

ABORIGINAL PERSPECTIVES
UNDERSTANDING AND COMPARING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES AND
RESILIENCE OF ABORIGINAL MEN AND WOMEN
ATTENDING HIGHER EDUCATION

by

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Abstract

Through an in-depth examination and review of the traumatic impact of colonialism and oppression faced by Aboriginal peoples, trends being to appear within the literature. These trends include the intergenerational cycles that foster negative outcomes for Aboriginal Peoples, specifically for those who were forced to endure the physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and sexual abuse within the Residential school system. The survivors of this era experience lifelong trauma which is then passed on through the generations to their children, grand-children, great grand-children etc. The numbers of Aboriginal students attending University level, higher education are increasingly low and the research has indicated that this is, in large part, due to the impact of the residential school system and the outlook that Aboriginal Peoples now have towards the education system. Factors of resiliency both positive and negative are described throughout. Positive resiliency, from a western perspective, include the ability to overcome adversity (Scarpino, 2007). This research project utilizes a qualitative method of open-ended one-on-one interviews with Aboriginal men and women who are students at Laurentian University in order to better understand their lived experiences and the aspects that have fostered positive resiliency for them to pursue higher education.

Keywords: Aboriginal Peoples, colonialism, education, intergenerational cycles of trauma, resiliency

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Introduction

All across Mother Earth, we could say that the words “resistance” and “resiliency” are synonymous with Indigenous peoples. The strength of our ancestors throughout history which has been passed along through blood memory and spirit to each generation is remarkable. How else do we explain our survival in the face of horrendous deeds created by colonization and genocide? (Baskin, 2007, p. 3)

Aboriginal People have experienced a long history of trauma, exploitation, forced assimilation, loss of autonomy, loss of independence, loss of traditional territories and roles through cultural domination, institutionalism, marginalization, as well as structural and systematic discrimination and racism (Benard, 1991). In order to advance with this study, it is imperative that the history of colonialism and oppression faced by Aboriginal Peoples be understood. Colonization was a term coined to describe the process of assimilation and taking control of Aboriginal people through formal government policies (Chansonneuve, 2005). Chansonneuve (2005) explains that from an Aboriginal perspective, colonization was the theft of ancestral homelands and resources and the destruction of Aboriginal languages and cultures.

When the Europeans arrived in Canada they disrupted the traditional lifestyles of the Aboriginal people who occupied the land. The Europeans believed that the Aboriginal Peoples were in need of social reform in order for them to assimilate to the new and dominant culture that was invading their territories. The unique social structures of the Aboriginal People along with their traditions, culture, language, ways of living, thinking and viewing the world were ultimately violated (Mawhiney and Hardy, 2009, p.96). Cote-Meek (2014) describes the longstanding and ongoing violence experienced by Aboriginal Peoples specifically through the government use of residential schools (discussed throughout). The aftermath of these schools resulted in poverty, devastations as well as cognitive and physical impairments which were then passed down through the generations through intergenerational cycles of trauma (Cote-Meek, 2014). The impact of the residential schools and the intergenerational cycles of trauma they

created have resulted in generations of Aboriginal families fearing the education system which is still operated through a dominant, western-culture perspective (Stonechild, 2006).

Social Darwinism, according to Stonechild (2006) was the prevailing ideology among the Canadian elite at the time of the Confederation. The belief was that certain individuals, including Aboriginal Peoples, were simply born defective biologically, intellectually and emotionally (Stonechild, 2006). It was this uneducated thought process that formed the idea that Aboriginal Peoples and their culture would be unable to cope with the social and cultural changes of Colonialism with the arrival of the Europeans. Cote-Meek (2014) explains that the residential school system was used as a tool to suppress and eradicate Aboriginal Peoples, including their ways of knowing and understanding. With that, began years of trauma and degradation that have resulted in these intergenerational cycles of historical trauma that have been passed down through the generations. Goforth (2007) explains that the impact of intergenerational trauma have had negative effects on entire Aboriginal communities. One of the major contributing factors to these intergenerational cycles was the trauma and abuse that Aboriginal Peoples were subjected to in the residential school system.

Statement of the Problem

Research indicates that there is a dramatic difference in educational attainment between Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal People (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada [AANDC], 2012). The concept of resiliency comes up throughout the literature again and again. Resiliency has been used to describe individuals who overcome adversity against the odds (Scarpino, 2007). Through the use of a qualitative approach utilizing a one-on-one open-ended interview process, the following research study aims to understand the lived experiences

of Aboriginal Laurentian students to learn what factors have fostered positive resiliency for them while accounting for the effects of colonialism and the intergenerational cycles of trauma.

Rationale for Study

This qualitative study into the lived experiences and resiliency of Aboriginal men and women attending higher education is important for a number of reasons. First, there is a significant gap that exists between Aboriginal Peoples attending higher education in comparison to non- Aboriginal peoples at the same level of educational attainment. Second, when comparing the gap between Aboriginal men and women's attending University-level education, there is a larger gap than that of non-Aboriginal men and women. These statistics indicate that more Aboriginal women attend University-level education than do Aboriginal men. And finally, after years of colonization and the struggles faced by Aboriginal Peoples, specifically for those individuals who attended the Residential school system, patterns of intergenerational cycles of trauma appear throughout the literature which has been attributed to negative resiliency. The available literature and research points to these numbers and statistics for comparative purposes, however, the questions of why there are higher numbers of women attending higher education or why some Aboriginal people are more resilient than others have not yet been thoroughly investigated in past literature.

Assumptions

This research project aims to take a closer look at the resiliency factors that have aided Aboriginal students at Laurentian University to succeed in attending higher education. In learning about the histories and discussing their successes, we may be able to pinpoint resiliency factors that could then be utilized in teachings for other Aboriginal Peoples. This may aid to promote these positive resiliency factors in-spite of the intergenerational cycles of trauma

discussed previously. It is anticipated that the factors that foster resiliency in Aboriginal University students will differ between men and women. Through a focus on success and resiliency in the discussions with Aboriginal Laurentian students, it may be discovered that this resiliency is fostered at a familial and cultural level. In this sense, family and culture would play a strong role in the fostering of positive resiliency. This research will aid in solidifying the current knowledge surrounding the barriers, obstacles and intergenerational traumas already within the literature while pointing to the current limitations. Through the sharing of these findings with Aboriginal communities, it may promote positive resiliency in parental and cultural aspects, potentially leading to increased levels of Aboriginal peoples attending higher education.

Research Methods and Rationale

Haverkemp (2005) characterizes qualitative research in terms of delving into the historical, cultural and social context of the lives of participants while emphasizing their particular experiences. Through the use of a qualitative research design to examine the lived-experiences of Aboriginal Laurentian students and gaining perspective on what has fostered resilience for them is important to gain first-hand knowledge as to what factors motivate individuals to attend higher-education. This will also aid to uncover potential differences between these resiliency factors between Aboriginal men and women.

