of "kill the Indian, save the man," and extinguished Native American traditions, languages, fashions, and knowledges. Beyond cultural extinction, diseases ran rampant in the hyper-crowded dormitories, resulting in such frequent student deaths that every off-reservation school had a graveyard on their property (Adams, 1995). The trauma of boarding schools is shared by many; the Indigenous Foundation claims that the "approximately 357 boarding schools operated across 30 states during this era both on and off reservations and housed over 60,000 [N]ative children" (Mejia, 2021).

Third, the termination era (~1945-1968) was the US federal government's final attempt to solve "the Indian problem," aptly defined as "Native nations getting in the way of white settlers acquiring all the land" (Koch, 2021). Many policies passed in this era forced tribal members to relocate from their rural reservations—possibly not their traditional homeland, possibly the destination of their nation's forced migration during Removal—to urban areas across the country. House Concurrent Resolution 108 (1953) attempted to disband Indian tribes by stating that the United States no longer recognized tribal sovereignty. Scholars have

[1] I present here a history of Native American / US American relations which is primarily based in the contiguous United States. For monographs on the US's empire building project's clash with Native Hawaiians and Alaska Natives, please see Kauanui's *Paradoxes of Hawaiian Sovereignty: Land, Sex, and the Colonial Politics of State Nationalism* (2018) and Case and Voluck's *Alaska Natives and American Laws* (2012), respectively.

interpreted HCR-108 as a form of genocide (see, for example, Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014; Pacheco et al., 2013; Pevar, 1992).

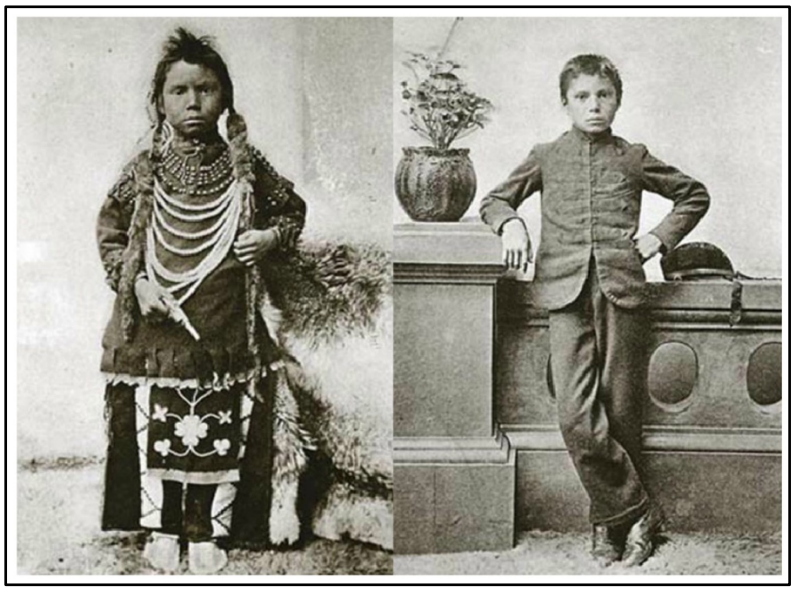


Figure 1.

Photographs of Thomas Moore before and after "civilizing operations" at Regina Indian Industrial School, ca. 1897.[2]

Quoted above, Grande (2015) draws the strong, yet frequently obscured, lines of relationships between colonial efforts to civilize, Christianize, and capitalize. Importantly, she identifies education as "the nexus" of these missions, serving as both the mechanism and the disguise that entangled these campaigns (p. 4). There can be no ignoring these long histories. Their effects are felt deeply today. Only from here can we begin the work of this dissertation.

2.3 A Snapshot of Native Americans in Higher Education

Native Americans are underrepresented in higher education. Just 22% of 18-24 year old Native Americans were enrolled in college in the US in 2020 compared to 40% of the general population of the same age (Postsecondary National Policy Institute [PNPI], 2022). Native American students are more likely to attend public rather than private colleges (83% attend a public school); they are more likely to receive federal aid, but that aid is on average much lower than any other racial/ethnic group receives; and they are less likely to complete their degree within six years (PNPI, 2022). These disparities begin even before students enroll in higher education—Native American high school students are less likely to enroll in Advanced

[2] This is a typical propaganda image boasting the power of education on Native American children—the power of assimilation at boarding schools. For reading which challenges our knowledge of the assimilation era as coming exclusively from these official, school-produced images, please see Stratham (2015).

Placement courses or other college prep courses, and they are far less likely than any other identity group to live in a household with one parent who completed a bachelor's degree (PNPI, 2022).

When Native American students successfully apply to and enroll in higher education, the issue of *belonging* is a great one. Belonging has been identified as an important aspect of a student's perception of their campus in terms of retention and academic success, and particularly essential in references to students of color (Hausmann et al., 2007; S. Hurtado et al., 1999; S. Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Lee et al., 2010; Maestas et al., 2007; Museus & Maramba, 2011; Oxendine et al., 2020; T. Strayhorn, 2008). Strayhorn (2012) defines belonging as "perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus (e.g., faculty, peers)" (p. 3).

Academically speaking, Native American students may not experience mattering or being respected as a collective population based on the content of the courses offered at their college or university. Native American histories and cultures are often erased, minimized, or miscommunicated in US American history college courses, building on the US American primary and secondary schooling tradition of invisibilizing Native Americans in history courses (Loewen, 2007). In other academic courses, ranging from the humanities to medicine, Native American populations are often not included in the results of studies because researchers do not allocate the appropriate time or resources to gather statistically significant data on such a small minority of the United States—increasingly, this failure to research and report on Native American populations is being understood as a "data genocide" (Friedman et al., 2023; Urban Indian Health Institute, 2021).

Generally speaking, "in most disciplines, there is a decline in representation from student to professor. However, in some disciplines, the representation of Native Americans is zero" (Nelson & Madsen, 2018, p. 382). The National Center for Education Statistics (2022) found that <1% of full-time faculty at US colleges and university were American Indian/Alaska Native. Other sources put that number between 0.3% and 0.5% (Brayboy et al., 2015). The value of a Native American college student knowing and learning from a Native American graduate student or faculty member cannot be overstated. Representation is essential to belonging. "Given the small number of Native graduate students and the even smaller number of Native faculty," Brayboy et al. (2015) writes, "feelings of isolation and alienation are especially acute for Native students" (p. 164, citing Brayboy et al., 2012). To learn about other ways colleges and universities have abandoned Native American students, please see Bryant (2021).

One solution to these multi-faceted issues of belonging has been the creation of tribal colleges and universities (TCUs). While often ignored in mainstream analysis of higher education institutions, TCUs are a vital part of Native American higher education. In 2020 the US Department of Education published a count of TCUs in the US, listing 32 fully accredited TCUs, one formal candidate for accreditation, and three in Associate Status; the Department further identifies 40 bachelor's degree programs, 181 associate degree programs, and five master's degree programs, in total serving ~30,000 students (Department of Education, 2020). TCUs are valuable minority-serving institutions which offer degrees and certificates in many common fields, from nursing to creative writing. Further, programs like casino management, Great Lakes studies, tribal vocational rehabilitation studies, Inupiaq fine arts, Native American art history, tribal governance and administration, and Ojibwe language, just to name a few, are unique programs which fill important cultural, intellectual, and practical gaps.

Though this dissertation primarily concerns itself with Native American students' experiences applying to mainstream colleges and universities—that is, not tribal colleges and universities—it is still vitally important to be aware of TCUs and the role they play in Native American higher education and the way they meet the needs of a population historically not well served by US colleges and universities.

2.4 A Blended Theory: Possible Selves + Resilience Framework

To comment here on the blended theory that will be used to collect and analyze data, let us briefly recall the three research questions which drive this dissertation:

1. How do Native American students experience the college application process in the United States?
2. How do Native American students describe the barriers to applying, if there are any?
3. How do Native American students' perceptions of the college application process change over time?

I chose to pursue these questions through interviews, asking Native American students directly to describe their experiences and memories of applying to college. In asking my participants to talk about their experiences, I was necessarily asking them to talk about their selves.

To best design questions that would elicit cogent commentary on their past, present, and future selves, I looked to Markus & Nurius' (1986) articulation of *possible selves*. This concept puts forward that each of us, at any given moment in time, has many *possible selves* in

addition to our present self. “This type of self-knowledge pertains to how individuals think about their potential and about their future. Possible selves are the ideal selves that we would very much like to become. They are also the selves we could become, and the selves we are afraid of becoming” (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954). It does not matter whether we are consciously aware of these possible selves, even less whether we can articulate them. Still, as literature has long suggested (Freud, 1925; W. James, 1910), our self-knowledge extends bidirectionally into the past and the future. Our attention can be called to the selves we once were, the selves we might have been, the selves we are, and the selves we still might be:

> *The individual's collection of self-conceptions and self-images can include the good selves (the ones we remember fondly), the bad selves (the ones we would just as soon forget), the hoped-for selves, the feared selves, the not-me selves, the ideal selves, the ought selves. They can vary dramatically in their degree of affective, cognitive, and behavioral elaboration. They also vary in valence. Some self-conceptions are regarded as positive and others as negative. A third dimension of variation, already implicit in the examples given here, is what Schutz (1964) called the ‘tense’ of self, and more recently, what Nuttin and Lens (1984) referred to as ‘temporal sign’ of the self. That is, where in time is the particular self-conception located? (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 957)*

Possible selves are influenced by our internal characteristics—our manner, our personality, our likes and dislikes—but also influenced by a number of external factors.

We do not derive these self-concepts in a void. Our environments and the other people around us affect our selves. Consider, for example: if a child has never heard of a particular life path or career, they are far less likely to dream it. If you have never heard of a particular city in the world, you are not likely to imagine yourself moving there someday. Exposure to a diversity of ideas, paths, opportunities, decisions, occupations, and other people are essential to the conjuring of many and diverse possible selves. Regarding these influential external factors (what your parents were like, what kind of home you grew up in, whether you attended school, the books and television shows you consumed, your health, your relationships, etc.), and with a focus on any one possible self, we could broadly divide these external factors into two main groups. Some factors would push you further toward that possible self, others would pull you away from it.

The resilience framework (Cotton et al., 2017), in looking at UK higher education retention rates, has created the categories and labels of *protective and risk factors*—external factors which either help an individual achieve a specific goal or make it more difficult for that individual to achieve that goal. In their original project, Cotton et al. (2017) found that

protective factors (factors that made students more likely to persist in higher education) were things like a stable family environment, determination to succeed, and maturity and independence, and that risk factors (factors that made students more likely to drop out) were things like an abusive family, problems with roommates, and drug addiction (p. 69). Protective and risk factors are the background factors in any person's life which shape their actual and possible selves throughout their lifetime. Like possible selves, we may not be aware of protective and risk factors, and we may be unable to name them, but they are constantly present.

In short: every individual at any given moment in time has many possible selves, and every individual in regard to any given goal/circumstance has many protective factors and risk factors influencing their actions toward reaching that goal/circumstance. Data collection and discussion will blend the possible selves lens and the resilience framework. You will read in Chapter 3 the three major interview questions, which are inspired by the possible selves lens; these interview questions will lead participants to implicitly report the protective and risk factors which influenced their application to college. In this way, the possible selves lens and the resilience framework operate in tandem to create the interview schedule and subsequently interpret participant answers. The analysis of the interview data with a goal of answering the three research questions will require that I combine the possible selves lens and resilience framework to create a more complex analytical theory, ultimately commenting on the barriers that Native Americans experience when applying to college in the US.

2.5 Barriers to Applying to College

College application is conceptualized in the field of higher education as fitting into the larger process of "college choice" (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). College choice has three phases associated with grades in US schooling: *predispositions* (grades 7-9), *search* (grades 10-12), and finally *choice* (grades 11-12) (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1989; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Nora & Cabrera, 1992). Submitting applications fits into the third phase, choice. It is generally understood that at any single step in these three phases there are many influential factors. Cabrera & La Nasa (2000, p. 7) offer a useful figure for tracking the ways certain factors influence each other and a student's ultimate decision to apply to college and their experience of that application process. This diagram (Figure 2) underscores the dizzying complexity and interrelatedness of just some of these factors:

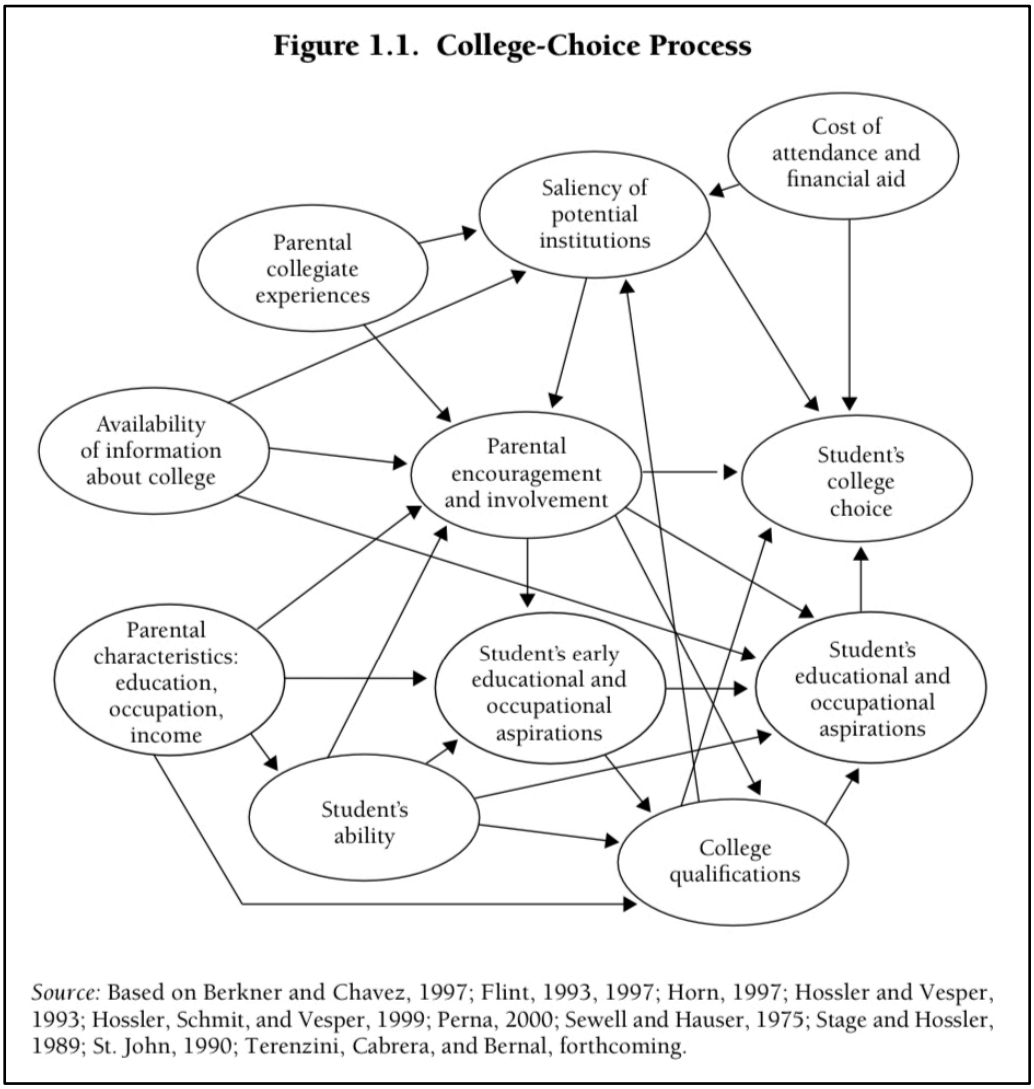


Figure 2.
Source: Cabrera and La Nasa (2000, p. 7)

I have not come across any studies that particularly examine Native American students' experiences of college application, but there is significant research examining the experiences of other student groups deemed "non-traditional" (please see Bowl, 2001, p. 142). The literature includes many studies which narrowly focus on Chicana, first-generation, and rural students, and their unique experiences with college applications (for example, Ceja, 2006; Cogdell, 2016; Dumais & Ward, 2009; Jeong Robinson & Roksa, 2016). These papers surface recurring themes of the influence of the family, finances, and access to information.

2.5.1 Family

Family has long been known to be a critical component in a student's decision to apply and their experience of applying. Students who come from families who have attended college for one or many generations have the advantage of benefitting from their parents' (and grandparents' etc.) experiences. When parents have not applied to or attended college, there is a void of knowledge. Students may be unable to navigate the process on their own, or parents may be wary of their student choosing a path unlike their own. Ceja's (2006) study examines low-income, first-generation Chicana students and investigates their experiences applying to college within their family. The overwhelming barrier which shines through in the testimony from all the participants is a lack of information from their parents and their parents' "lack of familiarity with the college choice process" (Ceja, 2006, p. 95).

Moving away from qualitative stories and toward quantitative data, Dumais and Ward (2009) conclude, in part, that while parental education in general is often analyzed as a factor influencing a student's decision to apply to or enroll in college, "it is important to focus *specifically* on the first-generation/non-first-generation distinction" (p. 249, emphasis added). They find that "first-generation status serves as more of a barrier for initial college access than it does for attainment of a bachelor's degree or for undergraduate grade point average" and affirm "the idea of a first-generation habitus that might serve as an obstacle to higher education" (Dumais & Ward, 2009, p. 262).

2.5.2 Finances

Finances are a conspicuous barrier to *attending* college, but perhaps not so much when it comes to *applying to* college. Indeed, the promise of extreme financial burden may be enough to convince some students to not apply to college at all, but others simply cannot afford to apply. Applying to college has an opportunity cost (all the time a student puts into an application could have been spent working or applying for jobs), and a monetary cost. In 2022, US News & World Report (USNWR) found that among the 889 colleges they ranked and participated in the USNWR annual survey, the average application fee overall was approximately $45; the average application fee of the top 64 most expensive was $78; and the most expensive single application fee was $100 (Wood, 2022).

Fee waivers exist supposedly to remove financial access barriers to those who cannot afford the application fee, but those waivers are often difficult to find and difficult to understand if a student successfully locates them. Taylor (2019) set out with a basic research question, "Are application fee waiver statements readable by aspiring postsecondary students of average, 11th- and 12th-grade reading levels?" (p. 20). His conclusion: no, they are not:

> *…more troubling than the fact that the average statement scored at the 13th-grade level is that a number of schools do not include a clear, easily-accessible application fee waiver statement… Furthermore, only one institution made progress toward making the application free. Also notable is the range of readability scores: 9.3 and 16.2 represent the simplest and most difficult average readability scores, a difference of nearly seven years of reading comprehension ability. (Taylor, 2019, p. 23)*

These financial barriers appear months ahead of whether a student will even be admitted or will choose to enroll to a college.

2.5.3 Information

Information may seem invisible in conversations around college applications, so ubiquitous it is nearly ignored. General or firsthand knowledge is absolutely essential to applying to college, and a lack thereof is a common barrier. Information relates to family, as families with parents or older siblings who have been through the college application process are better equipped to assist students with decision-making. Information equally relates to finances, as families with greater financial resources might hire professional consultants to assist their student's application process (McDonough et al., 1997) or travel to college(s) near or far to gain first-hand experiences on the campus (Griffith & Rothstein, 2009). Here, already, we can see the beginnings of the intersecting complexities illustrated by Cabrera & La Nasa's (2000) diagram included above.