Definition of Key Terms

Aboriginal Peoples: This term is used collectively to describe three cultural groups of Aboriginal people: the Inuit, Métis people and First Nations (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2005).

Colonization: A term that describes the process of taking control over and assimilating Aboriginal people through formal government policies. From an Aboriginal perspective, it refers

to the theft of ancestral homelands and resources, as well as attempts to destroy Indigenous languages and cultures (Chansonneuve, 2005, p. A19).

Enfranchisement: Moss & Gardner O'Toole (1991) describe enfranchisement as the “voluntary” removal of Aboriginal status which required the abandonment of reservation rights and the right to live with one’s family and culture.

Higher Education: This term will be use to describe University level education.

Limitations of the Study

Although a qualitative approach is beneficial to finding out about the lived experiences and the success factors that have fostered positive resiliency in Aboriginal Laurentian students, a further examination utilizing a quantitative approach would be beneficial. A quantitative approach utilizing a survey format where Aboriginal students would be given the opportunity to answer questions relevant to resiliency factors already within the literature would allow for a better exploration and solidification of the current known trends. Also, by allowing this survey to offer an area where students could insert their own responses, perhaps a new trend would increase and add to the current known trends. This type of quantitative survey format would also allow for a larger body of respondents whose responses could then be easily graphed and analyzed. Also, due to ethical factors and time-constraints, this research was unable to examine individuals who have chosen not to attend higher education or individuals from other higher education institutes, thus not allowing for a comparative examination between these groups. Another limitation is that although this sort of research hopes to gather as much relevant information as possible, there are occasions where the participants are simply unsure of the answers, especially when focusing on a family history. Finally, although a total of 8 participants will aid in scratching the surface to answering the proposed research questions, more participants

would allow for a more in-depth overview, however, again, time available to interview more participants does become a limitation.

Summary

The above provided a brief look at the history and impact of Colonization on Aboriginal Peoples. It discussed briefly the effects of the Government and Church-run Residential School System and the disruption it had on the traditional lifestyles of Aboriginal Peoples including the negative repercussions on their traditions, culture, language, ways of living, thinking and viewing the world. This section also introduced the notion of the intergenerational cycles of trauma that have resulted from this historical trauma which are then passed down through the generations. The literature has indicated that as a result of these factors, Aboriginal Peoples have lower levels of Academic achievement in comparison to non-Aboriginal people. Through a qualitative analysis of the lived-experiences of Aboriginal men and women attending Laurentian University, this research aims to pinpoint resiliency factors that have aided these individuals in their pursuit of higher education despite the intergenerational cycles of trauma.

Literature Review

The treatment of children in Indian Residential schools is a sad chapter in our history. Two primary objectives of the residential schools system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. These objectives were based on the assumption aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, 'to kill the Indian in the child'. Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country.

...

The government now recognizes that consequences of the Indian residential schools policy were profoundly negative and that this policy has had lasting and damaging impact on aboriginal culture, heritage and language.

...

The government recognized that the absence of an apology has been an impediment to healing and reconciliation. Therefore, on behalf of the government of Canada and all Canadians, I stand before you, in this chamber so central to our life as a country, to apologize to aboriginal peoples for Canada's role in the Indian residential schools system. (Stephen Harper, June 11, 2008)

Residential School System

Cote-Meek's (2014) research indicates that the notion that colonialism exists solely in the past, is simply the response of the perpetrators attempting to escape accountability and promote forgiveness for their actions. Churchill (2004) explains residential schools as a joint Church and government of Canada run school system that had mandatory attendance requirements for all Aboriginal children. These children were forced from their families and made to attend schools that were often long distances away from their homes where they were then unable to contact their families. These schools were a government attempt at cultural oppression, coercive change and genocide (Churchill, 2004). Churchill (2004) also reports that survivors have reported that while in these schools they experienced poor nutrition, high rates of tuberculosis and other diseases (which were then untreatable), forced labor, as well as incidents of physical, emotional,

mental, spiritual and sexual abuse. He continues to explain that the trauma faced by these Aboriginal Peoples has been transmitted to successive generations. These trauma include a history of poor parenting skills, mood issues such as anger, low self-esteem, domestic violence, fear, anxiety, social issues, dependency, substance use and abuse, internalized oppression and other maladaptive coping mechanisms amongst other consequences. More than 150,000 Aboriginal children attended these schools between 1857 until the last one in Canada closed in 1996 (AANDC, 2012).

The Indian Act of 1876

The Indian Act was enacted after the Confederation of 1867 and was an amalgamation of Canadian legislation that was created in 1876 (Department of Justice Canada, 2013). According to Moss and Gardner- O'Toole (1991) the aim of the Indian Act was to speed up the civilization of the Aboriginal Peoples. This act allows the government to control most aspects of Aboriginal life including (but not limited to) Indian status, land, resources, wills, education and band administration (Moss and Gardner-O'Toole, 1991). Aboriginal Peoples were legally wards of the state and considered minors under the Indian Act until 1947 unable to seek council for legal or political matters, own property or enter into contracts (Stonechild, 2006). The Indian Act was referred to by Dei and Kempf (2006) as a tool of colonization which stripped Aboriginal People of their means of livelihood and independence resulting directly in social, economic civil, political, spiritual and cultural marginalization (p. 137).

A History on Education

According to Stonechild (2006) the Indian Act contains provisions for on-reserve education that include elementary and secondary school. The act remains unclear about University-level education. In 1879, section 86(1) of the Indian Act explained that any

Aboriginal has the option of attaining a doctorate or degree within a University, however, in doing so, these individuals would be forced to give up their Aboriginal status (Stonechild, 2006). This was the first reference to enfranchisement within the Indian Act which Moss and Gardner O'Toole (1991) explain as the “voluntary” removal of Aboriginal status which required the abandonment of reservation rights and the right to live with one’s family and culture. This clause remained within the Indian Act until 1927 when it was replaced by another clause, also with the intent of enfranchisement.

According to Carter (1999), it wasn’t until the 1970s that students within Canadian universities were offered the opportunity to further explore Aboriginal history. Prior to this, students were told that there was no Aboriginal history to teach and even history courses did not offer any substantial material on Aboriginal and European contact (Carter, 1999). Stonechild (2006) explains that a Canadian history that does not involve Aboriginal Peoples is simply a fabrication of the dominant society that was created as a tool of domination. Cote-Meek’s (2014) research explains that it may be the first time for many Aboriginal students attending University that they discuss, study and read about the history of Aboriginal Peoples. History in which they are exposed to in Elementary and Secondary school prior to University are taught from a dominant European perspective and omit much of the hardships that encompass the history of Aboriginal Peoples within Canada (Cote-Meek, 2014).