The scholarship indicates that a critical agent of information is the school counselor. Jeong Robinson and Roksa's (2016) study analyzes the interaction of socioeconomic status, the impact of counseling, and college-going culture. They equate the combined concepts of social and cultural capital as "a set of resources that consists of connections, knowledge, information, and know-how" (Jeong Robinson & Roksa, 2016, p. 847). While they point out that in our democratized Information Age students may learn about college and options for their future from new digital sources, including social media platforms like YouTube, Reddit, Instagram, and Twitter, they find that counseling is still a powerful knowledge source and driver of applying to college. They specifically identify the high school counselor as "a key institutional agent," someone in the unique position to "mitigate the lack of social and cultural capital in families and facilitate access to higher education for students from poor and working class families" (Jeong Robinson & Roksa, 2016, p. 863). Bryan et al. (2011) come to similar conclusions, finding that "contact of students with the school counselor for college information provides a positive advantage for students who see the school counselor by 10th grade and for less affluent students throughout their high school years" (p. 196).

Lack of family experience, steep fees, and inaccess to clear information about the college application process are all potential barriers to students, especially students who may have more risk factors and fewer protective factors according to the resilience framework, including low-income, first-gen, rural, and racially minoritized students.

2.6 Stitching the Pieces Together

Let me now return to the three main takeaways I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, and comment briefly on each.

First, to reiterate, any analysis of Native American students in higher education today must be rooted in the centuries' long history of the United States abusing education as a means of forced assimilation imposed on Native students. Adams's *Education for Extinction* (1995) and the introduction to Grande's *Red Pedagogy* (2015) are excellent starter texts for learning this US/Native educational history, while Dunbar-Ortiz's *An Indigenous People's History of the United States* (2014) and Hurtado et al.'s *Major Problems in American History* (2015) offer a broader look at the national history and dominant narratives which enabled such vicious perversions of schools.

Second, Cotton et al.'s (2017) resilience framework (which identifies protective and risk factors in an attempt to explain a student's success in higher education) and Markus and Nurius' (1986) possible selves lens (which theorizes that every person is always moving through the world with many possible future selves in mind, moving toward some and away from others) work together to inform interview questions which will lead participants to identify protective and risk factors in their lives. Based on the literature reviewed above which addresses barriers to applying to college for other disadvantage student groups, and mimicking Cotton et al.'s (2017) frame, I would hypothesize the following factors (Table 1) for Native students applying to higher education institutions:

Protective Factors:	**Risk Factors:**
Parents or older siblings attended college	First generation, oldest or only child
Live near university or have visited a campus	Rural home, or grew up far from universities
High school had high college-going culture	High school had low college-going culture
Interacted with college counselor	Did not interact with college counselor
Financially stable childhood/adolescence	Childhood/adolescence in poverty

Table 1.

From the collected data presented in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, I will distill protective and risk factors that recur in the interviews, and then compare those factors to Table 1 (above) in my analysis in Chapter 5. A future study might be able to use this same framework on a much larger data set to find patterns in student resilience and further make recommendations to colleges and universities to boost the conditions for students to succeed.

.

Chapter 3: Research Design

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 Narrative Research Methodology

Methodology is the academic term that refers to "the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcome" (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). It is the idea or reasoning behind choosing your *methods*, or the practical ways you choose to gather or generate knowledge. For this study, a *narrative research* methodology seemed most prudent, as my research questions center on experiences and perceptions. In narrative research, "the focus of attention shifts from 'what actually happened?' to 'how do people make sense of what happened?'" (Bryman, 2016, p. 589). This methodology is a people-centered approach because it prioritizes the way we already order our knowledge of our lives. There is important emphasis on stories, context, chronology, and the individual in narrative history.

The questions I asked in my ten interviews were designed to prompt my participants to tell me stories. I did not want the interviews to feel too artificial or stressful—I clearly communicated to my participants that there were no right answers, and that I wanted to hear their memories about how they felt when applying to college, what their parents said, why they took certain actions, and more. The context of these stories matters, too. Clandinin (2013) complicates our understanding of "the focus of narrative inquiry," writing that it "is not only valorizing individuals' experience but is also an exploration of the social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences were, and are, constituted, shaped, expressed and enacted" (p. 18).

3.1.2 Research Paradigm

The *research paradigm* through which I view my work would best be labeled as social constructivist. A research paradigm is "a set of basic beliefs" that "[represent] a worldview that defines for its holder, the nature of the 'world,' the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts" (Aliyu et al., 2015, p. 2). This graphic (Figure 3), below, was designed to horizontally show the spectrums of ontology, epistemology, and theoretical perspectives, and vertically show how stances along those spectrums would connect.

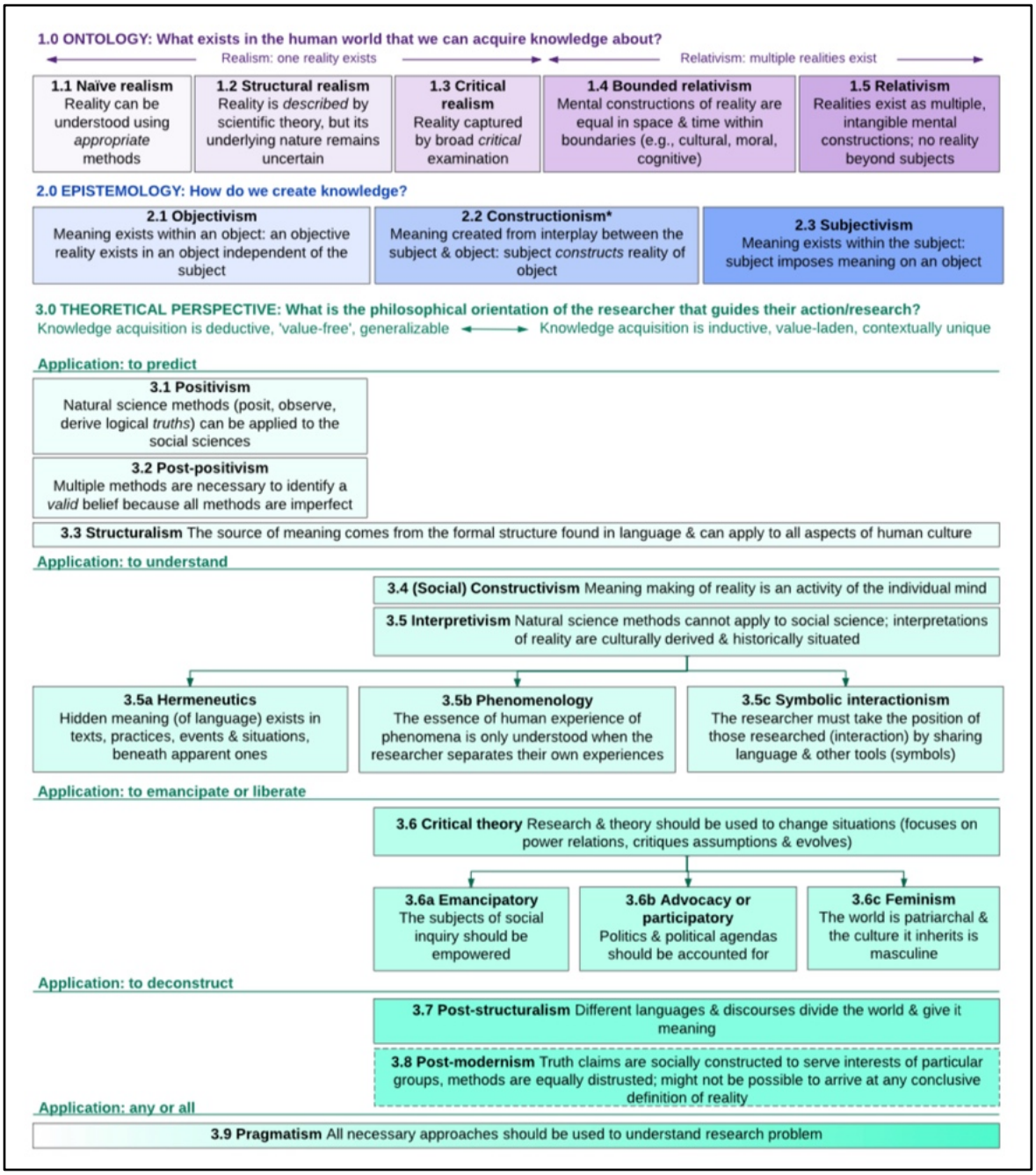


Figure 3.
Source: Moon and Blackman (2014, p. 1169)

Social constructivism most closely aligns with the combination of my ontological, epistemological, and axiological stances (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Mason, 2002; Moon & Blackman, 2014; Nyein et al., 2020; Punch & Oancea, 2014, p. 16-20, 144-146). *Ontologically*—or, regarding what exists and what can be known—I believe that multiple realities exist, and that they are subjectively constructed by individuals who experience that reality. *Epistemologically*—or, regarding how knowledge comes to be—I believe that knowledge is

constructed, and that in research projects like this one, the researcher and the participants co-construct knowledge together. *Axiologically*—or, regarding the role of values—I believe that the biases, perspectives, and motivations that come from a researcher's position must be clearly identified and integrated into the project. All these philosophical assumptions lead me to prefer qualitative methodologies.

3.1.3 Co-Construction of Knowledge

I did not feel equipped at this stage in my research career to explicitly follow Indigenous philosophical paradigms and methodologies, but my background reading did illustrate the importance of viewing knowledge as something shared between all people and led me to the narrative approach (described above) as inspired by the long histories of oral tradition in Native America (Arola, 2011; Deloria, Jr., 1998; Forbes, 1998; Grande, 2015; Kovach, 2021; Villegas et al., 2008; Waterman, 2019). I was cognizant throughout my interview-based study that I was a co-constructor of my dissertation alongside my participants. Parts of the project required that my participants and I directly collaborate (for example, in the interviews themselves, where I am responsible for curating and phrasing questions, while they are responsible for articulating memories and experiences); other parts of the project spotlight one knower, for example direct quotations from the participants, or my personal interpretations presented in the analysis. This value of situating participants as co-constructors was also reflected through the monetary compensation provided to participants for their time and experiences shared.

3.2 Methods

3.2.1 Recruiting and Selecting Participants

Ten students participated in this project. To qualify, participants must (1) self-identify as Indigenous, Native American, Native Alaskan, or Native Hawaiian (or a synonymous or more specific identity), (2) have applied to one or more colleges in the United States, and (3) have attended some college within the last five years. A snowball sampling technique was used for recruitment, which means participants were accessed through my own personal network, and through my acquaintances' acquaintances.

Interested participants contacted me by email, and I replied with the Participant Information Sheet (attached as Appendix F) to offer them greater detail. Participants then electronically signed the Consent Form (attached as Appendix G) and sent their signed copy to my university email account. At the beginning of each interview, I answered any new questions

participants might have had, and returned their consent form by email complete with my electronic signature.

3.2.2 Designing the Interview

"In the end, the narrative study tells the story of individuals unfolding in a chronology of their experiences, set within their personal, social, and historical context, and including the important themes in those lived experiences" (Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 73). Hearing my participants articulate complete accounts (no matter how brief) of illustrative memories which conveyed their experiences was of the utmost importance. To make space for this storytelling, I conducted semi-structured interviews pursuant to my narrative approach.

To call interviews "semi-structured" does not tell us much—there are manifold "semi-structured" shades of grey which fall between the black and white "structured"/"unstructured" designations (N. James & Busher, 2009; May, 2011; Miller & Glassner, 2021; Robson & McCartan, 2016; Walford, 2001). To that end, I would clarify that my interviews were largely structured by just three areas of chronological inquiry—before, during, and after applying to college:

(1) *Before you applied to college*, what future paths did you imagine for your life?
(2) *While you were applying to college*, what was your experience like?
(3) *Now that you have completed the college application process*, reflect: if you could change one thing or grant your past self one tool/resource/piece of knowledge, what would that be?

The before-during-after temporal structure of these questions is derived from the possible selves lens, which takes into consideration the "'tense' of the self." You will notice that the resilience framework—as introduced in Chapter 2—does not appear explicitly in these questions. This was intentional, as I anticipated that my participants would answer these questions by unconsciously referring to protective and risk factors in their lives which influenced their possible selves before, during, and after applying to college. I did not want to unduly steer their responses by asking them about specific protective or risk factors, nor did I want to appear to pass judgement on these factors by labeling them as "protective" or "risk," which while useful for analysis might be distracting or destabilizing in such a personal interview.

When I began drafting more specific interview questions that I anticipated would fit in between these major trisecting "before, during, after" questions, I drew heavily from the family, finance, and information literature reviewed in Chapter 2. However, after meeting with

a Native American professor of Native American studies and piloting my questions, I made significant amendments which targeted feelings and experiences that I had been unaware or ignorant of as a white researcher. I also piloted the revised interview schedule with non-Native students to practice hearing about a students' high school environment and home environment and then fine-tuning follow up questions in response to that information in the moment. Throughout the official interviews I did find myself asking specific follow-up questions and offering prompts and probes to guide the direction of the conversation, but these were highly specific to each interviewee. An outline of my semi-structured interview protocol is included as Appendix H.

3.2.3 Conducting Interviews

Each participant was interviewed for 45-60 minutes online using Microsoft Teams. Each interview was recorded via Teams and manually transcribed after the fact. I personally knew several participants, and all participants were fewer than three degrees of separation from myself; this relative closeness may have impacted the depth of content those participants shared. That said, open and sincere conversations seemed to take place across all interviews regardless of a pre-existing relationship.

3.2.4 Analysis

The interview transcriptions were coded using MAXQDA software. Both deductive and inductive codes were used, and a copy of my code tables is included as Appendix I. The deductive (or pre-existing) codes that I began with were derived from my expected protective and risk factors as listed in Table 1 (page 22); inductive (or emergent) codes were distilled as I reviewed all ten transcripts together and identified common topics or feelings according to the approach outlined in Creswell (2021). I then grouped these deductive and inductive codes—which were microscopic in scale—into macro themes, which informed the structure of the following chapter on findings. The data came in four primary areas: (1) the self, identity, and emotions, (2) family and community, (3) high school, and (4) other external factors.

3.3 A Longer Note on Position

3.3.1 Positionality Statement

Bennett et al. (2022) defines positionality as the "consideration of how our various lenses—regarding our social identities, social capital, and status as researchers—influence and bias our understandings of the world. Importantly, these lenses may cohere with or (in our

cases, often) diverge from the people and contexts we study" (p. 635). There is some scholarship and opinions which argue that positionality statements should not be included in academic pieces of writing (Ali, 2006; Macfarlane, 2022; Marcus, 1998; Morgaine, 2017). These authors suggest that statements are excessively perfunctory, and tend to sterilize the complex, emotional, and sometimes even violent realities that may be embodied or embrained by a researcher. Some even suggest that positionality statements backfire by making it all about the researcher's identity, especially when the researcher is "declaring whiteness," and distracting from the work they are undertaking (Ahmed, 2004).

Other authors feel strongly that positionality statements are essential given the inescapable influence of identity (Folkes, 2022; Holmes, 2020; Manohar et al., 2017; Pezalla et al., 2012; Rose, 1997). Research is never neutral, and to playact that it could be is only withholding relevant information. Researchers cannot help but bring their selves, interests, biases, motivations, and worldviews to their research projects—this pro-positionality statement scholarship considers it best to transparently disclose those factors as early as possible. As I read through the literature on position and positionality statements, I discovered several strong examples of well-crafted statements that functioned to enhance my understanding as a reader of the authors' starting point in their project (Carothers et al., 2021; Moffitt et al., 2021; Rice, 2022; Siegel et al., 2021). I find myself in alignment with the scholars who lie somewhere between these two extremes, arguing that positionality statements are the bare minimum (Jamieson et al., 2023; Martin et al., 2022). Authors of this view generally hold that positionality statements can be productive when they are backed by intense engagement with reflexivity, and when they are composed with thought and care.

I have chosen to include this rather long note on position not only to identify my own social location and situate myself in relationship to my research and my participants, but also to highlight the diverse, growing body of literature on position.

I am a cisgender, heterosexual, fair-skinned, white American woman from California. These are labels which communicate my "fixed" positions, or things about me that do not change and do influence how I move through the world. My personal histories, too, are fixed. For example, before starting my master's degree here at the University of Oxford, I had been educated in wealthy, private, Catholic schools from kindergarten through college graduation. I grew up as an only child with two parents in an emotionally stable and financially privileged home. Reaching much further back into my family history, I have had European ancestors in North America for over four centuries, including one pilgrim who came from England and arrived on the Mayflower, and one man who fought in the Revolutionary War. My life and my ancestors' lives for thirteen generations have benefitted from the disappearance and displacement of Native peoples in the Americas.

3.3.2 Allyship

Native American history is rarely taught in universities, and it is even more rarely held as common knowledge. At the University of Notre Dame, I was lucky to take an introductory course in Native American studies—incidentally, with a white professor who has dedicated his life to service in education. This course revealed the most basic and fundamental historical and cultural truths about Indian Country to me. Our texts ranged from the veritable Bible of the field, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's *An Indigenous People's History of the United States* (2014), to the accessible meet-you-where-you-are handbook, Anton Treuer's *Everything You Wanted to Know About Indians But Were Afraid to Ask* (2012).

This course led me to do my own reading and research, and to become extremely involved in our university's Native American Student Association of Notre Dame (NASAND) as a non-Native ally. NASAND welcomed the participation of any ND student, and alongside my classmates of varying racial identities, we organized for truth-telling, Native visibility, and inclusion initiatives. In 2021 when no Native students were available to serve as president of NASAND, there was risk of losing our status as a university-recognized student club. After consulting with the Native students in NASAND, it was agreed that we would temporarily list me as president, although in rejection of that power title for a white person in this context, we referred to me only as "Officer 1." As Officer 1, I chiefly dealt with the bureaucratic tasks that allowed us to retain our club status with the university. I also applied for and won two grants which provided enough funds for every Native student in NASAND to attend an overnight bonding retreat, all meals and activities included, at the beginning of the next academic year. Before seven months had passed, I happily turned over the position to a Native student.

This period of regular and close-contact service to my local Native American community cemented my understanding of the profound lack of resources being spent on this population.

Aside from the obvious and extensive reparations that they are owed after centuries of genocidal brutalization, Native Americans are also due a significant body of problem-solving-oriented research. Without scholars undertaking the large questions of the ongoing structural oppression against Native Americans, policymakers, activists, and community-responders will have no academic foundations on which to base their actions. Throughout this project, I have aspired to produce a dissertation which reflects an academic kind of allyship.

3.3.3 Reflexivity in Practice

I have learned that the field of Native American studies is a small and tight knit one, despite its interdisciplinarity. I am aware that there are some Native scholars, some scholars of Native American studies, and in particular some Native scholars of Native American studies who would object to a white person conducting this research or authoring this dissertation. That said, I have also heard from multiple Native scholars of Native American studies who have expressed a kind of realism, knowing that Native issues are grossly understudied, and who are willing to accept the work of scholars of any background given that it is conducted in good faith.

I hope this dissertation will be received an artifact of good faith. This is certainly not to suggest that I have produced a text without flaws or made every correct decision as I navigated the "disorienting dilemmas" which come with being a white researcher working with Indigenous experiences (Bennett et al., 2022). All I can claim is that I have honestly tried my best to remain aware of power dynamics and not shy away from uncomfortable questions.

As I have described earlier in this chapter, I chose a methodology of narrative research, and through my method of semi-structured interviews I listened to many stories of Native students' experiences and perceptions of the college application process. I have made a concerted effort to remain aware of my role in curating and presenting these stories, as they are not my own. In addition to regular meetings with my supervisor to discuss progress on my project and ongoing ethical concerns, I also engaged Kohl and McCutcheon's (2015) practice of *kitchen table reflexivity* with a select group of my peers, "where through informal conversations, researchers critically and reflexively engage with the fluidity of their positionalities throughout the research process" (p. 748). Lastly, I maintained a research diary to track and catalogue my own feelings as I dealt with the frictional and sometimes precarious power dynamics of cross-racial research, especially as such a young researcher.

3.4 Ethics

3.4.1 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations must be present throughout all stages of research. There can be a tendency for students and even seasoned researchers to "check the boxes" of ethical approvals, so to speak, and then disregard it moving forward. The flowchart shown below (Figure 4) was created by the course director of the MSc in Education at the University of Oxford. While helpful in thinking through where you stand between identifying a problem and reporting your results at the end of your project, this chart more importantly shows four

elements which must be constants in the research process. One of these is ethical considerations.

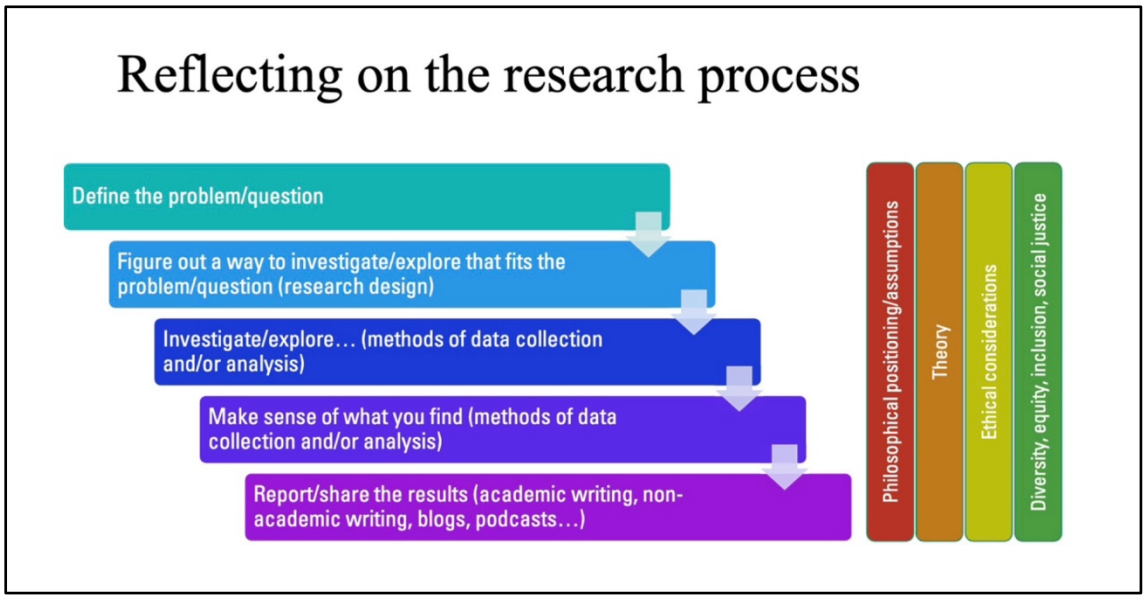


Figure 4.
Source: Dr. Ariel Lindorff, Department of Education, University of Oxford.
"Underpinnings of Educational Research," Foundations of Educational Research I, October 12, 2022.

As I developed this project, I consulted several sets of ethical guidelines. I began with the University of Oxford's Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) Best Practice Guidance (BPG), taking particular care to consider the following guidance documents: BPG 01 – Researcher Safety, BPG 02 – Ethnographic and Other Kinds of Qualitative Research, BPG 06 – Internet Mediated Research, BPG 09 – Data Collection, Protection and Management, and BPG 10 – Conducting Research Interviews (CUREC, 2017, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2021). I also reviewed the professional guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA), including their Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA, 2018).

CUREC 1A approval for my project (reference EDUC_C1A_23_055) was granted on February 10, 2023. Please see Appendices A, B, and C to review the forms and relevant documents I submitted to CUREC. My approval is categorized as "1A," which refers to "less complex ethical issues" because my participants are adults who do not fall into a high-risk or vulnerable group. To earn this approval, a CUREC reviewer evaluated my planned interactions with my participants, which included reaching out to them to invite them to participate as an interviewee, sharing information with them to describe my project, answering their questions, obtaining their consent, and conducting the interviews. Anonymity was ensured; participant

identities are wholly protected by the use of pseudonyms. These actions were deemed ethically appropriate.

It is worthwhile to interrogate who benefits from any research project. As my dissertation fills a gap in the literature and opens the door to future research on the topic of Native American students applying to college, it is my hope that the field of higher education and future researchers may benefit from my findings and conclusions. I also benefit personally, as the submission of this dissertation to my department is an essential step toward completing my master's degree. My participants may benefit through knowing that the experiences they share in their interviews are immensely valuable given the void of research on this topic—they may also benefit from the designated space to reflect on this moment in their adolescence, a major American coming-of-age experience.

As we consider who benefits from research, we arrive at an important note on compensation. I personally funded the compensation of each participant for their time and knowledge shared in their interviews. Compensating research participants is somewhat controversial in research ethics, with some sides arguing that compensation is coercive and inordinately influential on the data, with other sides arguing that compensation is a necessary transaction which treats participants with dignity and prevents researchers from exploiting their participants (Anderson, 2019; Ripley et al., 2010). My positionality again was a big factor in deciding to compensate participants. As a white non-Native researcher seeking knowledge from Native participants, it was essential to honor their experiences and generous contributions with a financial sign of gratitude.[3]

No risks or disadvantages to the participants were foreseen, aside from the potential discomfort a participant might feel while reflecting on applying to college, especially if that experience was very distressing for them.

[3] As many of us in the United States learned during the racial reckoning of 2020, it is essential for white Americans to listen to lived experiences directly from Americans of Color and learn from what they share; simultaneously, it is never a Person of Color's responsibility to educate white people (Adom, 2020; Real Talk: WOC & Allies, 2017; Wilson, 2020; Wright, 2020). One of the many cruel manifestations of racism and white supremacy is the white expectation for People of Color to educate us *about* racism and white supremacy. That burden lays unfairly on the shoulders of all Americans of Color, but especially Black and Native Americans.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 The Interviews

In all, I interviewed ten participants, hailing from nine states and claiming eight unique Indigenous identities. Three participants were true first-generation students (students whose parents had no higher education), and another four had parents who had attended some college, but it was either so long ago or so radically different from the student's own college experience that it was as if they were first-gen. Nine of the ten participants said they felt confident throughout high school that they would *somehow* go to college *somewhere*. Eight felt stressed while applying, and seven felt isolated while applying.

None of the participants identified applying to college as an outright positive experience. In fact, only one identified the experience as neutral; all nine others explicitly characterized the experience as primarily negative and, expectedly, used strongly negative diction in describing their memories. For example, Stella (Pascua Yaqui) used the words *degraded* and *degrading* to describe how she felt while applying to college nine times in less than half an hour. Stella ultimately concluded, "I felt pretty hurt by the entire process." Amy (Choctaw) said that applying to elite college made her such an outlier in her community that it seemed like there were no good outcomes: "If I don't get it, it's bad. If I do, it's bad. And if I even talk about the process, all of it is embarrassing and terrible." Georgia (Mescalero Apache) succinctly summarized her application experience, "It was really, really difficult."

In this chapter I describe the findings from all ten interviews as grouped into four emergent themes: (1) the self, identity, and emotions, (2) family and community, (3) high school, and (4) other external factors.

4.2 Self, Identity, and Emotions

4.2.1 Native Identity

The participants' Native identities were foregrounded in these interviews. All the participants spoke of their Indigeneity with pride, and several commented specifically on how excited they were to participate in this project and have space to speak directly to their application experiences as an Indigenous person.

Some students found that applying to college triggered surprisingly positive developments related to their Native identity. Michael (Hawaiian) went to a weeklong camp during the summer between his junior and senior years of high school specifically for Indigenous students applying to college. That camp introduced him to Native Americans, Native Alaskans, and other Native Hawaiians and gave him a glimpse of both the diversity of Indigenous experiences in the United States and the powerful unity of a young generation of Indigenous students. Another positive memory came from Ben (Cherokee), who recalled how he got his Tribal ID around the same time that he was applying to colleges. Ticking the "Native American" box on his college applications became a moment to flex his recently confirmed identity. "You know how so many people say, 'Oh yeah, I'm Cherokee, I'm a Cherokee princess, yada yada yada…'" he joked to me, "…having physical representation [a Tribal ID card] was like, 'Oh, I actually *am* Cherokee!'" He laughed. "That was affirming," he said. "I self-identified as Native. I had an ID to prove it."

On the flip side, the participants I interviewed who self-identified as multiracial seemed to have primarily negative experiences relating to their Native identities while applying. Aliska (Cherokee, Apache) explained that being a Black Indigenous woman means that "no one *ever* thinks to address my Native side. No one ever. […] No one was going to address my Native American-ness. At all." She felt that her Blackness outshone her Indigeneity when it came to claims of identity, and that this was a reflection of US American politics and sensibilities. Stella (Pascua Yaqui) said she felt like her college applications were trying to force her into a box—when she was asked to tick a box to identify herself racially, she was torn. She ultimately ticked the box for "Native American," but with great emotional distress. "There should be more options for people who have multiple identities," she said. "I think having to decide who you are when we live in a place with such a strong monoracial paradigm… I think that's insanity. […] Because that's not fair."

Her recognition of the US's monoracial paradigm, like Aliska's gesturing to Blackness being recognized over Indigeneity, provides a sense of just how much "objective" questions on college applications are influenced by cultural ideas of race.

4.2.2 Confidence About College

As mentioned above, nine of the ten participants felt confident to some degree that they would end up attending college. Some participants had greater confidence than others, though. Tyler (Pokégnek Bodéwadmik) was holding sports scholarships, so he knew that he was guaranteed to go somewhere. He still applied to college through the regular non-sports avenues, and ultimately did go to school *not* for sports, but having that "backup plan" or "plan

B," he said, gave him "a lot of peace of mind." Lily's (Kumeyaay and Barona Band of Mission Indians) mother had a PhD, and her older brother was pursuing his bachelor's, so in her household, the expectation was always, "You'll go to college, you'll graduate from college, and then whatever you want to do with your life after that you can do. But you will go to college."

A few participants told me that they now feel that they were *too* confident. Ben (Cherokee) said, "I think I was gassed up by my college counselor in a way that I shouldn't have been. I think it gave me a confidence that was misplaced." Gabby (Cherokee) similarly reflected, "I felt really confident. I was 100% sure that I was gonna be able to do it, and that that's what I was doing." She went on, saying, "[I wish I had] not let myself be so overconfident. I'm sure that hurt me in a lot of ways.

More than half the participants expressed confidence and excitedness at the idea of going to college to get out of their hometowns, live on their own, and try something new. Georgia (Mescalero Apache) sought time and space to herself, explaining that "on the reservation community is so important. So a lot of the time I felt like I had a responsibility to my community. So I was very excited to take a step back from that and be more alone and make my own decisions." Michael (Hawaiian) was excited about living on the mainland—he told me, "I wanted to use college as a reason to leave Hawai'i for a period of time and grow as an individual and meet new people. […] And I saw college as a new experience for me that I could really benefit from."

4.2.3 Supported…Yet Isolated

Many participants referenced the support they received while applying to college during the first and second stages of the interviews, where I asked about their feelings and experiences before and while applying. They spoke of parents, friends, teachers, counselors, even YouTubers—individuals who were there for them in some capacity.

However, those same participants often identified having felt isolated when we moved into the third stage of the interview, which asked them to reflect on their application experience now. Tyler (Pokégnek Bodéwadmik) captured this retrospective feeling of isolation, saying, "I wasn't able to articulate it then, but definitely looking back, I definitely did feel isolated. It was tough. I would go to somebody, hoping they had an answer to my question, and I would get pushed to the next person, or the answer wasn't sufficient…" Finally, he pinpointed a particular sense of isolation stemming from applying to college as a Native American student: "I didn't feel like I could always relate to other people either because, being Native, my application process was just completely different."

A few participants were aware that they isolated themselves—sometimes as a coping mechanism, sometimes because there seemed like no other options. Amy (Choctaw) reflected, "I put that all on me, and I didn't let anybody help me. I think it was a thing of like…nobody knew what to do. But even if they did know what to do, I didn't know how to ask. So I didn't." The high anxiety of forging a new path and doing something unusual relative to the community led some participants to silence. Better to not discuss applying to college at all than to discuss it and potentially receive any kind of negative feedback.

4.2.4 College as a Duty

Without a doubt, the strongest theme to emerge and appear across all interviews was a sense of duty in applying to and ultimately attending college.

Some participants articulated an almost humanitarian responsibility, a duty to seize the opportunity of higher education and use it for good. Mary (Pokégnek Bodéwadmik) spoke of her love of learning, saying that "there's so much to learn out in the world that it's our duty to figure out as much as we can." Michael (Hawaiian) similarly said, "For me it was kind of like a responsibility, it was like we should be doing these things and we should be trying to further our education." He also remembers people saying to him, "You're gonna go to this school where there's not a lot of Hawaiians, you're going to represent us here back home, and we want you to succeed. […] Right on! Go represent! Take our aloha spirit wherever you go!" These remarks exemplify the way community encouragement can dovetail with ideas of duty.

Some participants felt a duty to themselves to do something different, bigger, and better with their lives; college often seemed like the ticket either out of a bad situation, or into a good one. Aliska (Cherokee, Apache) recalled applying to only one college, and choosing that college because the application seemed easiest. She told me about the tremendous stress and burnout she felt during high school. Speaking as her younger self, she said her attitude was straightforward: "I gotta do something. Eventually I'm gonna get to where I wanna go, but right now I just gotta do something." That something was exerting her last bit of energy to apply to one college. Gabby (Cherokee) had explained early in our interview that to her high school self, college felt like a responsibility. When I asked her toward whom she felt a responsibility, she immediately replied, "Oh it was definitely for me. It was definitely like, 'I have to get out. If I don't get out, there isn't anything here for me.' It was very much just for me. I just wanted to be free." Through statements like these, especially regarding the idea of *freedom*, I came to see my participants' multiple selves at play. Applying to college was often one self throwing a life

preserver to another version of that self, a determined and dogged attempt to reach college, a place and idea which seemed to represent relief.

For those who felt that college was their only way towards a better future, sacrifices were made. Participants recalled exhausting days, a kind of rinse-and-repeat stress cycle that has come to define the American high school experience for juniors and seniors applying to college—especially elite colleges with low admissions rates. These memories were the most emotional moments of the interviews. Tyler (Pokégnek Bodéwadmik) spoke of his senior fall:

> *And those were long days. I remember I was working at Pizza Hut, I was going to football practice, and then at the end of the day I had to shower, drive [one town over] from [my home town], it was like a thirty minute drive, study, come back home, do it again. It was a grind. But it was available! And I had this goal of opening doors, so we did it. But it was made available and more accessible because of my tribe's resources for sure.*

Georgia's (Mescalero Apache) experience sounded similar, as she especially highlighted driving back and forth between her home and her high school, where her college application resources were.

> *The application process was so difficult on so many levels that it was very very stressful. […] It was just exhausting… The high school that I went to was 45 minutes one-way from my house, so it was like getting up super early at 5:00 in the morning to be ready, driving to school, and then doing school until 3:00, doing some homework afterwards, and then coming home, and then doing more homework. So it was hard to find the time to do the applications and make sure that they were really well done.*

Lily (Kumeyaay and Barona Band of Mission Indians), too, spoke of the enormous time commitment that was applying to colleges.

> *I would spend hours. Like three hours every weekend taking practice tests. And on top of that, high school doesn't just stop because you're applying to school! […] It was very stressful. I remember crying in the tutoring center because I just didn't want to do it anymore. But, I did it.*

These acts of self-sacrifice indicate the strong sense of obligation to go to college that the participants felt. It was only through that duty that they found the drive to put themselves through these miserable routines.

4.3 Family and Community

4.3.1 Parents' Familiarity with College

Parents' familiarity and comfort with higher education had a major impact on the participants' application experiences. I realized as more and more interviews passed that while being a first-generation college student resulted in consistent experiences, there was another group of participants who had parents who had attended some college, but largely shared experiences with first-gen students. Some students who had parents that had gone to college were still effectively operating as first-gen because the parent did not go to a four-year university, did not go to a similarly elite university, or attended college so long ago their experience is neutered. Taken as a group, the true first-gen students and the effective first-gen students together told the same story, and I repeatedly heard stories about parents who only recognized the names of universities from television shows and football rivalries.

Lily (Kumeyaay and Barona Band of Mission Indians) is not a first-gen student, but she importantly articulated the role of an entire community's or an entire generation's familiarity with college. A student is not only impacted by their own parents, but they are also impacted by the attitudes and experiences of all their peers' parents, and the many other adults in their social network. In fact, because Lily had immediate family who had been to college—making her *not* first-generation—she earned a different label and identity: black sheep.

> *So my family—like my mom and my brother—we are the black sheep on the reservation. We are really the only people with higher education backgrounds. And it's not highly accepted. Even when I was going to [college], I got comments like, 'Oh, you really need to go that far to get an education?' People were taking bets on how long I was gonna last at [college]. I just think that a lot of people don't see the purpose of education. Because they don't have the education, and they're doing just fine in life.*

4.3.2 Fear and Anxiety

Throughout the interviews, fear and anxiety seemed largely rooted in the unknown. Seven of the ten participants expressed some idea of not knowing what they were in for as they applied to colleges—ranging from what the education would be like, what moving away from home would be like, or what it would be like to be Indigenous and suddenly be a minority at a predominantly white institution. I asked Gabby (Cherokee) what her parents thought about the idea of her moving away to attend college. She said,

> *I don't know, I think they were going to be uncomfortable no matter where I went. Like, I'm the first person to leave in my family's history. This is where the Trail of Tears ended. This is where my family has been. The idea of me leaving was always really hard and wasn't going to be any easier.*

For her family, there was little difference between fifty and five-hundred miles. Gabby's departure was going to be shocking no matter what.

Unique to the population of Indigenous Americans, family history with boarding school is another source of fear and anxiety. As I glossed in Chapter 2, the history of Indian boarding schools and broad education for extinction looms large in any discussion of Native American students entering institutions of education. Two participants in this study had recent family members who had attended boarding school—*recent*, as in just one or two generations away, family members these participants grew up with, and family members who are still alive and full of memories today. These two participants identified the role of intergenerational trauma in driving today's apprehension around college. This leads us directly to the issue of higher education being associated with whiteness that over half the participants identified.

4.3.3 Ideas of Whiteness

> *I don't remember anyone telling me in so many words, 'Don't go to college, they're going to hurt you or try to take away your culture.' But my mom's grandfather (so my great-grandfather)…he went to boarding school. I never met him, but my mom would bring that up sometimes, that he was sent away, and that that happened to him. And then on my dad's side, it was sort of the same thing, my great-uncle… I've met him, and he only speaks Cherokee, he refuses to speak English, because he had to speak English when he went to school. So it was kinda on both sides, this idea of, 'Watch out for school.'*

Gabby (Cherokee) shared this story with me. "Watch out for school" seems to be the crucial connection between a family history of education-based trauma and a modern mistrust of college, all hinging on perilous ideas of whiteness and assimilation.

When Lily (Kumeyaay and Barona Band of Mission Indians) was applying to college, she said,

> *…[my friends and family members] kept calling school 'the white man's way.' And I had even asked my cousin—she is probably twenty-five or twenty-six, so not that much older,*

> *and she was like, 'Oh, school's for white people, school's the white thing to do.' […] Or they would say, 'School isn't meant for us, it isn't made for us.'*

This broad rejection of school, and particularly of higher education, made breaking the mold and applying to college even harder for the Native students I talked to. Not only were they taking on an ambition and an application which were legitimately structurally more challenging for them compared to non-Native students, they were also facing disapproving and taunting feedback from their social circles.