Educational Attainment for Aboriginal Peoples

The role of Aboriginal post-secondary education has evolved from a tool of assimilation to an instrument of empowerment (Stonechild, 2006, p. 7)

Aboriginal Peoples today have lower levels of academic achievement overall in comparison to non-Aboriginals in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2010). Statistics Canada (2006) also points out that Aboriginal women are more likely than Aboriginal men to pursue University

level education. The literature showcases a significant difference in University-level educational attainment between Aboriginal Peoples in comparison to non-Aboriginal people. According to the literature, there is a 14.1% gap in University-level achievement between Aboriginal men (4.5%) and non-Aboriginal men (18.6%) and an 11.4% gap between Aboriginal women (7.1%) and non-Aboriginal women (18.5%) (AADNDC, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2010). What is even more surprising is the 0.1% gap between non-Aboriginal men and women in comparison to the 2.6% difference between Aboriginal men and women at the same level of educational attainment.

Raham (2007) describes the issue of the education gap as one that is both persistent and pressing while Calliou (2001) expresses the need for parental involvement and local control; such as government assistance in increasing educational involvement and achievement for Aboriginal Peoples. Previous literature indicates that the devastation caused by the residential school system and its traumatic effects can have an intergenerational or historical impact on learning for many Aboriginal Peoples (Calliou, 2001; Cote-Meek, 2014). The statistics that are found within the Canadian census corroborate this theory.

The Income Gap and Poverty

Wilson and Macdonald's (2010) research explains the aftermath of colonialism on Aboriginal People which has resulted in Aboriginal peoples having been ranked among the poorest of Canadians. These high levels of income disparity continue to exist despite rapid increases in educational attainment on the part of Aboriginal People (Wilson and Macdonald, 2010). Their research does indicate that Aboriginal People who attain a University-level degree overcome this income gap (Wilson and Macdonald, 2010). Aboriginal women are receiving University-level education at higher rates than Aboriginal men, however, as previously

mentioned, the educational attainment of Aboriginal peoples still falls behind that of the rest of Canada (Wilson and Macdonald, 2010). Wilson and Macdonald (2010) also point out, that despite the increase in Aboriginal women completing University-level education, there has been very limited changes made to reduce the income disparity between Aboriginal peoples and the rest of the Canadian population.

The education of Aboriginal Peoples does not simply benefit those individuals. Ashton and Green (1996) describe the importance of economic growth and development in an industrialized society which benefits from education and skill formation and they add that a rise in labour productivity and the average living standards would ensue if educational attainment rates increased. The role of educational attainment and the overall benefits to the global economy are becoming increasingly important and education is a solution (Ashton and Green, 1996). In other words, increased education rates result in a decrease in unemployment rates which aid in the continued growth of the global economy.

Resilience within the Literature

With the long history of documented trauma, it is a wonder how *any* Aboriginal People have managed to rise above the intergenerational cycles of trauma and attain a degree in higher education. One may begin to question what sorts of environments help to nurture positive resiliency outcomes in the face of such adversity. Bernard's (1991) research on children and youth explains that there are relational protective processes that can predict these sorts of positive developmental outcomes in high risk individuals. Resiliency is described throughout much of the existing literature in terms of children overcoming obstacles. Scarpino's (2007) research into the resiliency of urban Aboriginal women finds that resilience is a lifelong process that has many factors that vary from individual to individual. Stonechild's (2006) research

indicates resilience as a contributing factor to explain why more Aboriginal women attend higher education than Aboriginal males. This is explained in terms of the strength and determination of Aboriginal women to overcome the various barriers they face such as racism, primary responsibility for childcare, lower incomes and exposure to violence (Stonechild, 2006).

According to Ungar (2006), there are factors that can both enhance and diminish resiliency in individuals. Protective factors, if fostered, can result in positive growth and development, whereas as, if risk factors are present, there is the possibility for less-positive outcomes. Protective factors are strengths that help a person or family cope with stress or life difficulties, increasing the likelihood of rebound from difficult situations (Ungar, 2006). Benard (1991) lists protective factors that include supportive families, parents or caregivers that promote love, acceptance, positive guidance and protection as well as knowledge of parenting skills, respectful communication, consistency and access to supports or essential services. Children require their basic needs met, safety, social connections, autonomy as well as a sense of purpose (Benard, 1991). Other researchers suggest that extra-curricular involvement as children and adolescents can enhance educational outcomes, thus functioning as a protective factor- although further research into this is needed (Shulruf, 2010; Seow and Pan, 2014). If these factors are fostered then there is a greater likelihood of positive resiliency. On the other hand, there are risk factors that attribute to poor-resiliency which include a history of neglect, substance abuse, poverty, social isolation, living in a violent community, family structure, domestic violence and stress (Benard, 1991). Those individuals who can overcome these risk factors would demonstrate even greater resiliency.

Summary

Throughout the literature, the Residential School System is explained as having created intergenerational cycles of historical trauma. Survivors have reported experiencing poor nutrition, high rates of tuberculosis and other diseases, forced labour, as well as incidents of physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and sexual abuse which impacted the lives of more than 150,000 Aboriginal children. Aboriginal People experience lower levels of education in comparison to non-Aboriginal people and the literature also indicates that Aboriginal women attend University-level education in greater numbers than Aboriginal men. The literature also explains that many Aboriginal people fear the education system as a result of the impact of the Residential Schools and the intergenerational cycles of trauma. The literature pinpoints protective factors that have contributed to positive resiliency and some literature indicates that women in general are more resilient than men. Protective factors include supportive families, parents, caregivers, acceptance, positive guidance among other factors that help to promote positive resiliency.

Research Methodology

Research Questions

The central research questions that this study aimed to answer was to understand what motivated positive resiliency for Aboriginal men and women attending Laurentian University while addressing the following questions:

1. What resiliency factors emerge from Aboriginal Laurentian students that have promoted and motivated success and the pursuit of higher education?
2. Due to the differences in educational achievement between Aboriginal men and women, will the resiliency factors and their motivators between these groups differ?

Research Design

This research was conducted using an ethnographic method of qualitative inquiry. Through the use of an in-depth one-on-one interview process utilizing open-ended questions to gather as much relevant information from the first-person perspective on the histories of the participants and their point-of-view on what motivators have fostered educational success and resiliency for them. The ethnographic approach allowed for the interpretation of shared and learned patterns of values and beliefs found within the culture-sharing group of Aboriginal Peoples. Using qualitative research to examine the lived-experiences of Aboriginal Laurentian students and gaining perspective on what has fostered resilience for them is important to gain first-hand knowledge as to what factors provide the highest drive to attend higher-education. This will also aid to uncover potential differences between these resiliency factors between Aboriginal men and women. Data collection adhered to the ethical considerations outlined in Appendix F and Appendix G. Participants and any identifying features remain anonymous and confidential. The interviews were recorded utilizing a voice-recording device and then later transcribed. Each interview lasted between 20 and 40 minutes dependent upon the direction of

each interview, the responses of the participants and how long they chose to speak for. The interviews involved a one-on-one open-ended interview that was conducted face-to-face in a location that allowed for the maintenance of privacy and confidentiality. The interview (See Appendix C) included some basic demographic questions including gender, age and Aboriginal identity followed by the key questions that aided in the understanding and analyses of the research questions.