A few participants emphasized the role peer-to-peer ridiculing played, as their Native classmates and friends commented on the whiteness of applying to and attending college. Georgia (Mescalero Apache) told me, "I had a best friend. Something that sticks with me even now, is she said, 'Well, you *talk* white.' It's just very very different. So when I go home [to the reservation], I don't have any friends to hang out with." Gabby (Cherokee) too felt like her peers were more likely to introduce the idea of whiteness in response to higher education. "I did get stuff from people in high school," she said, "like, 'Oh, of course Gabby's going to a white people college…'"

For participants who were already attending a predominantly white institution for high school, they found themselves splitting their identities between home and school. Georgia (Mescalero Apache) explained to me,

> *It was like trying to be a good Native American daughter at home, where I'm helping my mom […] take on the home and everything else. And then also trying to be a 'whiter version' of myself at school, where school's important, and you don't focus on your family, you focus on yourself.*

She felt like she had to embrace whiteness and eschew her Nativeness, explaining her younger self's thought process: "If people my age aren't going to accept that I can be both, then I have to assimilate into the majority culture to fit in."

4.4 High School

4.4.1 Resources

Resources range from information to money, from people to iPads. Getting perspective on the resources you have is difficult, especially when you're in high school—how can you know the caliber of teachers at the next district over?

A novelist, Richard Kadrey, once wrote, "When you're born in a burning house, you think the whole world is on fire. But it's not." Tyler (Pokégnek Bodéwadmik) talked to me about the moment he learned that not everyone has such a miserable application experience. Before college he thought, "Oh, this is the way it is. It's just difficult. Everybody's experiencing this." Later, at college, while speaking to new friends from different high schools, he realized, "Oh wow, this isn't…that's not always the way it is. Your process could have been much smoother had you known this, this, and that." Mary (Pokégnek Bodéwadmik) echoed Tyler' experience that before getting to college, she never had any insight into the college application process, saying, "No one had ever really told me how hard—and honestly how tasking and time-consuming—the process would be." It was only after she got to college that she learned that many kids had had better or greater resources and therefore easier experiences.

A handful of students referenced particularly strong resources they were fortunate to have access to, and most of them not only spoke of their own experiences with these resources, but also spoke of wishing access to that resource could be expanded so more students could benefit from it. National and university-based scholarships were named as lifelines, and one participant spoke fondly of Naviance, an online platform her high school subscribed to designed to illuminate fit between students and universities to inform their applications.

Michael (Hawaiian) spoke about the weeklong workshop he attended the summer between his junior and senior year called College Horizons. Michael raved about his College Horizons experience. He said that "their program really helped us become fluent in using the Common App," and he credited that workshop with almost all his application literacy. He also thrived in a space of all Native students. "[We would] meet other people of Hawaiian or Indigenous background," he said. "They would tell us how important it is for people of our background to apply to college and take advantage of the resources that are out there. So that program really put everything in perspective for me." The College Horizons experience made Michael enthusiastic about his generation of Indigenous Americans participating in higher education.

4.4.2 Guidance and Counseling

Amy (Choctaw) summed up a common sentiment among the participants: “there wasn’t a lot of clear path.” High schoolers need informal and formal guidance when applying to college. They need their peers and loved ones to serve as sounding boards and safe harbors in the storm, but in our increasingly competitive higher education landscape, they also need professionals.

Georgia (Mescalero Apache) voiced the refrain of the negative impact of too few community members who had any higher education experience, saying, “I feel like if I would have had a mentor who was closer in age to me who could have given me advice and talked to me… I think I would have been a lot happier.” In her view, a peer-mentor would have reduced the stress of both applying to college and ultimately transitioning to life at college. This same idea was expressed by other participants, especially by only children and oldest siblings.

Several students spoke of guidance counselors who were either physically or effectively absent. Amy’s (Choctaw) high school seemed to be a “revolving door” for guidance counselors. She said it felt “like once a month we got a new guidance counselor, which is supposed to be your college person. So it was a little hard to formulate a plan with someone who was there for like two months and then left.” Mary’s (Pokégnek Bodéwadmik) counselors were consistently employed by her high school, but they were not enthusiastic about supporting her college application process; in fact, one counselor failed to submit Mary’s official transcripts to a college on time, which immediately disabled Mary from submitting a complete application to that college. In her words, “They [the high school counselors] were definitely there, but they weren’t at the same time.” Aliska (Cherokee, Apache) felt discouraged and abandoned by her high school counselors—if you were to write her college application story as a hero’s journey, her high school counselor would be the villain. She said, “I think a lot of them [counselors] don’t look past themselves in their job that they get paid for, and I think that that’s a shame.”

Interestingly, none of the ten participants explicitly voiced that they had received high school counseling that made a strong positive impact on their college application experience.

4.4.3 Big Fish in Small Ponds

Most, if not all, of the participants I spoke to were at the top of their high school classes. They were high-achieving high schoolers, deeply ambitious, and often perfectionists. For many of the participants, though, the high schools they were excelling in were under-resourced and not oriented toward academic excellence. They were big fish in small ponds.

Some expressed shock at being underprepared for college because they had been so successful in their small high school, and because they had not been aware of the more rigorous educations in other high schools.

Others felt acutely aware of their comparative lack of preparedness for college while they were in high school, and these students were exasperated by the adults in their lives who were only interested in praising their big fish success. Mary (Pokégnek Bodéwadmik) knew she had a realistic grasp of how she was behind students who were attending elite private high schools. Meanwhile, she said, the adults in her life were saying, "Oh, Mary, you're already at the top, don't worry about it." She felt compelled to constantly remind the very people who were supposed to be guiding her, "You have no idea. The schools that I'm going to, I'm nothing compared to them." Among others, she applied to multiple Ivy League schools, and she felt frustrated and dragged down by the praises her family and teachers good-heartedly repeated.

One unexpected way these big fish students were kept unprepared was through guidance counselors and other high school leaders grouping them and labelling them as high achievers, and then failing to provide them with more intense support or counseling. Above, I relayed the total absence of guidance counseling some participants identified; other participants, though, felt their high school had competent and consistent counseling, but felt that they were counterintuitively ignored. Ben (Cherokee) felt that the counselors at his school "picked favorites" based on achievements—the higher achieving the student, the more low-maintenance they could be for guidance counselors. This, of course, was not a productive attitude for those high achieving students. The very students that Ben's counselors felt could be put on cruise control were the ones who needed the most support to help them reach their lofty goals.

4.5 Other External Factors

4.5.1 Finances

Finances are always a major consideration when applying to college—not only do the applications themselves come with steep costs, but the thing you are applying for likely costs tens if not hundreds of thousands of dollars, and your financial aid is up in the air annually. Most participants commented on differing degrees of financial restraints influencing how many colleges they applied to and which colleges they applied to. Some participants came right out and said, "we were poor," and others simply gestured to financial difficulties they experienced due to competing family needs or the pandemic-era economy.

A few participants, though, introduced the fascinating and complex issue of applying to college (and especially applying for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA) as recipients of *per capita.* Per capita is shorthand for regular payments which are paid out by Tribes to either all Tribal Members or specific populations of Tribal Members, sourced from Tribal revenue from gaming. Tyler (Pokégnek Bodéwadmik) explained the questions and concerns he faced when filling out his FAFSA and financial aid forms:

> *But it was also difficult because our situation was unique because we had Tribal income, we had Tribal per capita. We had to go back and forth many times trying to figure out, 'Okay does this count for this? Or does this amount factor into this…are they gonna count this? Are take away because we had this income?' We had so many different hurdles that we had to experience in that way. So, it's funny: we had more assistance, but with that assistance came more questions, and it made it a bit more challenging in that way.*

4.5.2 Internet and Technology

With today's ubiquity of the online Common App, Internet access and reasonably modern and powerful technology is a necessity for applying to college.

Several participants voiced their infuriating experiences with the Internet and technology. Amy (Choctaw) offered me the most detail on her computer misery, and introduced it immediately in response to my very broad question, "While you were applying to college, what was your experience like?" She set the scene for me.

> *Uh, yeah, it was terrible. It was terrible. […] The worst part was that I didn't own a computer, I didn't own a laptop, I was poor. I had like a phone that was an LG $40 phone from Walmart. […] I used my nana's computer that she got when I was in elementary school, that's how old this computer is, and I used that to write my college essays and do everything. And it would break down all the time, sometimes it wouldn't start up. It was a nightmare. It was an absolute nightmare.*

And, zooming back out, aside from the many targeted resources and applications online, having a working computer and strong Internet access also gets you the basics: the Google search engine. Four participants specifically mentioned using Google—and certainly almost everyone else used it too. Tyler (Pokégnek Bodéwadmik) remembers Googling questions about filling out his FAFSA application. Amy (Choctaw) remembers Googling "What is a superscore?",

followed by "Do I *need* to take the SAT?", and in a moment of desperation, "How do you get into a college?" Michael (Hawaiian) used Google to find virtual tours of college campuses since, living on the Hawaiian Islands, travelling for campus visits was not feasible. The Internet and technology are indispensable tools for applying to college in the 21st century.

4.5.3 Tribal Resources

Tribal resources were essential to some participants' college application experiences. Certain Tribes and Nations are able to pay for college application fees, provide personal laptops and other necessary technologies, connect students with tutoring services and other application preparatory courses, and offer employment and internships to high school students to bolster their work experience and resumes. More than one participant explicitly stated that without resources from their Tribe, they would not have been able to apply to college.

Even within Tribes that have substantial resources, these resources sometimes go unused either because the Tribal Members are unaware of the existence of those resources or how to access them, or because using Tribal resources are stigmatized. Georgia (Mescalero Apache) lamented the common disconnect, saying, "There's also a lack of education on the reservation about…like…there *are* resources for you." Tyler (Pokégnek Bodéwadmik) told me that he would love to energize younger Native American students applying to college now with the following message:

> *If you're Native and your tribe has the resources, use 'em. They're there for a reason. And it's a wonderful thing. […] Lean on your tribe. Lean on the people in your community. Reach out to people. Ask questions. I think if I would have asked more questions, I would have only put myself in a better position.*

As several participants pointed out, Tribal resources are the remaining vestiges of the immense resources most Tribes lost during the long genocide committed by European Americans and US Americans. Significant effort has gone into securing these resources; young people should feel proud to engage these resources and benefit from them.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 From Findings to Discussion

Chapter 4 presented the participants' experiences of applying to college in the United States as grouped into four thematic areas of influence. These findings represent an empirical contribution to the field of higher education, and potentially to the field of Native American studies; they offer a snapshot of how Indigenous students perceive the college application experience, emphasizing personal feelings and memories. The majority of the participants found the experience to be strikingly negative. Data collection combined—and the discussion will now continue to combine—the resilience framework and the possible selves lens. The blending of these theories allows us to look at chronological cross-sections of participants' past selves' and past-future selves' experiences, perceptions, and expectations, representing both a methodological and conceptual contribution to the field of higher education. Examining experiences and perceptions chronologically allows us to hear Indigenous students' increasingly informed thoughts and opinions. There is value in measuring the raw experience, and then hearing how that experience feels in retrospect when individuals have a greater understanding of systemic and structural realities and of how their experience compares to those around them.

5.2 Chronological Cross-Sections

As a refresher, the resilience framework (Cotton et al., 2017), as applied to college applications, suggests that each applicant is impacted by a sum of protective and risk factors particular to their identity and social location. The psychological concept of possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) suggests that each person at any given moment is a current self, and possesses many future possible selves; important to this project, when we use a possible selves lens, we can tap into varying "tenses" of the self—past, present, and future, and even more complicated tenses like a "past-future self." The possible selves-influenced chronological structure of the interview questions led participants to implicitly report the protective and risk factors which influenced their application to college. In this way, the possible selves lens and the resilience framework operated in synchrony to create the interview schedule, and they now once again interact to interpret participant responses.

In concluding my review of the literature in Chapter 2, I distilled five protective and risk factors for Native American students applying to college in the US that I imagined would emerge in my findings.

Anticipated Factors Based on the Literature	
Protective Factors:	**Risk Factors:**
Parents or older siblings attended college	First generation, oldest or only child
Live near university or have visited a campus	Rural home, or grew up far from universities
High school had high college-going culture	High school had low college-going culture
Interacted with college counselor	Did not interact with college counselor
Financially stable childhood/adolescence	Childhood/adolescence in poverty

Table 1 from page 22.

Most of these expectations rooted in the literature were wholly supported by the interview findings, and this will be discussed in the following section.

I had originally planned to revise this table with the findings from the interviews, but I came to a critical realization. While a single large table displaying all the protective and risk factors introduced in the interviews would provide a thorough snapshot, the chronological structure of the interview schedule as based on the "tense of self" concept from the possible selves lens allows for a more nuanced result: the construction of *three* protective/risk factor tables (Tables 2-4) which display findings in chronological cross-sections—first looking at all the participants' experiences *before* applying to college, then all the participants' experiences *while* applying to college, and finally all the participants' reflections *after* applying to college.

From the Findings: *Before* Applying to College	
Protective Factors:	**Risk Factors:**
General knowledge of colleges/higher ed	No general knowledge of colleges/higher ed
Parents or older siblings attended college	First generation, oldest or only child
Live near university or have visited a campus	Rural home, or grew up far from universities
Talked with friends/family/counselors/ teachers about application cycle	Had no conversations about upcoming application cycle
Financially stable childhood	Financial instability or childhood in poverty
Financially literate (or financially literate parents/guardians/siblings/etc.)	Not financially literate (or no financially literate parents/guardians/siblings/etc.)
Regular practical imagining and articulating goals/aspirations/paths	No practice imagining or articulating goals/aspirations/paths
Participated in or attended programs targeted at historically disadvantaged applicants to build enthusiasm for applying	

Table 2.

From the Findings: *While* Applying to College	
Protective Factors:	**Risk Factors:**
Parents or immediate family had relatively recent and relevant college app experiences to share	Applicant is true or effective first-generation, or the oldest/only child
Good Internet and technology access	Limited Internet access or poor/old technology
High school had high college-going culture	High school had low college-going culture
High school counselor performed responsibilities	High school counselor failed to submit letters or transcripts
Was able to visit/tour campuses	Was not able to visit/tour campuses
Could afford standardized test fees and application fees, or had them covered	Could not afford standardized test fees and application fees, or had them covered
Positivity and encouragement from family/friends	Anti-higher education attitude from family/friends
Identity neatly fits on application	Identity does not neatly fit on application (e.g., bi-racial or multiracial identity)
Access to tools that help with narrowing down colleges to apply to (e.g., Naviance)	
Tribal resources available to high schoolers	
Private counseling	

Table 3.

From the Findings: Reflections *After* Applying to College	
Protective Factors:	**Risk Factors:**
High school counselor was consistently involved, responsive, and encouraging	High school counselors changed frequently, or counselor was inattentive or discouraging
Friend or peer-mentor close in age	Isolated; did not have friends of a similar age on a similar path
Scholarships	Burnout
	Caregiving responsibilities
	Pressure to join the military
	Teenage pregnancy (self, partner, or peers)
	Substance use (self or others)
	Pressure to not move away
	Family history of boarding school and education for assimilation

Table 4.

Analyzing the findings chronologically shows the evolution of what kinds of factors were most impactful to participants as their application process progressed, not to mention the development of their own perspectives on their protective and risk factors. To wit, participants

identified many more risk factors in the final reflective stage in large part because their current selves have more information about how their high school experiences and college application experiences compare to others; they now have perspective, a greater sense of relativity.

A final major point to be discussed—a finding which does not explicitly reveal itself in these tables—is the bizarre duality of the participants' confidence that they would go to college and participants' lack of confidence that their future selves would be happy, successful, or stable. To begin, all but one of the participants felt sure that they would go to college somewhere somehow. When those nine participants were in high school applying to college, *all* their immediate future possible selves were in college or college graduates. There seemed to be no meaningful alternative. College was how you reached bigger and better things. When I asked participants what their high school selves wanted to do with their lives more generally, all of them (including the one participant who was not confident they would go to college somewhere somehow) listed careers which would have required at least a bachelor's degree, and oftentimes an advanced degree. They aspired to very specific professions that they found in classrooms or online or in pop culture; they wanted to grow up and be oncologists, financiers, forensic psychologists, businesswomen, aerospace engineers, and politicians.

Still, alongside participants' obvious commitment to attending college and their obvious interest in joining career paths that required a college degree, the participants had shockingly little confidence that their future selves would be happy, successful, or stable. Their high school selves seemed ready to diverge from their parents' life paths, but they did not expect any higher quality of life than their parents'.

A degree or a job title is a concrete thing that a teenager can make a goal. Feeling fulfilled, being financially secure, setting and achieving goals—these are abstract things that are more difficult to aspire to when you have not seen them in action. The adults they had interacted with when they were children primed their expectations for themselves and what adulthood would *feel* like. One participant characterized the overall sense she got growing up on her reservation as "people [being] comfortable living with nothing." Another participant—one of ten children in their family—said that the overwhelming message about adulthood from adults on the reservation was, "Life is a series of decisions, and they all lead to garbage. Nothing you do amounts to anything, why even try?"

Even while forging new paths, as in the instance of first-gen students firmly expecting to attend college, participants rarely overcame ideas about the quality of their future lives or the broadness of their horizons before arriving at college.

5.3 Locating this Project in the Literature

As mentioned above, the literature review in Chapter 2 concluded with a table of protective and resilience factors I expected to hear in the interviews based on the pre-existing scholarship. Within the three broad areas of family, finances, and information, participants' comments by and large aligned with the literature, which, as a reminder, was merely adjacent in nature. There was no literature to review on Native American students applying to college in the US, so the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and revisited here covers first-generation college students, rural students, low-income students, and Chicana students, among other "nontraditional" groups.

Family barriers, like Ceja's (2006) findings, were described by the participants as parents and other family members being unfamiliar with higher education. A lack of familiarity led to anxiety and fear and eliminated the opportunity for applicants to receive advice and guidance within the home. Importantly, within the realm of the family, the long Native American histories—which I claimed in Chapter 2 underpinned both the literature review and the project in its entirety—appeared repeatedly in the interviews. Participants spoke of the Trail of Tears and Indian boarding schools. They talked about their family's apprehension surrounding college because schools were a locus of forced assimilation. One participant told me about a great-uncle who to this day refuses to speak English and only speaks his Native language; he is still living a resistance because of the ways the United States has historically tried to stamp out his culture.

Financial barriers were both acute and chronic. Participants spoke of the steep application fees, and the difficulty accessing the resources designed to waive or cover the fees. Just as Taylor (2019) found, the forms designed to remove financial barriers require an impractical and inappropriate level of financial literacy, only adding to applicants' stress rather than serving as a source of relief. A few participants' Tribes covered the application fees directly, and they spoke of that support with immense gratitude because it easily eliminated the fees without requiring hours of additional research and effort. More generally, participants spoke about the crushing weight of being poor, financial realities which shortened their fuses and lengthened their days—multiple jobs and childcare responsibilities were stacked on top of high school, homework, and standardized test prep. One participant described burnout so severe she only applied to one college, despite wanting to apply to many more.

Information—or rather, lack thereof—was brought up again and again in the interviews as perhaps the most salient barrier. Participants spoke of confusion at every turn and a maddening inability to get answers to their questions. Lack of information as discussed in the

interviews, in many instances, connected directly with a lack of family members who were familiar with higher education and a lack of financial resources to hire help, just as McDonough et al. (1997) explain.