Data Analysis Strategy

The interviews were first recorded and then the audio material was transcribed into text. From the transcripts a qualitative data analysis was conducted utilizing a content analysis technique known as directed content analysis. Mayring (2000) explains content analysis as a qualitative research tool which analyzes the frequency of main ideas, specific themes, terms and narratives within the research. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) explain directed content analysis as an elaboration on existing theories or prior research. These results are meant to establish an inductive argument to aid in the increase and enhancement of the current research and literature. As the literature explained throughout does include previous research on the educational attainment of Aboriginal Peoples, this research is intended to add to the current literature and thus a directed content analysis was utilized seeking to focus on specific themes and narratives in order to gain insight into answering the research questions. Pre-determined themes were set in order to easily distinguish them during the interviews and to aid in adding to the interview process. The themes that were pre-determined for included poverty, resilience, historical residential school attendance and motivation. Upon analyses, these themes and others emerged.

The following steps were utilized based on a collaboration of various researchers' input in ensuring that the content analysis was thorough (Creswell, 2013; Hsieh and Shannon, 2005; Mayring, 2000)

1. During the interviews and data collection, analysis occurred concurrently where notes were written on the interview questionnaire that pertained to the pre-determined themes.
2. The audio recordings were listened to and then transcribed verbatim.
3. The transcripts were then read, and relevant themes that emerged were highlighted and notes were written in the margins.
4. The notes within the margins were read and compared to one another to pinpoint commonalities.
5. A list was created to categorize each item based on the themes that emerged allowing for a description to be added.
6. Each emerging theme was analysed to find links between them and then categorized as either a major theme or minor theme.
7. Major and minor themes were again analysed.
8. Each transcript was re-read over and over and analysed repeatedly to be sure all connections and themes had been accounted for.

Ethical Considerations

Due to ethical validation purposes as explained by Creswell (2013), this research takes into account and questions any underlying moral assumptions and their implications. Ethical approval for this study was received through the Department of Psychology at Laurentian University (See Appendix E and Appendix G). Ethical considerations have been made by receiving informed consent from each participant who were all over the age of consent. An

informed consent form was provided to all participants. This form explained the study's procedure and purpose. The participants were provided with ample opportunity to ask questions, gain further explanation or understanding. This consent form also included consent being given to audio-record the interview as well as consent to the release of the transcripts of those recordings for the duration of the study.

There was a minimal level of risk to participants who were able discuss whichever events they felt most comfortable with and they were given the opportunity to stop the interview at any time. Some participants discussed events that may have been traumatic in their past, however none of the participants showcased any level of distress during this process. Had a risk been presented, it would have been relatively short-term and the opportunity to end the interview at any time was always available. Due to the slight potential for risk, all participants were provided with contact information of the Aboriginal Student Association's Aboriginal Counsellor, Cynthia Belfitt (Appendix D). A debriefing form (Appendix E) was also provided which included two references to books that expand upon Aboriginal education (Cote-Meek, 2014) as well as colonial impacts and intergenerational cycles (Stonechild, 2006).

Summary

This research aims to utilize an ethnographic method of qualitative inquiry to discover what resiliency factors emerge from Aboriginal Laurentian students which have promoted and motivated success and the pursuit of higher education. It also seeks to pinpoint differences in educational attainment between Aboriginal men and women and whether or not the resiliency factors and their motivators will differ between groups. The data was collected from 4 male and 4 female Aboriginal volunteer participants. The interviews were recorded with permission from the participants and then later transcribed verbatim. This data was then analysed utilizing a

directed content analysis technique to locate main ideas, common themes, and narratives while maintaining participant confidentiality and adhering to ethical considerations outlined and approved by the Laurentian University Psychology Department Board of ethics.

Findings

The findings and results of the data analyses will be described in this section. The themes that were identified within the data include: (A) Family History, (B) Childhood Environment, (C) Resiliency, (D) Support systems, (E) Challenges, and (F) Motivators (to pursue higher education). These themes also included the following subthemes: (a) Familial Residential School Attendance (a) Family dynamics, (b) Positive or Negative Environment, (b) Extra-Curricular Involvement, (b) Familial alcoholism, (c) Individual definitions of resiliency, (c) Personal identification as resilient, (d) Family, Friends and Mentors, (d) Supportive childhood, (e) Institutional racism and discrimination (e) Financial (f) Children as a motivator, and (f) Breaking the Intergenerational cycle. To recap, the following aims to provide insight into what resiliency factors emerge from Aboriginal Laurentian students that have promoted and motivated success and the pursuit of higher education. Also, due to the differences in educational achievement between Aboriginal men and women, will the resiliency factors and their motivators between these groups differ?

Participants

Baker and Edwards (2012) explains that for an undergraduate thesis, four to eight participants is sufficient. Therefore, this research included a voluntary (convenience) sample of four Aboriginal male and four Aboriginal female Laurentian students who were interviewed utilizing the qualitative approach. When examining students there is generally a large age range,

one of the demographic questions asks for participants' age in order to verify they are over 18 years of age to consent. All of the participants involved were above the age of consent. This study aimed to develop a richer understanding of the participants' lived experiences in a comfortable environment to develop a richer understanding of the factors that motivated them to pursue higher education while gathering a broader understanding of any life obstacles they may have had to overcome along their journey.

Participant Recruitment Methods

Random selection was utilized in order to aid in the removal of potential bias or influence from external variables as well as allow for generalizability of the results, in accordance with Sargeant's (2012) research. In order to recruit participants, there were two methods utilized for recruitment. Firstly, a sign-up sheet was available in the Aboriginal Student Association Volunteer Room (See Appendix A). Secondly, the Aboriginal Student Association has a mailing list of 251 Aboriginal students, and a copy of the participation recruitment form was emailed to this list on behalf of this research (See Appendix B). A last resort recruitment method was arranged in advance which would have required classroom visits, however, this method was not utilized.

Data Analysis

The following will explain the various demographic and interview questions that were asked while providing insight into some of the transcribed responses that came directly from the participants. In order to protect the confidentiality of the participants, each participant was provided a numerical value instead of a name. Participants 1 through 4 were the Aboriginal males and participants 5 through 8 were the Aboriginal female participants. Appendix C provides the questionnaire. Within the demographic portion of the interview, other questions were asked

above and beyond the ones presented in **Figures 1 through 8**. However, some of these questions were used to help familiarize the participant with the researcher and vice versa. This allowed for the participant and researcher to engage in conversation to gain as much family history as possible throughout the interview. Some of these questions were not originally meant for analysis.

Figure 1 Demographic Questions, Responses and Results	
Questions	Responses and Outcomes
Are you of Aboriginal Decent?	<p>Participant 1: First Nation Participant 2: First Nation Participant 3: First Nation Participant 4: First Nation Participant 5: First Nation Participant 6: First Nation Participant 7: Métis Participant 8: First Nation</p>
Do you know what generation you are in school? Prompts: Did your parents attend University	<p>Participant 1: “I’d say second. Both my parents went to school. My dad actually graduated from here (Laurentian University)”</p> <p>Participant 2: “I’m the first to attend University in my immediate family.”</p> <p>Participant 3: “First, my dad went to college, but he didn’t graduate... my mom didn’t”</p> <p>Participant 4: “Second, both my parents were educators. My dad went to L.U. and my mom went to University.”</p> <p>Participant 5: “I’m the first.”</p> <p>Participant 6: “first.”</p> <p>Participant 7: “My parents had me when they were 18 just out of high school so I’m the first to go to University.”</p> <p>Participant 8: “My mom went to community college and my dad was in the army and I don’t know if we went to post-secondary, but I think</p>

	I'm the first to go to University.”
How old are you?	<p>Participant 1: 18 Participant 2: 27 Participant 3: 25 Participant 4: 23 Participant 5: 39 Participant 6: 42 Participant 7: 21 Participant 8: 28</p>

Analysis of Figure 1

The results of **Figure 1** showcase a couple of interesting details. First, 7 out of 8 were First Nations individuals. 6 out of 8 of the participants responded with being the first generation within their immediate families to attend post-secondary. Of that, 100% were female while only 50% were male first generation. Age was questioned during this process, to see if it played a role in the overall results and to confirm participants’ were above the age of minority to participate. Ultimately, age did not play a role in terms of female post-secondary education, however, the results do show that younger males (below the age of 23) are those who are second-generation and those over that age answered as being first generation. This could be significant if a larger sample-size of participants showcased similar results, it could also imply that younger second-generation students have younger parents who attended post-secondary (although parent-age was not questioned within the interview and can therefore not be presumed).

Interview Questions Explained and Results

The full-interview questionnaire can be found in, **Appendix C**. The following **Figures 2 through 8** will take a look at the interview questions that were of the most significance in answering the research questions while providing the *emerging themes* and *subthemes* that were identified within the data. To recap, the themes that will be assessed are: (A) Family History, (B)

Childhood Environment, (C) Resiliency, (D) Support systems, (E) Challenges, (F) Motivators (to pursue higher education). The following *subthemes* will also be assessed: (a) Familial Residential School Attendance (a) Family dynamics, (b) Positive or Negative Environment, (b) Extra-Curricular Involvement, (b) Familial alcoholism, (c) Individual definitions of resiliency, (c) Personal identification as resilient, (d) Family, Friends and Mentors, (d) Supportive childhood, (e) Institutional racism and discrimination (e) Financial (f) Children as a motivator, (f) Breaking the Intergenerational cycle. Each Figure provides the themes/subthemes along with the related open-ended interview question. Below each Figure, an analysis will be provided along with various quotes from the participants’ responses.

Figure 2 Themes (A), Subthemes (a) and Interview Questions	
Themes and Subthemes	Questions
(A) Family History - Family Residential School Attendance - Family Dynamics	Can you tell me a little bit about your family history? Prompts - Did any of your family attend the Residential Schools? - Were you raised by both of your parents?
Brief Overview of Results	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5 out of 8 (62.5%) participants had a familial history of residential school attendance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 50% of males and 75% of females - 100% of female and 75% of male participants reported being raised in a two-parent household (this included biological and step-parents) 	

Analysis and Responses of Figure 2

Each participant, regardless of gender, family dynamics or familial knowledge of residential school attendance certainly had a story to tell. Participant 3 says “I have young parents, they were inexperienced raising kids... it wasn’t stable. I lived with both my parents ‘til they split, then I chose to live with my dad.” Participant 5 states “my parents both passed away

within the last 5 years, I’m the second youngest in my family, there were ten girls, one passed away, and two brothers... but my parents were together until the end.”

The results showcase that 100% of females and 75% of male participants were raised in a two-parent household. It also indicates that 75% of female participants and 50% of male participants’ knew whether or not they had an immediate family member who attended the residential school system. This indicates that 62.5% of participants overcame the intergenerational cycles that were previously discussed as being a repercussion of the Residential school system.

Figure 3 Themes (B), Subthemes (b) and Interview Questions	
Themes and Subthemes	Questions
(B) Childhood Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive or Negative environment - Extra-curricular involvement - Familial Alcoholism (<i>emerged by participants</i>) 	Describe the environment in which you grew up in? Prompts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Was it a positive environment? - Were you involved in any extra-curricular activities?
Brief Overview of Results	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 7 out of 8 (87.5%) of participants reported their childhood as not being very positive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 100% of female participants reported this versus only 50% of male participants - 7 out of 8 participants were involved in extra-curricular activities throughout their childhood and adolescence. - 6 out of 8 (75%) of participants voluntarily reported a familial history of alcoholism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 100% of female participants versus only 25% of male participants 	

Analysis and Responses of Figure 3

7 out of 8 participants reported their childhood as not being very positive. Participant 7 stated “my parents are very controlling and it was kind of hard to stick to my guns on what I wanted to do and not what they expected me to do... my parents don’t want my little sister to go

to University because they think it's a waste, now they're pushing her to go to college instead and my sister isn't as good as sticking to her guns as I am." Participant 2 explained a difficult childhood of an alcoholic mother, abuse "if we acted up, we got the belt or spoon as punishment", poverty "I remember there being no food so we'd (little brothers and himself) would drink soya sauce just to have something in our stomachs and sometimes, if there was food, it was covered in cockroaches so we couldn't eat it" and Participant 2 continues by explaining an environment that was difficult and far from positive "there were points in time that were positive, looking back and knowing what I know now, I would say it definitely wasn't a positive environment... when I got to the foster home though, I feel bad for saying it, but I liked it, it was better than being home." On the other hand, Participant 1 explained "there was always food on the table, it was a healthy environment... yeah, it was pretty positive." The stories told by the participants certainly does showcase resiliency simply by being in University.

The question within the interviews on extra-curricular activities was included due to the fact that within the literature there were some (Shulruf, 2010; Seow and Pan, 2014) who attempt to find connections between children and adolescents who are involved in extra-curricular activities and higher educational results. Although their research requires further study, this question was added in order to discover whether or not the participants involved within this study participated in extra-curricular activities to discover whether a link existed. The results of this indicate that 7 out of 8 of the participants were in-fact involved in extra-curricular activities throughout their lives, some of whom continue to be involved today. As Participant 1 explains "I was involved in tonnes (of extra-curricular activities)! Racket sports to hockey to baseball and wrestling. I was also in a drumming group and I'm still wrestling!" Although this statistic doesn't provide solid evidence to conclude that those who participate in extra-curricular

activities will go on to pursue higher education, it does provide a potential outlet for children and adolescents living in difficult conditions and could potentially help as a coping mechanism to enhance resiliency outcomes.