However, I found that two of the expected protective and resilience factors as derived from the literature were directly contradicted by the interview findings. First, my interviews revealed the existence of a class of college applicants unnamed in previous literature who were *effectively* but not *true* first-generation students (Ceja, 2006; Dumais & Ward, 2009). My project suggests that there is an additional category of applicants whose parents have some higher education but are operating with the same limited knowledge as true first-gen students. Second, participants reported that college counselors are not always the wealth of information and source of support that prior literature suggested; in fact, the way many participants spoke of their high school counselors was completely inconsistent with the literature. Counselors were described by participants as either passively not helpful or actively unhelpful to participants' college application process, rather than serving as key facilitators of the college app process as in Jeong Robinson and Roska (2016) and Bryan et al. (2011).

The fact that there were only two major deviations from the literature in the findings underscores the fact that this is not a study which claims to have isolated participants' very Native American-ness as the cause of their experiences. That they share many experiences with first-generation, rural, impoverished, and Chicana students reflects that many identities were in play in this study, and none were isolated. With that said, numerous comments were made which neither aligned with nor deviated from the literature—they did not come up at all in the literature. Topics which were raised numerous times within this microscopic study (like the quality of high school teaching on reservations, grappling with what racial identity to check on the application, and family history of Indian boarding schools) illustrate the need for further research on Native American experiences applying to higher education.

5.4 A Return to the Research Questions

The blending of the resilience framework and the possible selves theory has made the chronological cross-sectional analysis shown in the three tables above possible. As we return to the research questions, the resilience framework and possible selves theory will function sometimes together and sometimes independently.

5.4.1 How do Native American students experience the college application process in the United States?

Stressful. Lonely. Terrible. Degrading. These are the words participants used to describe their college application experiences. Negativity and exhaustion colored most of the interviews (with just one participant describing his experience as truly "neutral"). Some participants said that their Native identity and the total unpreparedness of the US college application structures to receive Native applicants made their experiences much worse—identity questions about being "Native enough" or confusion about Tribal finances cropped up again and again. Many spoke of the pushback they received from family members and friends for simply aspiring to participate in higher education. The overwhelming unfamiliarity with college from the participants' parents, high schools, and broader communities made them isolated, and they often took on stress without telling others or asking for help.

Still, across the interviews, participants firmly expressed a strong sense that all this stress and loneliness and worry was worth it. Higher education was characterized as a unique means of "getting out" and jumpstarting an independent adult life, and that perception of college seemed to start early. One participant said that going to college was "definitely the dream," and had been since they were very young. Most participants were looking for something new when they applied for college(s), and no one suggested that college ultimately failed to meet expectations. No one wished they had not applied to or gone to college. Several participants gave advice to future Native American college applicants during their own interviews. One participant said, "I want them to know that it is possible. It's hard. But you can do it."

The way participants easily responded to questions which asked them to break up their memories chronologically and the way they comfortably spoke about past selves (and the future selves those past selves imagined) suggests that participants did experience the college application as different, evolving versions of themselves. They spoke of protective and risk factors without knowing it. They experienced the good and the bad of college applications, and further, they were able to speak about the things that *would* have made it better or *would* have made it worse. Conscious of it or not, the participants were extremely articulate with respect to the lives they lived *and* the lives they might have, could have, would have lived.

5.4.2 How do Native American students describe the barriers to application, if there are any?

The findings clearly show significant barriers to Native American students applying to college. Given the theoretical lenses being used in this project, we can think of barriers as *risk factors*, as defined in the resilience framework (Cotton et al., 2017). The chronological cross-section tables show that barriers (risk factors) fluctuated for participants throughout the application process.

Before applying to college, risk factors were described generally, rather diffusely—participants talked about being poor, not being casually familiar with higher education, and not knowing what was coming next. While applying to college, risk factors were described much more precisely—it was more than being poor, it was that they were poor *and* not financially literate; it was more than being unfamiliar with higher education, it was that they felt like *nobody* around them was familiar enough to answer their most basic questions. Increasingly microscopic risk factors were described, including SAT and ACT fees, Internet connectivity, and not feeling seen by standard "tick the box" racial identity questions.

After applying to college, in reflection on the process, risk factors were described in far greater volume than the previous two sections. Participants named risk factors that impacted them directly, but also risk factors that impacted their peers or elders. A community mindset that higher education does not necessarily—or even normally—follow high school manifests in the frequency of alternate life paths. In some cases, the barrier to higher education is simply that it has not been prioritized by the community; in many other cases, the barrier to higher education is that it *cannot* be prioritized by the community. Teenage pregnancy, caregiving responsibilities, and familial substance use/abuse are examples participants gave of instances which would automatically be prioritized over pursuing higher education. One participant concluded that the attitude of most people on her reservation is, "'I'm fine where I'm at.' It's almost like there is no incentive to look for a better future."

5.4.3 How do Native American students' perceptions of the college application process change over time?

The "tense of self" concept from the possible selves theory led to the before, during, and after structure of the interview questions. The three tables displaying the chronological cross-sections of the protective and risk factors show that new factors came into play as the participants moved through the college application process. Their perceptions, too, changed over time; several participants commented on the way their feelings changed as they were becoming, as one put it, "better informed." Their awareness of structural and cultural barriers, in conversation with their awareness of other applicants' personal experiences, functioned to give them a better sense of the steepness of the barriers they faced.

During the participants' reflection on their experiences having completed the college application process—having already "walked through the fire," as one participant described it—many of them articulated sympathy and sorrow for their former selves. They often identified more intense feelings of isolation or a stronger sense of being without resources the further they were from their application cycle. Not only did they now have more information and a better perspective on the ways they were disadvantaged or made to deal with more complex identity issues during their college application process, but it also seemed to me as if their younger selves' minds had blocked a full realization of their troubled positions. Completing the application had been paramount, and I think something in their psyches helped them to push through before allowing the reality of the challenges to set in. For some participants, this evolving understanding of what they were facing during their own college application process led them to brainstorm actionable steps that the US and Tribal governments, the higher ed industry, and allies could tackle to ease the challenges Native applicants face.

5.5 Actionable Recommendations

From the ten participants, without my prompting, twenty-nine recommendations were voiced for changes to be made to the college application process, or for new kinds of support to be given to Native American applicants—of those twenty-nine ideas, fifteen were unique. Those numbers alone suggest that Native American students have significant overlap in what they think should be prioritized to improve the college application experience for their population, thus suggesting that decision-makers with power should take care to consult with Native American students to find a potentially small number of actions which could make a big difference.

Of the fifteen unique recommendations, three were particularly well-developed.

First, FAFSA should be better adapted for per capita. FAFSA could alleviate stress by publishing clear instructions on how to report per capita payments—instructions written in a way that is accessible to high school students and their families who possess low financial literacy. Universities, too, should have at least one person in their financial aid office who is familiar with per capita and able to assist students as they navigate that very specific financial situation. Without easily comprehensible written guidance or designated helpers, the system is only further demonstrating that higher education has not been designed with Native American students in mind. Multiple participants commented on not only the difficulties they had in simply filling out their FAFSA applications to accurately report their per capita income, but also the anxieties they felt on how their per capita income might disqualify them from aid. There

should also be plainly-worded explanations of how that money is understood by the equations that determine aid—namely that per capita is often considered an excluded asset by FAFSA (Federal Student Aid, 2023).

Second, the digital disconnect on Tribal lands is far too common, and it needs to be remedied. Addressing Internet deserts and increasing ownership of or access to modern technology would support Native students moving into higher education given that the applications themselves—the literal entry points to higher ed—exist online. If you rank the US states by Native population, states in the number two, three, four, five, and six spots are also in the list of top ten US states with the largest Internet deserts (US Census Bureau, 2021 and Cooke, 2020).

Third, talking to parents about the opportunities in higher education must be prioritized. There are outreach organizations designed to interface with students about higher education, how to participate in it, and what it can mean for their futures. For all those outreach organizations talking to students, there should be an equal number talking to parents. One participant suggested the model of informal meetings—almost like town halls—on or near reservations with a speaker to offer basic information and to take questions directly from parents and guardians; what would sweeten this is if that speaker was themself a parent who had not gone to college, and who had children who had successfully gone to college to positive outcomes. The participant who made this recommendation felt that in response to the centuries' of evidence driving Native distrust of European and US education systems, the most effective antidote to that distrust would be someone with lived experience.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 In Summary

This dissertation has investigated Native American student experiences of applying to college in the United States in the twenty-first century. I pursued three research questions: how do Native students experience the college application process? How do they describe barriers, if there are any? And how do their perceptions evolve over time? To answer these questions, I interviewed ten current and recent Native college students in the United States who shared stories, memories, and feelings about applying to college.

Before conducting interviews, I reviewed bodies of adjacent literature because there was no prior scholarship on this topic. First, I presented an abridged history of the relationship between Native Americans and US American education, which is a history of forced assimilation. Second, I collected and reviewed higher education literature on nontraditional applicants to college in the US, including Chicana students, first-generation students, and rural students. These nontraditional students were generally found to experience a multitude of barriers in the realms of family, finances, and information.

Theoretically, this project took two concepts—Cotton et al.'s (2017) resilience framework and Markus and Nurius' (1986) possible selves theory—and fused them. This blending of theories allowed me to devise interview questions which prompted interviewees to implicitly report "protective" and "risk" factors according to the resilience framework, and to structure those interviews chronologically to measure evolving experiences and perceptions and to probe interviewees' understandings of their many possible selves.

The findings from the ten interviews demonstrated that the participants largely had challenging and lonely experiences applying to college. They reported many barriers, including in the areas of family, finances, and information, which were identified in the adjacent literature. With my blended theory approach, I was able to analyze these findings in chronological cross-sections, identifying the protective and risk factors that participants felt before, during, and after their application cycles. Critically, these chronological cross-sections revealed that *before* applying to college, participants experienced protective and risk barriers very generally; *while* applying to college, participants experienced specific, nuanced, and interrelated protective and risk barriers; *after* applying to college, having met new people from different backgrounds and having gained new perspectives, participants identified many more

risk factors than protective factors, and importantly commented on community (rather than individual) risk factors.

The most striking message in the findings was that participants felt like college was a necessity; they were driven to apply and attend to reap the benefits that come with a college degree. This sense of duty came through clearly in participants' remarks in all three chronological sections of the interview, and every participant was happy with their decision to apply to and attend college. No matter how frustrating or even impossible the application seemed, the participants persevered. As one participant put it, speaking as her high school self, "I just have to do this."

As we arrive at the conclusion of this dissertation, I would like to briefly comment on the limits this project faced, and potential future directions for related research.

6.2 Limitations

A notable characteristic of this project is its small sample size. With only ten interviewees, the data I have collected and analyzed is not generalizable to any larger population. It represents only a snapshot. According to academic norms, a small sample size is almost always considered a limitation, but I hesitate to embrace this label. The intimate interviews, made possible by the small sample size, returned detailed portraits of each participant's college application experience, and their personal perceptions of the barriers they faced. The small sample size has been a strength in this way, allowing for rapport and thoroughness.

Additionally, it must be said that this project has never presumed to speak for all Native American students who apply to college(s) in the United States—few projects presume to speak for all Native Americans on any topic. It would take a mammoth effort to design a study that would be generalizable to all 574 federally recognized tribes. It is essential to recognize that "*the* Native American experience" does not exist, as Native America is not a monolith.

A major limitation does exist in this project's inability to pinpoint causality. There are so many relevant categories which frequently overlap and intersect with being Native American that it is difficult to say whether my participants' experiences particularly reflect eases and challenges that stem from their identities as Native American, or if they are more reflective of eases and challenges that stem from socio-economic status, being a first-generation college student, growing up in rural versus suburban areas, the list could go on.

6.3 Directions for Future Research

Two general directions would prove fruitful for future research: a quantitative study with a large sample size, and a study which explores options for actionable strategies to ease college application challenges for Native students.

A large quantitative study might ask participants to respond to closed survey style questions. This study should be created by those with expertise in survey question design. By beginning with more biographical information than my study requested from participants, stronger correlation might be visible in the data. For example, a large quantitative study might be able to locate specific barriers (i.e., Internet deserts, inability to pay fees, lack of awareness of colleges, lack of access to transportation) to specific reservations or ZIP codes. Through this strategy, more comprehensive and intersectional data on students' identities outside of their Indigeneity could be gathered systematically: did their parents go to college?, how far do they live from a four-year degree granting university?, how many counselors did their high school employ?, etc. More localized data connecting specific populations to specific barriers experienced would allow for more targeted solutions to be invented and implemented.

On that note, a study which explores actionable strategies to ease application barriers might collaborate with experts on creating relief programs for Indian Country or government workers in the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Individuals in these critical roles would have experience in rolling out massive programs that are designed to flex enough to meet the unique needs of hundreds of sovereign nations across the United States. One might imagine a program that asks colleges and universities to buy into a new kind of college application or outreach program designed to simplify the application process for anyone with a Tribal ID or anyone coming from a reservation high school—this would shift the onus off of Native students (who we already know are statistically more likely to be unfamiliar with the process of applying to college and less likely to have other adults in their lives who have the familiarity/knowledge to assist them) to colleges and universities who should want to be serving Native America in accordance with their highly marketed diversity, equity, and inclusion missions.

As mentioned previously, and as is often the case in research adjacent to Native American studies, so little research has been done in this area that almost any future research undertaken in good faith would be productive.

References

Adams, D. W. (1995). *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928.* University Press of Kansas.

Adom, L. (2020, June 10). Please Don't Ask Your Black Friends to Teach You About Racism. *The Everymom*. https://theeverymom.com/dont-ask-your-black-friends-to-teach-you-about-racism/

Ahmed, S. (2004). Declarations of Whiteness: The Non-Performativity of Anti-Racism. *Borderlands*, *3*(2).

Akers, D. L. (2015). An Eastern Nation's Removal: Choctaws Leave the Homeland. In A. L. Hurtado, P. Iverson, W. J. Bauer, Jr., & S. K. Amerman (Eds.), *Major Problems in American Indian History: Documents and Essays* (Third, pp. 269–280). Cengage Learning.

Ali, S. (2006). Racializing Research: Managing Power and Politics? *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *29*(3), 471–486. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870600597891

Aliyu, A. A., Singhry, I. M., Adamu, H., & Abubakar, M. M. (2015). Ontology, Epistemology and Axiology in Quantitative and Qualitative Research: Elucidation of the Research Philosophical Misconception. *Proceedings of The Academic Conference*, *2*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318721927_ONTOLOGY_EPISTEMOLOGY_AND_AXIOLOGY_IN_QUANTITATIVE_AND_QUALITATIVE_RESEARCH_ELUCIDATION_OF_THE_RESEARCH_PHILOSOPHICAL_MISCONCEPTION

Anderson, E. E. (2019). A Proposal for Fair Compensation for Research Participants. *The American Journal of Bioethics*, *19*(9), 62–64. https://doi.org/10.1080/15265161.2019.1630501

Arola, A. (2011). Native American Philosophy. In W. Edelglass & J. L. Garfield (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of World Philosophy* (online, pp. 562–573). Oxford University Press.

Bennett, C., Fitzpatrick-Harnish, K., & Talbot, B. (2022). Collaborative untangling of positionality, ownership, and answerability as white researchers in Indigenous spaces. *International Journal of Music Education*, *40*(4), 628–641. https://doi.org/10.1177/02557614221087343

Blumenkrantz, D. G., & Goldstein, M. B. (2014). Seeing College as a Rite of Passage: What Might Be Possible. *New Directions for Higher Education*, *2014*(166), 85–94. https://doi.org/10.1002/he.20098

Bogost, I. (2020, October 20). *America Will Sacrifice Anything for the College Experience*. The Atlantic. https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2020/10/college-was-never-about-education/616777/

Bowl, M. (2001). Experiencing the barriers: Non-traditional students entering higher education. *Research Papers in Education*, *16*(2), 141–160. https://doi.org/10.1080/02671520110037410

Brayboy, B. M. J., Solyom, J. A., & Castagno, A. E. (2015). Indigenous Peoples in Higher Education. *Journal of American Indian Education*, *54*(1), 154–186.

Brennan, J., & Naidoo, R. (2008). Higher Education and the Achievement (And/or Prevention) of Equity and Social Justice. *Higher Education*, *56*(3), 287–302.

Brighouse, H., & Swift, A. (2006). Equality, Priority, and Positional Goods. *Ethics*, *116*(3), 471–497. https://doi.org/10.1086/500524

British Educational Research Association (BERA). (2018). *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*. British Educatoinal Research Assocation (BERA). file:///Users/julia/Downloads/BERA-Ethical-Guidelines-for-Educational-Research_4thEdn_2018.pdf

Bryan, J., Moore-Thomas, C., Day-Vines, N. L., & Holcomb-McCoy, C. (2011). School Counselors as Social Capital: The Effects of High School College Counseling on College Application Rates. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *89*(2), 190–199. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6678.2011.tb00077.x

Bryant, Jr., J. A. (2021, March 18). Acknowledge—And Act. *Inside Higher Ed*. https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2021/03/19/colleges-must-critically-examine-how-they-educate-native-american-students-opinion

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social Research Methods* (Fifth). Oxford University Press.

Bureau of Indian Affairs. (2017, August 19). *Why are American Indians and Alaska Natives also referred to as Native Americans? | Indian Affairs*. US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, FAQs. https://www.bia.gov/faqs/why-are-american-indians-and-alaska-natives-also-referred-native-americans

Cabrera, A. F., & La Nasa, S. M. (2000). Understanding the College-Choice Process. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, *107*, 5–22. https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.10701

Carothers, C., Black, J., Langdon, S. J., Donkersloot, R., Ringer, D., Coleman, J., Gavenus, E. R., Justin, W., Williams, M., Christiansen, F., Samuelson, J., Stevens, C., Woods, B., Clark, S. J., Clay, P. M., Mack, L., Raymond-Yakoubian, J., Sanders, A. A., Stevens, B. L., & Whiting, A. (2021). Indigenous peoples and salmon stewardship: A critical relationship. *Ecology and Society*, *26*(1). https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-11972-260116

Case, D. S., & Voluck, D. A. (2012). *Alaska Natives and American Laws: Third Edition*. University of Alaska Press.

Ceja, M. (2006). Understanding the Role of Parents and Siblings as Information Sources in the College Choice Process of Chicana Students. *Journal of College Student Development*, *47*(1), 87–104. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2006.0003

Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC). (2017). *Researcher Safety, Including Interviewing in Non-Public Places and Considerations When Employing Local/Casual Staff for Research Projects/Fieldwork*. https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/files/bpg01researchersafetypdf

Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC). (2020a). *Conducting Research Interviews*. https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/files/bpg10conductingresearchinterviewsv10pdf

Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC). (2020b). *Ethnographic and Other Types of Qualitative Research*. https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/files/bpg02ethnographicandothertypesofqualitativeresearchv10pdf

Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC). (2020c). *Management and Protection of Data Collected for Research Purposes*. https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/files/bpg09datacollectionandmanagementpdf

Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC). (2021). *Internet-Mediated Research*. https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/files/bpg06internet-basedresearchpdf

Clancy, P., & Goastellec, G. (2007). Exploring Access and Equity in Higher Education: Policy and Performance in a Comparative Perspective. *Higher Education Quarterly*, *61*(2), 136–154. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2273.2007.00343.x

Clandinin, D. J. (2013). *Engaging in Narrative Inquiry*. Left Coast Press.

Cogdell, V. (2016). *Rural Parents Navigating College Choice* [Ed.D. Dissertation]. The George Washington University.

Cooke, K. (2020, April 27). *The Top Internet Deserts in the US*. SatelliteInternet.Com. https://www.satelliteinternet.com/resources/top-internet-deserts/

Cotton, D. R., Nash, T., & Kneale, P. (2017). Supporting the retention of non-traditional students in Higher Education using a resilience framework. *European Educational Research Journal*, *16*(1), 62–79. https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904116652629

Creswell, J. W. (2021). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research [electronic resource]* (Sixth, global edition.). Pearson. https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/login?url=https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oxford/detail.action?docID=6118338

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (Fourth). SAGE Publications.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*. SAGE Publications.