At no point during the interview were the participants questioned on their parent’s alcohol consumption, yet 6 out of 8 saw this as a matter of importance when discussing their family history and childhood environment. Participant 7 stated “my parents were heavy drinkers... about 4 to 5 times a week.” Participant 8 explained “my parents were very social and liked to drink all the time, so I remember a lot of parties... a lot of BIG (emphasis included) parties at our house and we would just be in the bedroom playing, It was kind of a norm for us... but I became a teenager and I stopped staying home, I didn’t like it anymore so I would leave and go to my boyfriend’s house.” 100% of the female participants voluntarily reported a familial history of alcoholism during the interview when asked about their family histories and childhood. Only 25% of the male participants mentioned this during the interview process. “Mom had alcoholism and that affected our lives and we ended up going into foster care” stated Participant 2 (the only male to explain being affected by alcoholism). This could potentially support the previous literature by Stonechild (2006) which explains how there are higher numbers of Aboriginal women who attend post-secondary education in comparison to Aboriginal males. Also supporting the notion that explains how Aboriginal women tend to overcome barriers at a higher rate than Aboriginal males.

Figure 4
Themes (C), Subthemes (c) and Interview Questions

Themes and Subthemes	Questions
Resilience - Individual definitions of Resilience - Personal identification as resilient	What does resilience mean to you? Prompts - Would you describe yourself as resilient?

Brief Overview of Results	
- 100% of participants reported being resilient	

Analysis and Responses of Figure 4

100% of the participants described themselves as resilient and provided their own explanation as to how they would define resiliency. When asked what resiliency meant to them, Participant 8 compared a rubber band to a piece of wool. Explaining how the rubber band has the ability to be pulled and will always go back to its original form, whereas the wool stays in place and if you manage to stretch it, it will never go back to the way it was before. “In my point of view, the rubber band is resilient and able to bounce back and be in the same form it was to begin with, so for a person to be resilient it would mean bouncing back to your own perspectives and beliefs and values and staying strong and true to them” (Participant 8). Participant 5 explains resiliency as “coming up against some difficulties and being able to overcome or deal with them” and when asked why they believe they are resilient, Participant 5 replies “I had a shitty childhood, right, and if I can get through that I can get through anything.” The ability to overcome obstacles has been repeated throughout the literature to define resiliency, all of the participants agree that they have had to overcome obstacles to get to where they are today even if it was as simple as “overcoming my shyness” as Participant 6 explains.

**Figure 5
Themes (D), Subthemes (d) and Interview Questions**

Themes and Subthemes	Questions
Support Systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family, friends and mentors - Supportive Childhood 	Would you say you have a positive support system? Prompts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who were your supports? Family, friends or mentors? - Would you say you had a positive childhood?

Analysis and Responses of Figure 5

Participants experienced varying levels of support from different people. Participant 8 explains “I had a lot of support to help me get through it (school and life struggles). If I didn’t have my mentors I don’t know where I’d be. I see people who don’t have a support system, and they’re struggling, the support system got me to where I am.” On the other hand, Participant 3 describes his struggles of not having a mentor “not having a model or mentor to seek advice from is what prevented me from transitioning to University after college. After College I was in the job market and couldn’t find anything great so I came to University.”

**Figure 6
Themes (E), Subthemes (e) and Interview Questions**

Themes and Subthemes	Questions
Challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Institutional racism and discrimination - Financial challenges 	What sorts of challenges have you had to face as a student? Prompts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What sorts of obstacles? - What sorts of successes?
Brief Overview of Results	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bursaries, scholarships and awards were considered great successes - Money and financing was reported as a challenge - Racism and discrimination within the classroom was reported as a challenge by 4 out of 8 participants 	

Analysis and Responses of Figure 6

Participant 8 reported having no challenges stating “I like to think that everybody has a calling, you know how some people have skills or are advanced in hockey or other areas like art. For me, it takes a lot of time to excel in those areas and the one thing I’m naturally good at is school. This is where I can exceed without trying so hard. In high school though, it was very easy for me, so easy that I’d finish my work before everyone and have lots of spare time and then I started getting myself into trouble.” However, Participant 8 continued by stating that “this institution is made for non-native people and we’re trying to fit into the institutions so you know, we already have a disadvantage just being Aboriginal...uhm... an institution that’s made for another culture, another point of view on life... so we are already fighting barriers to maintain our position and our sense of belonging in this big organization. One of my barriers is to overcome the stigmas and discrimination and racism (within this institution).” Participant 5 says that when they took their PhD, things became challenging “not the course work, no, I mean it was challenging but I loved it, it was the people. I didn’t want to go to class but I had to. Classmates would turn to me and say ‘hey, you’re Native, tell us about this...’ and it was not my job to educate the class on Indigenous stuff. I was there to learn and if you want to know, go out and educate yourself.” This type of response was not uncommon throughout the interviews, Participant 4 describes similar opinions and says “people from my generation, my age, have to deal with things like poor grades and competing in the formal educational systems. But they also have to deal with historical traumas, living circumstances, people with addictions, family trauma, poverty and even sexual abuse.” Participant 4 continues to describe post-secondary trauma and racism in the classroom explaining the Laurentian University tri-cultural mandate, stating, “the mandate looks good on paper, but how well can it be implemented?” When 4 out of 8

participants describe their encounters with racism and discrimination within their post-secondary institution, without directly being asked whether this has ever impacted their lives, it draws on the questions as to what each participant would have said, had a question on racism and discrimination been included within the interview questionnaire.

Figure 7 Themes (F), Subthemes (f) and Interview Questions	
Themes and Subthemes	Questions
Motivators - Children as a motivator - Breaking the intergenerational cycles	What motivated you to become a student? - Looking back at your childhood, would you say that there were any motivators that helped you to pursue higher education? - Is there anything else you would like to add?
Brief Overview of Results	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 25% of participants reported parental motivation as a motivator - 75% of participants responded in some way that a good job/financial security was a number one motivator. - 12.5% responded that breaking the stereotypes was a motivator - 50% of participants reported their children as a motivator (that was 100% of those participants who have children) 	

Analysis and Responses of Figure 8

This analysis on motivation is quite important to the core purpose of this research. Participants each had their own reasons for what motivated them to pursue higher education, implying varying degrees and reasons for which they were resilient. This support Scarpino’s (2006) research in which they describe resilience as having many contributing factors that differ between individuals. The following will attempt to examine and compare the reasons brought up by the participants.