Deloria, Jr., V. (1998). Intellectual Self-Determination and Sovereignty: Looking at the Windmills in Our Minds. *Wicazo Sa Review*, *13*(1), 25–31.

Department of Education. (2020). *Tribal Colleges and Universities*. White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Native Americans and Strengthening Tribal Colleges and Universities. https://sites.ed.gov/whiaiane/tribes-tcus/tribal-colleges-and-universities/

Dumais, S., & Ward, A. (2009). Cultural capital and first-generation college success. *Poetics*, *38*(3), 245–265. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2009.11.011

Dunbar-Ortiz, R. (2014). *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*. Beacon Press.

Federal Student Aid. (2023). Filling Out the FAFSA. In *2023-2024 Federal Student Aid Handbook*. US Department of Education. https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/fsa-handbook/2021-2022/application-and-verification-guide/ch2-filling-out-fafsa

Folkes, L. (2022). Moving beyond 'shopping list' positionality: Using kitchen table reflexivity and in/visible tools to develop reflexive qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*. https://doi.org/10.1177/14687941221098922

Forbes, J. D. (1998). Intellectual Self-Determination and Sovereignty: Implications for Native Studies and for Native Intellectuals. *Wicazo Sa Review*, *13*(1), 11–23.

Freud, S. (1925). *Collected Papers*. Hogarth Press and Institute of Psychoanalysis.

Friedman, J., Hansen, H., & Gone, J. P. (2023). Deaths of despair and Indigenous data genocide. *The Lancet*, *401*(10379), 874–876. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(22)02404-7

Grande, S. (2015). *Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought* (Tenth Anniversary Edition). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Griffith, A. L., & Rothstein, D. S. (2009). Can't get there from here: The decision to apply to a selective college. *Economics of Education Review*, *28*(5), 620–628. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2009.01.004

Harkins, G. (2015). George Harkins (Choctaw) Laments His People's Forced Exile, 1832. In A. L. Hurtado, P. Iverson, W. J. Bauer, Jr., & S. K. Amerman (Eds.), *Major Problems in American Indian History: Documents and Essays* (Third, pp. 249–251). Cengage Learning.

Hausmann, L. R. M., Schofield, J. W., & Woods, R. L. (2007). Sense of Belonging as a Predictor of Intentions to Persist Among African American and White First-Year College Students. *Research in Higher Education*, *48*(7), 803–839. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-007-9052-9

Holmes, A. G. D. (2020). Researcher Positionality—A Consideration of Its Influence and Place in Qualitative Research—A New Researcher Guide. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, *8*(4), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.34293/ education.v8i4.3232

Hossler, D., Braxton, J., & Coopersmith, G. (1989). Understanding Student College Choice. *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, *5*, 231–288.

Hossler, D., & Gallagher, K. (1987). Studying Student College Choice: A Three-Phase Model and the Implications for Policymakers. *College and University*, *51*.

House Concurrent Resolution 108, HCR-108 (1953).

Hurtado, A. L., Iverson, P., Bauer, Jr., W. J., & Amerman, S. K. (Eds.). (2015). *Major Problems in American History: Documents and Essays* (Third). Cengage Learning.

Hurtado, S., & Carter, D. F. (1997). Effects of college transition and perceptions of the campus racial climate on Latino college students' sense of belonging. *Sociology of Education*, *70*, 324–345. https://doi.org/10.2307/2673270

Hurtado, S., Milem, J., Clayton-Pedersen, A., & Allen, W. (1999). *Enacting Diverse Learning Environments: Improving the Climate for Racial/Ethnic Diversity in Higher Education. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, Vol. 26, No. 8*. ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education, One Dupont Circle, N. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED430514

Huyser, K. R. (2020). Data & Native American Identity. *Contexts*, *19*(3), 10–15. https://doi.org/10.1177/1536504220950395

Indian Removal Act, Pub. L. 21-148, 21st United States Congress (1830).

James, N., & Busher, H. (2009). *Online interviewing*. SAGE. https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857024503

James, W. (1910). *Psychology: The Briefer Course*. H. Holt & Co. http://archive.org/details/psychologybriefe00willuoft

Jamieson, M. K., Govaart, G. H., & Pownall, M. (2023). Reflexivity in quantitative research: A rationale and beginner's guide. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*. https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12735

Jeong Robinson, K., & Roksa, J. (2016). Counselors, Information, and High School College-Going Culture: Inequalities in the College Application Process. *Research in Higher Education*, *57*, 845–868. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-016-9406-2

Kauanui, J. K. (2018). *Paradoxes of Hawaiian Sovereignty: Land, Sex, and the Colonial Politics of State Nationalism*. Duke University Press.

Knight, J. (Ed.). (2009). *Financing Access and Equity in Higher Education*. Brill Academic Publishers. https://brill.com/display/title/37008

Koch, K. (2021, April 29). *Watchlist: The "Indian Problem."* Smoke Signals. https://www.smokesignals.org/articles/2021/04/29/watchlist-the-indian-problem/

Kohl, E., & McCutcheon, P. (2015). Kitchen Table Reflexivity: Negotiating Positionality Through Everyday Talk. *Gender, Place & Culture*, *22*(6), 747–763. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2014.958063

Kovach, M. (2021). *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Second). University of Toronto Press.

Krakoff, S. (2012). Inextricably Political: Race, Membership, and Tribal Sovereignty. *Washington Law Review*, *87*(4), 1041–1132.

Lee, J., Donlan, W., & Brown, E. F. (2010). American Indian/Alaskan Native Undergraduate Retention at Predominantly White Institutions: An Elaboration of Tinto's Theory of College Student Departure. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, *12*(3), 257–276. https://doi.org/10.2190/CS.12.3.a

Loewen, J. W. (2007). *Lies my teacher told me: Everything your American history textbook got wrong* (Touchstone trade pbk. ed.). Simon & Schuster.

Macfarlane, B. (2022). Methodology, Fake Learning, and Emotional Performativity. *ECNU Review of Education*, *5*(1), 140–155. https://doi.org/10.1177/2096531120984786

Maestas, R., Vaquera, G., & Zehr, L. (2007). Factors Impacting Sense of Belonging at a Hispanic-Serving Institution. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *6*, 237–256. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192707302801

Manohar, N., Bhole, S., Liamputtong, P., & Arora, A. (2017). Researcher positionality in cross-cultural and sensitive research. In P. Liamputtong (Ed.), *Handbook of Research Methods in Health Social Sciences* (pp. 1–15). Springer Nature.

Marcus, G. E. (1998). What comes (just) after "post?": The case of ethnography. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Landscape of Qualitative Research* (pp. 383–406). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Markus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible Selves. *American Psychologist*, *41*(9), 954–969. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.41.9.954

Martin, J. P., Desing, R., & Borrego, M. (2022). Positionality Statements Are Just the Tip of the Iceberg: Moving Towards a Reflexive Process. *Journal of Women and Minorities in Science and Engineering*, *28*(4), v–vii. https://doi.org/10.1615/JWomenMinorScienEng.2022044277

Mason, J. (2002). Finding a Focus and Knowing Where You Stand. In *Qualitative Researching* (2nd ed., pp. 13–25). SAGE.

May, T. (2011). Interviewing: Methods and Processes. In *Social research: Issues, methods and process* (4th ed., pp. 131–161). Open University Press. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oxford/reader.action?docID=729519&ppg=148

McCowan, T. (2007). Expansion without Equity: An Analysis of Current Policy on Access to Higher Education in Brazil. *Higher Education*, *53*(5), 579–598.

McCowan, T. (2016). Three dimensions of equity of access to higher education. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, *46*(4), 645–665. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2015.1043237

McDonough, P. M., Korn, J. S., & Yamasaki, E. (1997). Access, Equity, and the Privatization of College Counseling. *The Review of Higher Education*, *20*(3), 297–317. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.1997.0004

McKenney, T. L. (2015). Indian Commissioner Thomas L. McKenney Explains Removal, 1828. In A. L. Hurtado, P. Iverson, W. J. Bauer, Jr., & S. K. Amerman (Eds.), *Major Problems in American Indian History: Documents and Essays* (Third, pp. 269–280). Cengage Learning.

Mejia, M. (2021, May 30). The US History of Native American Boarding Schools. *The Indigenous Foundation*. https://www.theindigenousfoundation.org/articles/us-residential-schools

Miller, J., & Glassner, B. (2021). The "inside" and the "outside": Finding realities in interviews. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research* (5th ed., pp. 53–68). SAGE. https://contentstore.cla.co.uk/secure/link?id=7ab89de4-c0ec-ec11-b656-a04a5e5d2f8d

Moffitt, U., Rogers, L. O., & Dastrup, K. R. (2021). Beyond Ethnicity: Applying Helms's White Racial Identity Development Model Among White Youth. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, *32*(3), 1140–1159. https://doi.org/10.1111/ jora.12645

Moon, K., & Blackman, D. (2014). A Guide to Understanding Social Science Research for Natural Scientists. *Conservation Biology*, *28*(5), 1167–1177. https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.12326

Morgaine, K. (2017). Positionality and privilege in qualitative research: Feminist critical praxis. In S. Wahab, B. Anderson-Nathe, & C. Gringeri (Eds.), *Feminisms in Social Work Research Promise and Possibilitys for Justice-Based Knowledge* (pp. 226–239). Routledge.

Museus, S. D., & Maramba, D. C. (2011). The impact of culture on Filipino American students' sense of belonging. *Review of Higher Education: Journal of the Association for the Study of Higher Education*, *34*, 231–258. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2010.0022

National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). *Characteristics of Postsecondary Faculty* (Condition of Education). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/csc

National Native Scholarship Providers. (2022). *National Study on College Affordability for Indigenous Students* (p. 22). https://issuu.com/collegefund/docs/nnsp_college_affordability_-_final

Nelson, D. J., & Madsen, L. D. (2018). Representation of Native Americans in US science and engineering faculty. *MRS Bulletin*, *43*(5), 379–383. https://doi.org/10.1557/mrs.2018.108

Nittle, N. (2022, November 23). Native American students can't afford college, landmark study finds. *The 19th*. https://19thnews.org/2022/11/native-americans-costs-college/

Nora, A., & Cabrera, A. F. (1992). *Measuring Program Outcomes: What Impacts Are Important to Assess and What Impacts Are Possible to Measure?* (p. 170) [Paper prepared for the Design Conference for the Evaluation of Talent Search.]. Office of Policy and Planning, U.S. Department of Education.

Nyein, K. P., Caylor, J. R., Duong, N. S., Fry, T. N., & Wildman, J. L. (2020). Beyond positivism: Toward a pluralistic approach to studying "real" teams. *Organizational Psychology Review*, *10*(2), 87–112. https://doi.org/10.1177/2041386620915593

Oxendine, S. D., Taub, D. J., & Cain, E. J. (2020). Factors Related to Native American Students' Perceptions of Campus Culture. *Journal of College Student Development*, *61*(3), 267–280. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2020.0027

Pacheco, C. M., Daley, S. M., Brown, T., Filippi, M., Greiner, K. A., & Daley, C. M. (2013). Moving Forward: Breaking the Cycle of Mistrust Between American Indians and Researchers. *American Journal of Public Health*, *103*(12), 2152–2159. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2013.301480

Pevar, S. L. (1992). *The Rights of Indians and Tribes: The Basic ACLU Guide to Indian and Tribal Rights*. Southern Illinois University Press.

Pezalla, A. E., Pettigrew, J., & Miller-Day, M. (2012). Researching the researcher-as-instrument: An exercise in interviewer self-reflexivity. *Qualitative Research*, *12*(2), 165–185.

Postsecondary National Policy Institute. (2022a). *First-Generation Students*. https://pnpi.org/factsheets/first-generation-students/

Postsecondary National Policy Institute. (2022b). *Native American Students in Higher Education*. https://pnpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/NativeAmericanFactSheet-Nov-2022.pdf

Punch, K. F., & Oancea, A. (2014). *Introduction to research methods in education* (2nd ed.). SAGE. https://contentstore.cla.co.uk/secure/link?id=10b3e6dd-c0ec-ec11-b656-a04a5e5d2f8d

Real Talk: WOC & Allies. (2017, May 27). White people, stop asking us to educate you about racism. *Medium*. https://medium.com/@realtalkwocandallies/white-people-stop-asking-us-to-educate-you-about-racism-69273d39d828

Rice, M. (2022). Power and positionality: A case study of linguistics' relationship to Indigenous peoples. *Proceedings of the Linguistic Society of America*, *7*(1), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.3765/plsa.v7i1.5295

Ripley, E., Macrina, F., Markowitz, M., & Gennings, C. (2010). Who's Doing the Math? Are We Really Compensating Research Participants? *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics*, *5*(3), 57–65. https://doi.org/10.1525/jer.2010.5.3.57

Robson, C., & McCartan, K. (2016). Interviews and Focus Groups. In *Real world research: A resource for users of social research methods in applied settings* (4th ed.). John Wiley & Sons. https://contentstore.cla.co.uk/secure/link?id=74b89de4-c0ec-ec11-b656-a04a5e5d2f8d

Rose, G. (1997). Situating Knowledges: Positionality, Reflexivity and Other Tactics. *Progress in Human Geography*, *21*(3), 305–320.

Sarche, M., & Spicer, P. (2008). Poverty and Health Disparities for American Indian and Alaska Native Children: Current Knowledge and Future Prospects. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, *1136*, 126–136. https://doi.org/10.1196/annals.1425.017

Schmidt, R. W. (2012). American Indian Identity and Blood Quantum in the 21st Century: A Critical Review. *Journal of Anthropology*, *2011*, e549521. https://doi.org/10.1155/2011/549521

Siegel, J. A., Winter, V. R., & Cook, M. (2021). "It really presents a struggle for females, especially my little girl": Exploring fathers' experiences discussing body image with their young daughters. *Body Image*, *36*, 84–94. https://doi.org/10.1111/jora.12645

Stratham, N. (2015). Student Snapshots: An Alternative Approach to the Visual History of American Indian Boarding Schools. *Humanities*, *4*, 726–747. https://doi.org/10.3390/h4040726

Strayhorn, T. (2008). How College Students' Engagement Affects Personal and Social Learning Outcomes. *Journal of College and Character*, *10*. https://doi.org/10.2202/1940-1639.1071

Strayhorn, T. L. (2012). *College Students' Sense of Belonging: A Key to Educational Success for All Students*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203118924

Tallbear, K. (2008). Native-American-DNA.com: In Search of Native American Race and Tribe. In B. A. Koenig, S. S.-J. Lee, & S. S. Richardson (Eds.), *Revisiting Race in a Genomic Age* (pp. 235–252). Rutgers University Press.

Taylor, Z. W. (2019). *Comprehending the Cost: Are Application Fee Waiver Statements Readable?* (SSRN Scholarly Paper 3404581). https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3404581

Treuer, A. (2012). *Everything You Wanted to Know About Indians But Were Afraid to Ask*. Borealis Books.

Urban Indian Health Institute. (2021). *Data Genocide of American Indians and Alaska Natives in COVID-19 Data*. Urban Indian Health Institute. https://www.uihi.org/projects/data-genocide-of-american-indians-and-alaska-natives-in-covid-19-data/

US Census Bureau. (2021, August 12). *Race and Ethnicity in the United States: 2010 Census and 2020 Census*. Census.Gov. https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/race-and-ethnicity-in-the-united-state-2010-and-2020-census.html

Villegas, M., Neugebauer, S. R., & Venegas, K. R. (Eds.). (2008). *Indigenous Knowledge and Education: Sites of Struggle, Strength, and Survivance*. Harvard Education Press.

Walford, G. (Ed.). (2001). Interviews. In *Doing qualitative educational research: A personal guide to the research process* (pp. 81–97). Continuum. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oxford/reader.action?docID=1749450&ppg=90

Waterman, S. J. (2019). New Research Perspectives on Native American Students in Higher Education. *Journal Committed to Social Change on Race and Ethnicity (JCSCORE)*, *5*(1), 61–80.

Wilson, B. (2020, June 8). I'm your black friend, but I won't educate you about racism. That's on you. *Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/06/08/black-friends-educate-racism/

Wong, A. (2019, March 5). The Schools That Tried—But Failed—To Make Native Americans Obsolete. *The Atlantic*. https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2019/03/failed-assimilation-native-american-boarding-schools/584017/

Wood, S. (2022, January 28). *Colleges With The Highest Application Fees*. US News & World Report. https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/the-short-list-college/articles/colleges-with-the-highest-application-fees

Woods, A. (2020, August 6). The Federal Government Gives Native Students an Inadequate Education, and Gets Away With It. *ProPublica*. https://www.propublica.org/article/the-federal-government-gives-native-students-an-inadequate-education-and-gets-away-with-it

Wright, M. (2020, July 9). Black people shouldn't have to educate white people on racism. *The Red and Black*. https://www.redandblack.com/opinion/opinion-black-people-shouldnt-have-to-educate-white-people-on-racism/article_f2206ce2-c1e5-11ea-9cea-97802eadd4ef.html

Appendix A: CUREC 1A

Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC)
CUREC 1A Application form for research projects in the social sciences and humanities with less complex ethical issues

The University of Oxford places a high value on the knowledge, expertise, and integrity of its members and their ability to conduct research to high standards of scholarship and ethics. The research ethics review process has been established to ensure that research involving human participants is conducted in a way that respects the dignity, rights, and welfare of participants, and minimises risk to participants, researchers, third parties, and to the University itself. It is assumed that all members of the University will take their responsibilities and obligations seriously, and will ensure that their research involving human participants is conducted according to established principles and good practice in their field and in accordance, where appropriate, with legal requirements.

Before completing this form, please refer to the and flowchart on the Research Support website. Only type-written forms form will be accepted. Completed application forms should be emailed, along with relevant supporting documents, to your Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) or to ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk from your ox.ac.uk email address.

Please contact your DREC or the SSH IDREC if you have any questions about completing this form or the review process.

SECTION A: Filter for CUREC 2 application		
This section determines whether the application for ethics review should be made using this form (CUREC 1A) or the CUREC 2 form (for research with more complex ethical issues).		
Please indicate with an 'X'.	**Yes**	**No**
1. Does the research involve the deception of participants?	☐	☒
2. Are the research participants vulnerable in the context of the research, or classed as people whose ability to give free and informed consent is in question? For example, • Participants aged 16 or under (also answer question A5); • Participants aged 16 – 18 (refer to competent youths for guidance); • adults at risk; Note the University's Safeguarding Guidance and Code of Practice and its implications for researchers involving young people or adults at risk.	☐	☒
3. By taking part in the research, will participants be at risk of criminal prosecution or significant harm?	☐	☒
4. Does your research raise issues relevant to the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (the Prevent Duty), which seeks to prevent people from being	☐	☒

drawn into terrorism? Best Practice Guidance 07 on the Prevent Duty provides further guidance.		
If you answered **'No'** to all the questions above, go to Section B. If you answered **'Yes'** to any question above, continue to question 5 below.		
5. Is your project covered by a CUREC Approved Procedure?	☐	☐
If yes, list the CUREC Approved Procedure(s) you will follow		
If you have answered '**No**' to all questions 1-4, go on to **Section B**. If you answered '**Yes**' to ANY of questions 1-4, and answered '**No**' to question 5, **stop** completing this form and do not submit it for ethical review. You will instead need to submit a CUREC 2 application form. If you answered '**Yes**' to **any** of questions 1-4, and your project is covered by an Approved Procedure, **go on to Section B**. If more than one Approved Procedure applies, contact the SSH IDREC or your DREC for advice on whether a CUREC 2 form should be submitted instead.		

SECTION B: Researchers			
1. Name of Principal Investigator or student's supervisor	Dr. Kelsey Inouye		
2. Department or Institute	Department of Education		
3. University of Oxford email address	kelsey.inouye@education.ox.ac.uk		
Copy and paste the following six rows as necessary to complete for each additional researcher who will be involved in this study, including student(s) and those external to the University.			
4. Name of researcher or student	Julianne Downing		
5. Department or Institute	Department of Education		
6. University of Oxford email address	julianne.downing@education.ox.ac.uk		
7. Role in research	student		
8. Degree programme, if student research	MSc		
The whole research team			
9. Have the researchers undertaken research ethics and integrity training?		**Yes** ☒	**No** ☐
10. Please provide details of any research ethics and integrity training undertaken, including the dates of the training. Alternatively state relevant research experience.	Julianne Downing—Research Integrity: Introductory Core Course, completed January 22, 2023; Research Integrity: Research Involving Human Participants, completed January 22, 2023		

	Dr. Kelsey Inouye has completed several research integrity courses at Oxford and the University of Hawaii, and had conducted previous studies involving interviews and a range of other data sources.
11. State any conflicts of interest and explain how these will be addressed.	none

SECTION C: The research project	
1. Title of the research project	
Native American Student Perceptions of the US College Application Process	
2. Anticipated start date of the aspect of the research project involving human participants and/ or personal data (**dd/mm/yy**).	The project will begin once ethics approval is obtained.
3. Anticipated research end date (**dd/mm/yy**).	11/08/2023
4. Provide a brief lay summary of the aims and objectives of the research. This should cover the questions it will answer and any potential benefits. (max 300 words)	
This research will explore Native American, Native Alaskan, and Native Hawaiian students' (henceforth referred to as a group by the term "Native American students") perceptions of their college/university application processes in the United States. There is very little pre-existing literature examining Native American students in higher education at all, and no pre-existing literature examining their experiences with or perceptions of college applications. My study will bring these two areas of literature together—(1) Native American students in higher education generally, and (2) the process of applying to institutions of higher education, especially as a "non-traditional" student—and make a modest first-step contribution to filling this research gap. My research aim is to hear perceptions from Native American students directly, and to share their experiences in their own words. There are many cultural and structural forces which silence Native voices and invisibilize Native persons; this dissertation will be written in a way which foregrounds experiential knowledge. My guiding research question is, "What major barriers do Native American students perceive when applying to college?" The scale of my project will not allow me to make a population-wide generalizable claim, but if—for example—7 of my 10 participants name "Internet deserts" as the primary barrier they experienced, this would be a valuable insight and would	

allow me to make suggestions for future research agendas. Small studies like this one, given the total absence of pre-existing literature, will each be significant in directing the next lines of inquiry. Eventually, I hope that a large quantitative study will be conducted to explore what Native American students perceive as the major barriers to applying to college. If such a project ever does come to fruition, the in-depth qualitative data I collect may be both complementary and illustrative.	
5. Please indicate the methods to be used (indicate with an '**X**'):	
Analysis of existing records	☐
Snowball sampling (recruiting through contacts of existing participants)	☒
Use of casual or local workers e.g. interpreters (refer to guidance in BPG 01: Researcher safety)	☐
Participant observation	☐
Covert observation	☐
Observation of specific organisational practices	☐
Participant completes questionnaire in hard copy	☐
Participant completes online questionnaire or other online task (refer to guidance in BPG 06: Internet-mediated research)	☐
Using social media to recruit or interact with participants (refer to guidance in BPG 06: Internet-mediated research)	☐
Participant performs paper and pencil task	☐
Participant performs verbal or aural task (e.g. for linguistic study)	☐
Focus group	☐
Interview (refer to guidance in BPG 10: Conducting research interviews)	☒
Audio recording of participant (you will generally need specific consent from participants for this)	☒
Video recording of participant (you will generally need specific consent from participants for this)	☒
Photography of participant (you will generally need specific consent from participants for this)	☐
Others (please specify below)	☐

6. Provide a brief summary of the research design and methods. What will research participants be asked to do? (max 300 words) Please also submit a copy of the questions participants will be asked, if applicable, or some information about the sorts of topics that will be covered.
This project will be a qualitative study based on the semi-structured interviews for which I am seeking this CUREC approval. Participants will be individually interviewed once on Microsoft Teams and asked questions about their experiences of applying to college in the United States. I will ask several closed questions which will help contextualize their responses. (e.g. "How do you self-identify?," "Where did you grow up and go to high school?," "Did your parents/guardians go to college?," and "Did you have any kind of professional guidance counselling when applying to college?") The bulk of the interview will center around three open questions which ask participants to articulate their experiences before, during, and after applying to college: (4) Before you applied to college, what future paths did you imagine for your life? (5) While you were applying to college, what difficulties/challenges did you experience? (6) Now that you have completed the college application process, reflect: if you could change one thing or grant your past self one tool/resource/piece of knowledge, what would that be? Having these principal questions will ensure that I hear from each participant on these different chronological moments of the college application process and allow me to compare participants' responses. I will offer additional questions, prompts, and probes based on the flow of each interview and the content of participants' responses. Given my very small sample size (10 participants), I will be using a narrative approach to interpret the data I collect from interviews. I expect to hear anecdotes, memories, and stories from my participants, and I will prioritize sharing these lived experiences in my written dissertation. I will use direct quotations from each participant.

7. List the location(s) where the research will be conducted, including any other countries.	Oxford, England; Remote (online) interviews will take place on MS Teams.		
8. Clarify which parts of the research will be conducted in-person and which will take place remotely, e.g. online.	All interviews will take place remotely (online) via MS Teams.		
		Yes	☐
		No	☐

9. If your research involves fieldwork or travel and your department requires a travel risk assessment, will you have completed and returned a risk assessment form beforehand? Please indicate with an '**X**'. (This must be approved by your department before you travel. If you are travelling overseas, you are advised to take out University travel insurance.) Refer to guidance available from your Department, the Safety Office, the Social Sciences Division, and the Humanities Division, and on travel for University business.	Not required in this instance	☒

10. In the case of international or collaborative research, explain how you will address any ethical issues specific to the local context. Please provide details of the local review, approval or permission obtained or required. Refer to the BPG 16: Social science research conducted outside the UK and the Code of Conduct for Ethical Fieldwork. If there will be no local review, explain why not. Please mention any stakeholder or community engagement that has been/ will be undertaken in relation to the research. Please also address any physical or psychological risks for Oxford researchers and local fieldworkers in Section G.
N/A

11. Name of departmental/ peer reviewer (if applicable)	N/A
12. External organisation funding the research and grant reference (if applicable)	N/A
13. Please refer to the CUREC Best Practice Guidance and list any that have been used to develop your research.	BPG 01 – Researcher Safety BPG 02 – Ethnographic and Other Kinds of Qualitative Research BPG 06 – Internet Mediated Research BPG 09 – Data Collection, Protection and Management BPG 10 – Conducting Research Interviews

SECTION D: Recruitment of research participants	
1. Number of participants	Approximately 10
2. How was the number of participants decided?	I have chosen a small number of participants because my project uses a biographical/narrative approach and presents individuals as their own case studies. With only 10 participants, I can consider each of their experiences in their application cycles more in-depth and write

	up more intimate portraits of their perceptions, experiences, and feelings. I do not intend my findings to be generalizable to the entire Native American population because that population is so heterogenous. For this same reason, I have chosen 10 participants (as opposed to an even smaller, and therefore deeper sample pool of 5) in an effort to sample widely and portray the great diversity of Indian Country and Indigenous experiences when applying to college in the US.	
3. Age range of participants	18 and over	
4. Inclusion criteria	Participants should (1) have been through at least one annual college admissions "cycle," (2) applied to multiple colleges/universities in the United States, and (3) attended college/university in the United States for at least some amount of time. I expect that most participants will be currently attending college/university, but I will accept participants who graduated from or stopped attending college/university up to 48 months ago at first contact. All participants should self-identify as Native American, Native Alaskan, or Native Hawaiian (or a synonymous or more specific identity). As mentioned above, I am aiming to sample widely and show the diversity of the Native American experience; toward this end, I will seek a gender balance in my sample, and try to avoid overlaps in hometown/tribal affiliation.	
5. Exclusion criteria	N/A	
6. Indicate with an '**X**' all intended recruitment methods	Poster advert	☐
	Flyer	☐
	Email circulation	☒
	Social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook)	☐
	Website	☐
	In-person approach	☐
	Snowball sampling	☒

	Recruitment sites (e.g. Mechanical Turk)	☐
	Existing contacts or volunteer database	☒
	Other (please specify):	☐
7. How will potential participants be identified and approached?	Participants will be recruited by accessing my personal networks, including by emailing individuals who have been teachers and administrators at K-12 schools that primarily serve Native communities. To reach my goal of approximately 10 participants, I may also ask participants to assist me in identifying other potential participants they could reach through their network, using the snowball sampling method. I will not be sending a mass email or placing a public call for participants; most participants will be alerted to this study by someone they know (their friend, their former teacher, etc.), even if they are a stranger to me.	
8. Will informed consent be obtained from the research participants or their parents/ guardians? If not, please explain why not.	Yes, informed consent will be obtained from each research participant.	
9. For each activity or group of participants, explain how informed consent will be obtained from the participants themselves and/ or their parents/ guardians, if applicable. How will their consent be recorded?	Participants will receive an information sheet explaining the background, purpose and aims of the research, why they have been asked to take part, what they will be asked to do, and how their data will be stored, used, and retained. The information sheet will also explain the steps which will be taken to protect their privacy and the possible risks of identification of individuals the project entails. Participants will be asked to sign a consent form prior to their interview indicating that they have read and understood the information sheet, had the opportunity to ask any questions they wish to, and consent to each specific aspect of the research project. At the start of each interview, I will verbally review the key points of the consent form the	

	participant has signed, and offer another opportunity for them to ask questions. Both the information sheet and the consent form will explain that participants do not have to take part, and that they can withdraw their consent to participate in the project at any time and without giving a reason. They also communicate the final date at which participants can withdraw their consent or ask for their data to be amended. As appendices to this document, I have attached examples of the recruitment material, the information sheet to be provided to participants, the written consent form, and a draft of the interview protocol.
10. Provide details of any payments and incentives and the rationale for providing these. Further guidance in Best Practice Guidance: 05 Payments and incentives in research.	none
11. Describe how participants • may withdraw from the study • may withdraw any personal information they have provided from the study State any limits to withdrawal, for example once the data has been anonymised or at some other specified stage prior to publication. Make sure participants are aware of any withdrawal limits.	Participants may withdraw from the study by contacting me through my Oxford University email address (julianne.downing@education.ox.ac.uk) and requesting to withdraw. They are not required to provide a reason for their withdrawal, and there will be no negative consequences to the participant if they withdraw. Candidates may withdraw any personal information they have provided, including research data, by emailing me through my Oxford University email address (julianne.downing@education.ox.ac.uk) and specifying the data they wish to withdraw from the study. In both cases, both the raw data concerned and any reference to it or the participant in question in research outputs will be deleted and rewritten immediately. Participants can withdraw from the study up until 16/06/2023, which is eight weeks ahead of the deadline for my dissertation submission. This

	withdrawal limit is advertised in both the information sheet and the consent form.

SECTION E: Research data

All information provided by participants is considered research data for the purpose of this form. Any research data from which participants can be identified is known as personal data; any personal data which is sensitive is considered special category data. Management of personal data, either directly or via a third party, must comply with the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018, as set out in the University's Guidance on Data Protection and Research.

In answering the questions below, please also consider the points raised in the Data Protection Checklist and Data Protection Screening Assessment and whether, for higher-risk data processing, a separate Data Protection Impact Assessment may also be required for the research. Advice on research data management and security is available from Research Data Oxford and your local IT department. Advice on data protection is available from the Information Compliance team.

For guidance on conducting internet-mediated research, refer to CUREC's Best Practice Guidance 06: Internet-mediated research.

1. What data will be collected? (Indicate with an '**X**')

Screening documents	☐	Task results (e.g. questionnaires, diaries)	☐
Consent records (e.g., written consent forms, audio-recorded consent, assent forms)	☒	IP addresses (refer to Best Practice Guidance 09: Data collection, protection and management for guidance)	☐
Contact details for the purpose of this research only	☒	Field notes	☒
Contact details for future use (guidance)	☐	Photographs	☐
Opt-out forms	☐	Information about the health of the participant (including mental health)	☐
Audio recordings	☒	Previously collected (secondary) data	☐
Video recordings	☒	Data already in the public domain. Specify the source of the data:	☐
Transcript of audio/ video recordings	☒	Other, please specify:	☐

<table>
<tr><td>2. During the course of the research, where will each type of research data be stored?</td><td colspan="3">Consent forms and contact details will be collected using Microsoft Forms, provided via the University of Oxford's student Microsoft account. Downloaded copies will be stored on Nexus 365 OneDrive for Business, again provided via the University of Oxford. Local and physical copies will not be kept for increased security.

Interviews will be conducted using Microsoft Teams, provided via the University of Oxford's student Microsoft account. Audio/video recordings of the online meetings will be collected and uploaded to Nexus 365 OneDrive for Business the day they are recorded via my personal laptop, with local copies being deleted after upload.

Transcripts of audio recordings will be completed on my personal laptop and will only be saved on Nexus 365 OneDrive for Business.

File shredding technology will be used to delete local digital copies of research data; local copies will be stored in separate folders to facilitate ease of deletion. Physical copies of research data will be physically shredded once digitised and uploaded.</td></tr>
<tr><td>3. Who will have access to the research data during the project?</td><td colspan="3">Only my supervisor and I will have access to the data generated.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">4. Please complete this section if your research involves the use of secondary (i.e. previously collected) data.</td><td>Please indicated with an 'X'.</td><td>Yes</td><td>No</td></tr>
<tr><td>Are data access agreements in place for access to and use of this secondary data? (If so, please attach these.)</td><td>☐</td><td>☐</td></tr>
<tr><td>Did the individuals agree that their data could be used for this purpose?</td><td>☐</td><td>☐</td></tr>
<tr><td>Could anyone (including members of the research team) link the data back to an individual or individuals? If this is a possibility, please explain how the associated ethical issues will be addressed:</td><td>☐</td><td>☐</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="6">5. How do you intend to share the research data at the end of the project?</td><td>Depositing in a specialist data centre or archive</td><td colspan="2">☐</td></tr>
<tr><td>Submitting to a journal to support a publication</td><td colspan="2">☐</td></tr>
<tr><td>Depositing in an institutional repository</td><td colspan="2">☐</td></tr>
<tr><td>Dissemination via a project or institutional website</td><td colspan="2">☐</td></tr>
<tr><td>No plans to share the data</td><td colspan="2">☒</td></tr>
<tr><td>Other (please specify):</td><td colspan="2">☐</td></tr>
</table>

6. How do you intend to report and disseminate the results of the research? (Indicate with an 'X')	Thesis publication	☐
	Publication in a peer reviewed journal	☒
	Publicly available report	☐
	Conference presentation	☒
	Publication on a website	☐
	Pre-registration	☐
	Report to a research funder	☐
	Providing participants with a lay summary of the results	☐
	Submission for academic assessment	☒
	Other (please specify): Depositing in ORA (Oxford Research Archive)	☒

7. Explain what will happen to the data at the end of the research project. This question must be answered for each type of data, including completed consent forms.
Research data will be stored safely for at least 3 years after final publication or public release and adhere to any additional research funder policies. The data will not be made available for reuse. Because personal data will no longer be needed (and will not be archived) it will be destroyed to comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act. Specifically, data stored electronically will be permanently deleted (file shredded) from the OneDrive folder and any other personal or work devices. Any hard copies of data will be shredded. Participant contact details will not be retained for contact regarding future study.

SECTION F: Protection of research participants and their personal data		
1. How identifiable will the participants be from the **research outputs**? (Indicate with an 'X')	Directly identifiable from the information included	☐
	Pseudonymised/ indirectly identifiable	☒
	Not identifiable – data is anonymous	☐
	Other, please specify:	☐
2. To what extent will the **data** be de-identified? How identifiable will any individuals be from the research data?	Unique, randomly assigned participant numbers (i.e., P01-P10) will be used to identify participants. It is extremely unlikely that individuals will still be identifiable from the data, given that I will not include their year of application to college/university or their current college/university affiliation or alma mater if application.	

Describe any measures you will take towards assuring confidentiality, potential risks to confidentiality.	On a case-by-case basis, I will include their tribal affiliation or other Indigenous identity (i.e., "P06 (Western Abenaki)" or "P04 (kānaka maoli)") with the participant's consent to contextualize their experiences and perceptions. Participants will be informed of the measures being taken to preserve anonymity and confidentiality through the informed consent forms.
3. How will you ensure that third parties (e.g., interpreters and transcribers) are aware of and adhere to the measures described in this form?	N/A

SECTION G: Risks and benefits of the research
1. Will the research involve topics that could be considered sensitive? If so: a. Please provide more detail or supporting information (such as the interview questions) to show the range of questions; b. Explain what steps will be taken to reduce risk of distress; c. Consider seeking advice from within your Department or from the ethics committee including whether the application might benefit from additional ethics review (e.g., via a CUREC 2 application).
The research does not involve topics which would be considered sensitive under the definition provided in the University's research ethics glossary.
2. Describe any additional burden or risks to the participants or others, including the potential for any indirect negative consequences. Explain the steps you will take to address these.
N/A
3. Describe any physical or psychological risks to the researcher(s) (including local fieldworkers or research assistants) and the steps you will take to address these.
N/A
4. Describe any benefits of the research, both to participants and to others. Outline the processes put in place to enable equitable research (see BPG 16 Social science research conducted outside the UK for further guidance).

There is no clear direct benefit to the participants, but involvement in this research would provide participants the opportunities for reflection on their experiences and expression of their opinions.
5. Comment on the societal impact.
This project will provide insights into the types of barriers that Native American students experience when applying to colleges/universities in the US. It will also generate practical implications for addressing barriers and complement future research on the topic.
6. Give details of any other ethical issues or relevant information.
N/A

SECTION H: Professional guidelines		
Please indicate with an '**X**' at least one set of professional guidelines you will follow.		
Research specialism/ methodology	**Association and guidance**	
Anthropology	Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK	☐
Computer Science	ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct	☐
Criminology	British Society of Criminology Statement of Ethics	☐
Education	British Educational Research Association Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research	☒
Geography	American Association of Geographers Statement on Professional Ethics	☐
History	Oral History Society of the UK Ethical Guidelines	☐
Internet-mediated research	Association of Internet Researchers Ethical Guidelines British Psychological Society: Ethics Guidelines for internet-mediated research Association for Computing Machinery Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct	☐
Management	Academy of Management Code of Ethics	☐
Political Science	American Political Science Association (APSA) Guide to Professional Ethics in Political Science	☐
Politics	Political Studies Association. Guidelines for Good Professional Conduct	☐
Psychology	British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct	☐
Social research	Social Research Association: Ethical Guidelines	☐
Socio-legal studies	Socio-Legal Studies Association: Statement of Principles of Ethical Research Practice	☐

Sociology	The British Sociological Association: Statement of Ethical Practice	☐
Visual research	ESRC National Centre for Research Methods Review Paper: Visual Ethics: Ethical Issues in Visual Research	☐
Other professional guidelines		☐

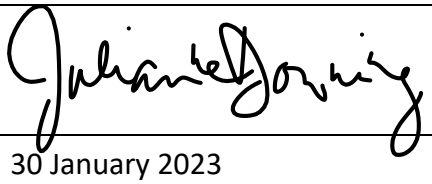
SECTION I: Endorsements and signatures

Please ensure this form is endorsed by the Principal Investigator (or student's supervisor), the Head of Department (or nominee) and, if student research, by the student themselves.
The SSH IDREC Secretariat accepts either option below. If you have a DREC, check which signature option it prefers.