When asked about what motivated them to pursue higher education, every participant could pin point someone or something that helped get them to where they are, although it wasn’t

always in a positive manner. Participant 3 recalls his motivator as “my dad, he would always say go to school, go to school. It wasn’t always in the most positive way but he would say that lots.” Or Participant 2 who explained “my mom emphasized school, but she did it in an angry way like ‘you guys better get up and get your ass to school!’ I’d wake up my brothers, feed them because there wasn’t enough food for all of us. We’d wait for the bus after I got them ready then we’d take a bus, then get on the subway at 8 years old with my 6 and 4 year old brothers. Then we’d take a street car to an intersection and walk the rest of the way to school... while mom slept.” On the other hand, Participant 4 recalls his mother being a motivator: “my mom, she uh... it was always told to us to go to school, be successful and do something with life. I guess...uh... there seems to be this perception of a glass ceiling and whatever you see beyond it is not attainable and I think that was a reality for a lot of my peers and my mom would always motivate me and she and my high school teachers would push me to apply to school and make something of myself.” There’s a dynamic that can be viewed in the types of motivation to pursue higher education. Participant 4, whose mother sounded very supportive of any academic achievements, was one of two second generation students within the participant pool. Participants 3 and Participant 2 were first generation. This negative form of motivation could use further exploration in order to determine whether it has an impact on positive resiliency or if only certain personality types, for example, would be able to foster this type of motivation.

Most of the participant’s stated financial and job security as being rather important as Participant 7 explains “my parents didn’t always have the best jobs so I would always hear my parents saying ‘ugh, this job sucks’ and my dad would be changing jobs every year. Seeing how hard it was for them to get real and consistent jobs that was totally motivating for me to go to school.” This type of response was quite common between participants, Participant 8 says “my

parents did an amazing job raising us... but there was never financial security other than Ontario Works or disability payments. We lived within our means and just growing up, watching it, I knew I didn't want to struggle in my future. I don't want my children to struggle so I use my mom's experience as a motivator." Participant 5 says "because of the difficult childhood I did have... I can maybe help people with a change. My motivation is not to have to work so hard to survive. I wanted to do something I actually believed in and I wanted to be a role model for my children." Participant 6 says "It was something I knew I wanted to do. I wanted to give the girls a positive outlook that 'hey, I can do this', I can show them the positive of having an education, having a vehicle, and having the goodies that they have now. 100% of the participants with children indicated in some way that making a better future and providing a better life for their children was a motivator to pursue higher education Participant 2 states "my son was a motivator. When I first had him I definitely considered the future. When I had my son I thought I don't want him to grow up with alcoholism, abuse and rape like I did."

Discussion

The following will provide a discussion in regards to answering the research questions followed by recommendations and implications for future research and finally a conclusion which will summarize the results that were explained throughout the results section.

Research Questions

The first research question was “What resiliency factors emerge from Aboriginal Laurentian students that have promoted and motivated success and the pursuit of higher education?” This data allows for a glimpse into factors that can potentially foster positive resiliency in order to motivate future Aboriginal peoples to pursue higher education. The results do support the current literature in that a two- parent household, extra-curricular involvement and some-manner of support system or person, which appear to be rather common factors among the participants does foster resiliency for some. Others tend to overcome their obstacles simply by wanting to have a better life than the one they’ve led thus far and for those participant’s with children, making a change for them. This form of personal resiliency tends to be common for those participants’ whose childhoods were particularly difficult.

The second research question was “Due to the differences in educational achievement between Aboriginal men and women, will the resiliency factors and their motivators between these groups differ?” Based on the definition of resiliency as overcoming barriers and obstacles, Aboriginal women tend to do this better than men. As we have seen within the results and as can be supported by previous literature, Aboriginal women overcome more difficult situations (higher levels of familial alcoholism, greater familial residential school attendance, primary caregiver to their children and being first generation within their families to attend University)

and continue to pursue higher education regardless of their struggles than Aboriginal men. The results showcase that 100% of the female participants were first generation, 100% reported a history of familial alcoholism, 100% reported a childhood environment that was not positive, and 75% reported having children of their own (which can also be an obstacle). These percentages could indicate their lived-experiences having been more challenging, however, there is one factor that was uncovered that needs to be considered. 100% of females also reported being raised in a two-parent household, a factor which fosters resiliency according to the literature. This draws about the question as to whether a two-parent household, regardless of living-circumstances, can foster resiliency where not many other resiliency factors exist. This would require further research. Breaking the intergenerational cycles is not an easy task by any means, Participant 3 stated within the interview “my dad tells me I’m going to be the first to break the cycle... it’s tough.”

Implications and Future Recommendations

These results can have varying degrees of implications for future research and it would be wise to study this topic even further in order to better-pinpoint factors that help foster positive resiliency perhaps through a more cultural and holistic perspective. Although support from either family, friends or mentors appears to play a role in fostering positive resiliency, the question arises as to what makes these participants different in comparison to those individuals who choose not to pursue higher education, even though they quite possibly have someone rooting for them as well. This research would benefit greatly from further examination into the lived experiences of Aboriginal people who choose not to pursue higher education to do an in-depth and comparative analysis into the matter. Future research should include a larger sample size as well to help with this analysis.

Conclusions

Although every one of the participants' had completely separate life histories, there were comparable and emerging themes that they all had in common. Through an examination of their family histories, it was discovered that 62.5% of participants had a history of residential school attendance and a familial history of alcoholism. 75% of participants reported their childhood environment as not being very positive and yet 100% of them are University attendees. The results indicate low levels of childhood support, although every participant had someone within their lives who at some point explained the importance of higher education and they made an impact. The number one motivator for attending higher education is to create an overall better life for themselves financially and for some of the participants it was mentioned that they wanted to break the stereotype or the intergenerational cycles of trauma. This is supported by the results which indicated that 6 out of 8 of the participants were first generation within their families to attend University-level education. Those who were not first, were second-generation, implying that their parents were the first to break this cycle. The literature suggests that females may have higher levels of resilience than males, and the results of this research appear to support that. And finally, motivators to pursue higher education are fostered in familial ways for those individuals who have children and choose to promote a more positive life for them by attending higher education.

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Appendix A to G

Appendix A



RECRUITMENT SCRIPT- Posting

I am doing research on Aboriginal perspectives. My name is Robyn Rowe, I am an undergraduate student in Psychology at Laurentian University. My thesis supervisor is Dr. Whissell and my co-supervisor is Prof. Manitowabi. The purpose of the study is to better understand the lived-experiences of Aboriginal men and women attending higher education and the paths they have taken to get there and what factors they have overcome from their own personal point of views. For the purposes of this study, I am looking for participants who are student of Aboriginal decent. We would like to know if you would be interested in participating in this study.

You would be asked to attend a 45 to 60 minute one-on-one interview session. Interviews will be conducted between January and March and participants will be interviewed in person. The interview session will be audio recorded and later transcribed.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Personal information gathered as part of this study will remain private and confidential. All data collected will also remain anonymous so that no individuals are identified. This project has been approved by the Psychology Department at Laurentian University.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time without consequence. Anonymity and confidentiality are assured.

If you agree to participate, please write your name and email address on the appropriate sheet and we will be in touch with you. If you participate you will be able to receive a summary of the results of the study in June, 2015.