- **Option 1: direct email endorsements**
  Each of the signatories should submit an email from a University of Oxford email address, indicating their acceptance of the responsibilities listed below.
- **Option 2: signatures**
  Please scan the signed form and email it to us as a PDF. Pasted images of signatures cannot be accepted.

Endorsement by the Principal Investigator/ student supervisor and student, if applicable

I/ we the researchers understand my/ our responsibilities as Principal Investigator (and student, if applicable) as outlined in the guidance on the CUREC website. I/ we declare that the answers above accurately describe the research as presently designed, and that the ethics committee will be informed of any changes to the project which affect the answers to this form.
I/ we will inform the relevant IDREC if the Principal Investigator changes.

Name of Principal Investigator	Dr. Kelsey Inouye
Principal Investigator's signature	
Date	31 January 2023
Name of student (if applicable)	Julianne Downing
Student's signature	
Date	30 January 2023

Departmental endorsement – from the Head of Department or nominee

(Another senior member of the department may sign where the head of department is the Principal Investigator, or where the Head of Department has appointed a nominee. Example nominees include Deputy Head of Department, Director of Research, or Director of Graduate/ Undergraduate Studies.)	
On the basis of the information available to me, I confirm that: • I am aware of the research proposed and have read this application; • To the best of my knowledge, the proposed design and scientific methodology do not raise ethical concerns; • I support this research in principle, subject to ethical and other necessary reviews.	
Signature	Instead of a signature, endorsement may be provided by an email confirming the points above.
Name	
Role	
Date	

Appendix B: CUREC 1A, Approval

Subject: CUREC
Date: Friday, February 10, 2023 at 11:17:36 AM Greenwich Mean Time **From:** Liam Gearon
To: julianne.downing@education.ox.ac.uk, Kelsey Inouye
CC: Student CUREC

Dear Julianne,

Research ethics approval

Research title:
Native American Student Perceptions of the US College Application Process

Research ethics reference:
EDUC_C1A_23_055

The above application has been considered on behalf of the Education Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) in accordance with the University's procedures for ethical approval of all research involving human participants.

I am pleased to confirm that, on the basis of the information provided to the DREC, ethics approval has now been granted for this study.

Please note the following:
Personal data: It is the responsibility of the PI to ensure that all personal data collected during the

project is managed in accordance with the University's guidance and legal requirements.

In-person activities: Any data collection involving in-person interactions with participants must have an up-to-date fieldwork risk assessment in place; further guidance is available from the Safety Office's website.

Amendments: Please notify the committee if you intend to make any amendments to the information in your ethics application as submitted at date of this approval, as all changes must receive ethical approval prior to implementation. The amendment form is available on the SSH IDREC webpage.

We welcome feedback on your experience of the ethical review process and suggestions for improvement. Please email any comments to staff.curec@education.ox.ac.uk / student.curec@education.ox.ac.uk or ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely,
Liam Francis Gearon
DREC Chair

Appendix C: CUREC 1A, IDREC Amendment Form

Social Sciences and Humanities IDREC Amendment Form

The IDREC or DREC that approved the original ethics application must be informed of any amendments. This can be via email for minor amendments (such as a change of investigators or to the research end date), but this form should be used for any more substantial amendments.

Information about the process for amending projects in light of COVID-19 is available at https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics/coronavirus.

Please complete electronically and submit by email to the committee that reviewed the original ethics application, along with your amended ethics application form and any amended or new supporting documents. Using track changes or a different colour to indicate the amendments would help speed up the review process.

Principal Investigator	
Name	Dr. Kelsey Inouye
Name of student *(if student research)*	Julianne Downing
Department or Institute	Department of Education
University email address	kelsey.inouye@education.ox.ac.uk

Study Details	
Full title of research study	Native American Student Perceptions of the US College Application Process
CUREC ethics approval reference	EDUC_C1A_23_055
Date of amendment	March 6, 2023
Number of previous amendments submitted since original approval	0

Documents submitted for review	**YES**	**NO**	**New version no.**
Updated CUREC form *(required for most amendments)*	☒	☐	1
Amended recruitment materials	☒	☐	1
Amended participant information sheet(s)	☒	☐	1
Amended consent form(s)	☐	☒	

Other amended documents *(please list)*	☐	☒	
New documents *(please list)*	☐	☒	

Main changes proposed in this amendment

Please list the changes proposed with reasons for making the change in the table below. Refer to the examples provided at the top of the table and add further lines if required.
There is no requirement to detail the exact changes made to each document, since these will be shown as tracked changes on the document.

Proposed change	Reason
Example: Addition of a new sub-study	*Example: Findings to date have been interesting and we would like to include further investigations to corroborate our data*
1. Addition of incentives for participants	In piloting my interview schedule and receiving feedback from academic mentors at other universities, I was informed that it would be best practice to compensate my participants. I am a white researcher interviewing Native American students about their experiences applying to college in the US, so I absolutely could not complete my dissertation and pursue my research questions without my participants' input. I am inherently an "outsider" researcher. This incentive would be an indicator of gratitude for my participants' willingness to share their experiences and respect for their dignity as knowers. My mentors are professors of Native American studies and American studies, and one professor is a Native American woman herself. It was suggested that $25-$50 would be an appropriate compensation per participant. If this amendment to add incentives is approved, I plan to offer gift cards in an amount in this suggested range, depending on what funding I can secure. BPG05 specifically names the importance of assessing cultural context and power imbalances when deciding whether to use incentives. Especially since the summer of 2020 in the United States, Native American participants in any kind of research will be expecting compensation. In my case specifically, where I do not come from a Native American background or community myself, I think it is best ethical practice to compensate my participants for their time and knowledge. Because this is such a small study with a sample size of 10, and because I will recruit participants through my own network of contacts, I feel comfortable telling my participants up front in the information sheet that there will be compensation for their participation.

Appendix D: Amendment Approval

From: Liam Gearon <liam.gearon@education.ox.ac.uk>
Sent: Tuesday, April 4, 2023 10:48:58 AM
To: Student CUREC <student.curec@education.ox.ac.uk>
Cc: Kelsey Inouye <kelsey.inouye@education.ox.ac.uk>; julianne.downing@education.ox.ac.uk<julianne.downing@education.ox.ac.uk>
Subject: RE: New CUREC amendment

Dear Julianne
We can note and approve this minor amendment.
Kindest
Liam

From: Student CUREC <student.curec@education.ox.ac.uk>
Sent: 31 March 2023 15:12
To: Liam Gearon <liam.gearon@education.ox.ac.uk>
Subject: New CUREC amendment

Dear Liam,

There is a new student CUREC amendment now available for you to review.

Name: Julianne Downing
Reference number: EDUC_C1A_23_055_Amendment_01

Could I please kindly ask you to expedite this, as it was submitted a couple of weeks ago, but I've missed it amongst the many emails we've been receiving?

Once the application has been approved, please send an approval email to the applicant and supervisor copying in student.curec@education.ox.ac.uk.

Many thanks and best wishes,

Irina

Irina Lepadatu
Research Manager
Department of Education, University of Oxford
15 Norham Gardens, Oxford, OX2 6PY
irina.lepadatu@education.ox.ac.uk
http://www.education.ox.ac.uk

Appendix E: Recruitment Materials

Email to individuals in my personal network, seeking participants through snowball sampling:

Good morning,

As you know, I am currently conducting research toward my MSc in Education (Higher Education) at the University of Oxford.

I would like to interview Native American college students (or recent grads, or individuals who have recently suspended/ended their studies) and hear their experiences and perceptions of the college application process. I will ask them questions which prompt them to reflect on their lives before applying to college, the material/structural/emotional experiences of applying to college, and what they think could have made their application experience better or more accessible. I will be comparing students' experiences and discussing whether particular themes recurred as barriers to Native Americans being able to apply to college (e.g., Internet deserts, familial pressures, lack of access to guidance or counselling, etc.). These conclusions will not be generalizable to the whole, very diverse population of Indian Country, but they will be informative in directing future research agendas.

Can you offer names/contacts of any current Native college students who may be interested in participating in this study? I can also hear from *recent* students—individuals who have suspended/ended their studies or graduated in the last four years. I am ultimately recruiting 10 participants. Participants will be asked to join an online interview with me on Microsoft Teams for 45-60 minutes. Participants will be compensated with a gift card in the amount of $25.00.

I have attached the information sheet. Please feel free to forward this email and the information sheet to anyone you think may be interested. You can send me names/emails for me to contact the students directly, or you can share my contact information with them: Jules Downing, julianne.downing@new.ox.ac.uk.

Thanks for your continued support!

Warmly,
Jules

Email to potential participants:

Good morning!

My name is Jules Downing, I'm a master's student at the University of Oxford. For my dissertation, I am conducting research and interviewing Native American [recent] college students to hear about their experiences applying to college. Professor [Name] of [institution]

thought this is something you might be interested in. It would be a 45-60 minute interview online over Microsoft Teams—and "interview" isn't meant to be intimidating, there are absolutely no wrong answers to the questions I will ask. It's basically a conversation where I listen to you tell me stories about what applying to college was like for you. I have attached an information sheet with all the details. Please let me know if you are interested, or if you have any questions I can answer!

Looking forward to hearing from you, and I hope your semester is going well.

Warmly,
Jules

Appendix F: Participant Information Sheet

Central University Research Ethics Committee Approval Reference: **EDUC_C1A_23_055**

1. **Introductory paragraph**

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part.

2. **Why is this research being conducted?**

This research is being conducted by Julianne Downing (me) and supervised by Dr. Kelsey Inouye. I am conducting this research to write a dissertation (a 20,000 word research paper) which is a requirement to earn an MSc in Higher Education from the University of Oxford. This project will explore Native American students' perceptions of their college/university application processes in the United States.

No academic studies have ever looked at the experiences of Native Americans during college applications, and few studies focus on Native American students in higher education at all. I am interested in what barriers Native American students face while deciding to apply to college and then actually filling out the application forms, writing essays, and hitting submit. These barriers might be material (it's too expensive to apply), structural (there's no Internet in my hometown, or my school didn't offer AP classes), or mental/emotional (I've never been away from home, or I have heard daunting things about going to college).

I will ask you three main questions about your experiences:

1) Before you applied to college, what future paths did you imagine for your life?
2) While you were applying to college, what difficulties/challenges did you experience?
3) Now that you have completed the college application process, reflect: if you could change one thing or grant your past self one tool/resource/piece of knowledge, what would that be?

It will be interesting to determine whether you and your peers have vastly different experiences, or if there are significant overlaps. Since there is no pre-existing research, you will be participating in making the first step. There are no right answers—any experience you share will be valuable.

3. **Why have I been invited to take part?**

You have been invited to participate in this research as someone aged 18+ who self-identifies as Native American, Native Alaskan, or Native Hawaiian (or a synonymous or more specific identity), and because you (1) have been through at least one annual college admissions "cycle," (2) applied to colleges/universities in the United States, and (3) attended college/university in the United States for at least some amount of time. You must have attended some college in the last 48 months.

I am recruiting a total of 10 participants for this project.

4. Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. You can withdraw yourself from the study, without giving a reason and without any negative consequences, by advising me of this decision. The deadline by which you can withdraw any information you have contributed to the research is June 16, 2023. If you decide to withdraw, any data which has already been collected will be permanently deleted.

5. What will happen to me if I take part in the research?

This section explains what will be involved in participating in this research in the order you will experience it:

- As the primary researcher, I (Julianne Downing) will contact you to schedule an online interview.
- All interviews will take place on Microsoft Teams.
- You will be provided with a consent form prior to the interview, and you will be asked to sign the consent form prior to the interview which indicates that you have read and understood this information sheet. You may contact me at any time prior to the interview to ask question or discuss the project further.
- At the start of our interview, I will verbally review the key points of the consent form which you have signed, and offer another opportunity for you to ask questions.
- You will be interviewed once, and the interview will last between 45 and 60 minutes. Generally, I will be asking questions about your experience applying to college. I have prepared some questions to guide us, and these questions move chronologically asking to you to reflect on your perceptions of applying to college (1) before you applied, (2) while you were applying, and (3) now that you have completed an application cycle. The interview can remain unstructured and somewhat casual, and the conversation can move to reflect your memories and experiences.
- With your consent, I would like to audio and video record the interview to provide accurate record of our conversation, and so I can distill important direct quotations when the research is being written up.
- You may ask to pause or stop the interview at any time, without having to give a reason.

6. **What are the possible disadvantages and risks in taking part?**

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to reflect on applying to college; if this was a particularly distressing experience for you, relating your memories may be uncomfortable. No major disadvantages or risks to you are foreseen. You will not be identifiable from the data and from the research outputs.

7. **Are there any benefits in taking part?**

While there are no direct or personal benefits to you, participating in this project will offer you the opportunity to reflect on your experiences and express your opinions. It is also worth noting that studies which examine Native American students' experiences in higher eduation are very few, and so you should feel confident that your contributions are valuable to the field.

8. **Expenses and payments**

As a sign of gratitude for your participation in this study, and as compensation for your time and knowledge shared, you will be given a gift card in the amount of $25.

9. **What information will be collected and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research objectives?**

Consent forms and contact details will be collected via Microsoft Word documents emailed from my University of Oxford's student Microsoft email account. Downloaded copies will be stored on Nexus 365 OneDrive for Business, again provided via the University of Oxford. Local and physical copies will not be kept for increased security.

Interviews will be conducted using Microsoft Teams, provided via the University of Oxford's student Microsoft account. Audio/video recordings of the online meetings will be collected and uploaded to Nexus 365 OneDrive for Business the day they are recorded via my personal laptop, with local copies being deleted after upload.

Transcripts of audio recordings will be completed on my personal laptop and will only be saved on Nexus 365 OneDrive for Business.

File shredding technology will be used to delete local digital copies of research data; local copies will be stored in separate folders to facilitate ease of deletion. Physical copies of research data will be physically shredded once digitised and uploaded.

I (Julianne Downing) and my supervisor (Dr. Kelsey Inouye) will have access to the research data.

10. **Will the research be published? Could I be identified from any publications or other research outputs?**

The findings from the research will be written up in a dissertation. Participants will not be identifiable from the outputs.

I would like your permission to use direct quotations without identifying you in any research outputs.

A copy of my thesis/ dissertation will be deposited both in print and online in the Oxford University Research Archive where its access will be restricted. There is a possibility that I will share my research through a journal publication or a conference presentation.

11. Data Protection

The University of Oxford is the data controller with respect to your personal data, and as such will determine how your personal data is used in the study. The University will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. Research is a task that is performed in the public interest. Further information about your rights with respect to your personal data is available at https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights.

12. Who has reviewed this study?

This study has received ethics approval from a subcommittee of the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee. (Ethics reference: **EDUC_C1A_23_055)**.

13. Who do I contact if I have a concern about the research or I wish to complain?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please contact me (Julianne Downing—julianne.downing@education.ox.ac.uk) or my supervisor (Dr. Kelsey Inouye—kelsey.inouye@education.ox.ac.uk), and we will do our best to answer your query. We will acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how it will be dealt with. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford who will seek to resolve the matter as soon as possible:

The Chair, Social Sciences & Humanities Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee
ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk
Research Services, University of Oxford
Boundary Brook House
Churchill Drive
Headington, Oxford
OX3 7GB
United Kingdom

14. Further Information and Contact Details

If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact:

Julianne Downing
julianne.downing@education.ox.ac.uk

Department of Education, University of Oxford
15 Norham Gardens
Oxford
OX2 6PY
United Kingdom

Appendix G: Written Consent Form

Consent to take part in:
"Native American Student Perceptions of the US College Application Process"

Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) approval reference: **EDUC_C1A_23_055**

Purpose of Study: This study will interview Native American college students (or Native American individuals who have recently attended some college) and hear their experiences and perceptions of the college application process in the United States.

	Please initial each box if you agree with the statement
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above research. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these answered satisfactorily.	☐
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any point until June 16, 2023, without giving any reason.	☐
I understand who will have access to personal data provided, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.	☐
I understand that I will not be identifiable from any publications or other research outputs here, including presentations.	☐
I consent to being audio and video recorded.	☐

Use of quotations: Please indicate your preference (select *one* option):

a) I do not wish to be quoted. **or**

b) I agree to the use of quotations in research outputs if I am not identifiable.

☐

I give permission for you to contact me again to clarify information. ☐

I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint. ☐

I agree to take part. ☐

_____	dd / mm / yyyy	_____
Name of participant	Date	Signature
Julianne Downing	dd / mm / yyyy	
Name of person taking consent	Date[4]	Signature

[4] *To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant. Once this has been signed by both parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form. The original signed and dated consent form should be kept with the project's main documents, which must be kept in a secure location.

Appendix H: Interview Protocol

Section 0: Demographic / Background Information

- What Native American nation or tribe do you belong to or identify with?
- Where did you go to high school?
- Can you describe a few things about your high school:
    - What kind of high school was it—public, private, reservation?
    - How many kids went there?
    - Was it normal or expected that you would graduate from high school?
    - Did you have high school guidance counselors or college counselors?
    - What did people normally do after high school? Did a lot of people go to college, did a lot of people pursue a specific career?
    - Did you feel there was a lot of stress about college?
- You and college:
    - When did you apply to college?
    - How many schools did you apply to, and do you remember which ones?
    - Did you have multiple acceptances or choices to make between colleges?
    - Where did you go to college?
    - Are you still in college, did you graduate, etc.?

Section 1: *Before you applied to college*, what future paths did you imagine for your life?

- Future paths:
    - Going to college or not? Was it assumed?
    - Career ideas
    - Family ideas
        - Did your parents or family members go to college? Is this something you talked about with them?
    - Relocating in general—to where, what kind of where, and why?
- How did you feel about those future life paths? Did you feel confident in them, did they scare you, did you feel like they were changing all the time?

Section 2: *While you were applying to college*, what was your experience like?

- Positives?
    - People who were influential/helpful in this process?
- Challenges or difficulties?
    - Material (examples?)
        - Did you apply online? Did you have your own computer?
        - Did you find the application understandable or confusing?

        - What were your other obligations at the time, and how did you balance applying to college with those other activities?
    - Structural (examples?)
        - Did you have good Internet access?
        - Did the application fee pose a challenge?
    - Emotional (examples?)
        - Did you feel like you had support?
        - Did you feel alone?

Section 3: *Now that you have completed the college application process*, reflect: if you could change one thing or grant your past self one tool/resource/piece of knowledge, what would that be?

- Overall, looking back, how you describe your experience? Positive? Negative?
- What would have made it easier to apply?
    - In other words, looking back, is there one major barrier that you think could be lifted or eased?
- Why?

Finally: Is there anything else you want to tell me that hasn't come up yet?

Appendix I: Table of Codes

Code System	**498**
boarding school	4
oldest sibling in college	1
plans to go to college?	5
visiting campus	2
geography	3
high school counseling	23
biracial	3
tools	15
sports	12
private counseling	6
identity	31
RESONANT QUOTES (2)	18
going away	23
college-going culture	25
education = whiteness	11
fear of education	14
RESONANT QUOTES (1)	83
taking help	18
confidence/pride	27
isolation	18
admissions counselors	7
information/familiarity with uni	37
family	39
finances	21
technology/Internet	11
application literacy	18
first-gen	13
application fees	10
Sets	**0**