Appendix B



RECRUITMENT SCRIPT- Email

I am doing research using Aboriginal perspectives. My name is Robyn Rowe, I am an undergraduate student in Psychology at Laurentian University. My thesis supervisor is Dr. Whissell and my co-supervisor is Prof. Manitowabi. The purpose of the study is to better understand the lived-experiences of Aboriginal men and women attending higher education and the paths they have taken to get there and what factors they have overcome from their own personal point of views. For the purposes of this study, I am looking for participants who are student of Aboriginal decent. We would like to know if you would be interested in participating in this study.

You would be asked to attend a 45 to 60 minute one-on-one interview session. Interviews will be conducted between January and March and participants will be interviewed in person. The interview session will be audio recorded and later transcribed.

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Personal information gathered as part of this study will remain private and confidential. All data collected will also remain anonymous so that no individuals are identified. This project has been approved by the Psychology Department at Laurentian University.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time without consequence. Anonymity and confidentiality are assured.

In order to maintain anonymity, if you would like to participate, please email Robyn Rowe at rx_rowe@laurentian.ca. Please provide your name and telephone number and we will be in touch with you.

If you participate you will be able to receive a summary of the results of the study in June, 2015.

Appendix C



PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Participant _____

Date _____

“Just a reminder that I am going to be audio recording this interview and it will later be transcribed. I will begin with some basic demographic questions.”

Basic Demographic Information

1. Are you of Aboriginal decent?

Prompts

- Which Aboriginal group do you belong to?

- Métis
- Inuit
- First Nations

2. Do you know what generation you are in school?

Prompts

- Did your parents attend University?

3. How old are you? _____

4. What program are you taking?

5. What year are you in?

Interview Questions- Open ended

“We’re going to move into some questions to get a better understanding of your childhood, family life and educational background that have led you to pursue higher education. I will be using this questionnaire as a basis for the interview, however, I will also ask other questions based on the direction of our discussion.”

6. Can you tell me a little bit about your family history?

Prompts

- How many siblings?
- Were you raised by both of your parents?

7. Describe the environment in which you grew up in?

Prompts

- Was it a positive environment? Why or why not?
 - Were you involved in any extra-curricular activities?
 - Was your family very spiritual?
 - Did any of your family attend Residential Schools?
8. What does resiliency mean to you?
- Prompts
- Would you describe yourself as resilient?
 - Is there a reason why or why not?
9. Being a student has many demands that can be stressful. How do you manage your time?
10. Would you say that you have a positive support system?
- Prompts
- Would you say you had a supportive childhood?
 - Who were your supports? Family or friend support?
 - Any mentors?
11. What sorts of challenges have you had to face as a student?
- Prompts
- What was the obstacle?
 - How did you deal with it?
 - What did you learn from the experience?
12. What sorts of successes have you experienced as a student?
13. What factors did you overcome to become a student?
14. What motivated you to become a student?
15. Looking back at your childhood, would you say that there were any motivators that helped you to pursue higher education?
16. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix D



CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a study entitled **Aboriginal Perspectives: Understanding and comparing the lived-experiences and resilience of Aboriginal men and women in Higher Education.**

Please take a moment to read this form carefully and feel free to ask any questions you may have.

The Research

Robyn Rowe is a fourth year student in the Psychology Department at Laurentian University and is required to complete a research study. Aboriginal peoples within Canada have experienced trauma and intergenerational trauma that has been documented throughout history. Previous research indicates that there are certain aspects that can predict positive developmental outcomes in the face of adversity. Attending higher education has been linked to factors of positive resiliency. This research is going to examine what types of protective factors can be found in Aboriginal Laurentian students that help to motivate them to attend higher education. This research will look at the participant's history and the factors that have influenced their experiences and choices to attend higher education. This may aid in pointing out and solidifying positive resiliency factors for others to learn from. The research method will be qualitative in nature. Each participant will be a Laurentian University Aboriginal student and will be asked to join in on a one-on-one interview that will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes. **By signing below you give your consent to the voice recording of the interview.** Only the researcher will have access to these recordings and they will be destroyed at the end of the study. The recordings will be later be transcribed. **By signing below you also give your consent to the release of transcripts for the purposes of this study.** Privacy and confidentiality will be maintained upon transcription.

I understand that since this activity deals with very personal information, it may induce **emotional reactions** which may, at times, be negative. **Every effort will be made to minimize these occurrences.** If you find yourself needing to speak with someone, Cynthia Belfitt is an Aboriginal Counsellor in the Aboriginal Student Association room L-222 and can be reached via email at cx_belfitt@laurentian.ca or at (705) 675-1151 ext. 1048.

Your participation is **strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any moment or refuse to participate without any penalty.** Although it would be preferable that I answer all of the questions, if I am uncomfortable with any particular question, **I may refuse to answer.** In this case, portions of the initial interview will be utilized where needed.

Privacy and Confidentiality

The information shared with the researcher will remain strictly confidential. **There are two copies of this consent form, one for the researcher and one for the participant.**

Questions

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to ask at any point. You may also contact the researcher Robyn Rowe rx_rowe@laurentian.ca or you may contact my supervisor Prof. Manitowabi or Dr. Whissell.

Consent to Participate

I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my question have been answered to my satisfaction

I agree to be audio-recorded and give consent to the release of their transcripts

I have read and understood the description provided above

Signature of Participant: _____ Date _____

Signature of Researcher: _____ Date _____

I wish to receive a summary of the results of this study which will be available in June of 2015, at the following email address: _____

Appendix E



Debriefing Form

Thank you for participating in this research project. This research project aims to take a closer look at the resiliency factors that have aided Aboriginal students at Laurentian University to succeed in attending higher education. In learning about the histories and discussing their successes, we may be able to pinpoint resiliency factors that could then be utilized in teachings for other Aboriginal Peoples.

In this study, you were briefly explained the research prior to being interviewed. You were asked some general demographic questions followed by some questions that focused on your life and factors that have promoted your success in attending Higher Education. The interviews were guided and semi-structured. Some questions were prepared in advance, while others were asked based on the direction of the conversation. You provided me with a glance at your life while answering my questions. One of the things we expect to find is that support from family and culture would be factors that promote resiliency in Aboriginal University students.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Personal information gathered as part of this study will remain private and confidential. All data collected will also remain anonymous so that no individuals are identified. Data will be transcribed and all forms and transcripts will be kept in a locked drawer. Please do not discuss the information on this page with others until June 2015 as several of your fellow-students may also be participants in the research.

Questions

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to ask at any point. You may also contact the researcher Robyn Rowe rx_rowe@laurentian.ca or you may contact my supervisor Prof. Manitowabi or Dr. Whissell.

If you are interested in reading more about the background of this experiment, you could try the following sources:

Cote-Meek's book entitled Colonized classrooms: Racism, trauma and resistance in post-secondary education or Stonechild's book entitled The new buffalo: The struggle for aboriginal post-secondary education in Canada