

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples and the Victimization Experiences
of Indigenous College Students: A Strengths-Based Focus on Resilience

by

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ABSTRACT

This study draws upon original data to identify protective factors of resilience among Indigenous college students who experience victimization with the goal of facilitating safety and health. The data draws from 16 interviews and 95 surveys with Indigenous college students about their victimization, including their experiences with the global issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples (MMIP). This research uses a decolonizing methodology, a trauma-informed approach, and a human-centered design while incorporating aspects of community-based participatory research with Indigenous populations. Many participants experienced at least one form of victimization (82%), and nearly all (94%) were aware of the MMIP crisis. Interviews revealed that MMIP had an emotional, psychological, and social impact on students regardless of their relationship with a victim. Participants identified several protective factors that enhanced their resilience, including reclaiming identity, reciprocity, taking healing actions, self-reflection, taking healthy risks, having goals, being with their community and their family, and having courage and strength. These findings provide support for five culturally appropriate university policy recommendations to enhance Indigenous students' resilience through culturally-competent programming, evaluation, and training.

Keywords: Indigenous; Native American; resilience; victimization, missing and murdered Indigenous peoples

DEDICATION

For my mother, who provided unconditional (yet tough) love, guidance, and unwavering support. Ahéhee' shíma, ayóó'ánííníshní.

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DEFINITIONS

This paper uses the term “Indigenous” or “Indigenous peoples” instead of “American Indian/Alaskan Native” or “Native American. “Indigenous peoples” refers to the descendants of the original peoples (pre-colonization) who inhabited ancestral lands. “Indigenous” is inclusive to *all* descendants of original peoples. It is not limited to tribal affiliation, federal recognition, or national origin. The terms “Native American” or “American Indian” places significance on nationality (i.e., the colonized location or jurisdiction). Likewise, the use of specific tribal affiliations places exclusive focus on citizenship, and federal recognition excludes non-federally recognized peoples who have inhabited the land since pre-colonization, including those who identify as Hispanic or have more than one race or ethnicity (Yellow Bird, 1999). Indigenous peoples come from various communities and countries and have distinct cultural backgrounds. However, they share common experiences that derive from the settler-colonialism experience, including oppression and marginalization (Dion et al., 2022).

INTRODUCTION

This study takes a strengths-based approach to identify protective factors and resilience among Indigenous college students to explore the victimization experiences, including experiences with the internationally known issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples (MMIP). Indigenous peoples globally are missing and murdered at higher rates than non-Indigenous peoples, who have experienced traumatic ripple effects for generations (Fox et al., 2020; Hanson, 2022). MMIP is a public health crisis as it represents the loss of life or inexplicable disappearance of an Indigenous person and includes Indigenous peoples who are: (1) missing, whose whereabouts are unknown to family, parents, or guardians; (2) murdered, intentionally killed by another person without having been missing, and (3) missing and murdered, with “missing” referring to the inability to locate the individual’s whereabouts or remains (Fox, 2020; Fox et al., 2022). Awareness of MMIP has begun to accelerate in recent years through social media, public testimony, community advocacy, and grassroots efforts (Fox, 2020; Fox et al., 2020, 2022, Moeke et al., 2018). Even so, no known research until now examines protective factors among those with experience with MMIP to facilitate safety and health among Indigenous populations.

Nationally in the United States (U.S.), 1 in 4 females and 1 in 5 males of all races and ethnicities are likely to experience intimate partner violence (IPV) before the age of 18 years old (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2022). Before age 25, 70% of females and 60% of males are estimated to have experienced forms of IPV, including rape, sexual coercion, physical violence, stalking, and psychological aggression (Leemis et al., 2022). Yet, for Indigenous peoples, violence is experienced at greater rates among all age groups than non-Indigenous peoples (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022; Center for Families,

Children & the Courts, 2012; Edwards, 2023; Hop Wo, 2020; Rosay, 2016). For instance, in some U.S. counties, Indigenous women experience are murdered at a rate that is ten times greater than the national average and are more likely to be killed by an intimate partner (Bachman et al., 1992, 2008; Crossland et al., 2013). In addition, college students, particularly college women, are at a higher risk of victimization than non-college students (Fisher et al., 1999). Together, these knowledge gaps signal an important to explore the protective factors for Indigenous college students to reduce their victimization and MMIP. No known research explores MMIP among college students, who are generally between the ages of 20 – 40 years old and are at the greatest risk of experiencing violent victimization such as murder (Fox et al., 2020, 2022)

Violent victimization, including MMIP, poses serious public health, safety, and academic concerns for Indigenous college students. Foundational research suggests that Indigenous peoples of college age are more likely to have prior victimization experiences (Fox et al., 2020; Greenfeld & Smith, 1999; Rosay, 2016). In the U.S., the top three states with the highest recorded cases of MMIP were New Mexico, Washington, and Arizona (Luchessi & Echo-Hawk, 2018). MMIP frequently occurs in urban cities, including Tucson (AZ), Seattle (WA), Albuquerque (NM), San Francisco (CA), Omaha (NB), and Billings (MT), all of which house large universities and colleges (Luchessi & Echo-Hawk, 2018). Existing reports recognize the limitations of existing law enforcement data which minimizes the extent of the MMIP issue, calling for future research to understand why Indigenous people go missing and are murdered. Dominant narratives surrounding the conclusions of root causes involve discussions on sex work, domestic violence, and extractive industries, but the reality of the circumstances surrounding MMIP is largely unknown (Fox et al., 2020; Luchessi & Echo-Hawk, 2018; Joseph, 2021).

Places where MMIP cases are most prevalent provide a prime location to examine protective factors promoting resilience among Indigenous people who experience victimization. Even though general campus victimization has seen a decrease in recent years, sexual assaults overall are on the rise (National Crime Victims' Rights Week Resource Guide, 2018). While college students are a well-studied population, *Indigenous* college students are overlooked and understudied, yet are an essential population to help understand aspects that promote their ability to counterbalance the significant socioeconomic adversities, disproportionate victimization, unique academic challenges that they are required to navigate (Freeman & Ammerman, 2021; Shield, 2004; Weaver, 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Importance of expanding the knowledge of Indigenous college students

Indigenous students remain underrepresented in higher education (Brayboy et al., 2012; Miller & Orsillo, 2020). As of 2020, over 15.9 million undergraduate students were enrolled in post-secondary institutions, with Indigenous students representing less than one percent (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], n.d.). Postsecondary National Policy Institute [PNPI], 2021). Indigenous students between 18 and 24 years old who enter higher education represent only 24% of the Indigenous college population compared to other racial categories within the same age range (PNPI, 2021). When retention and graduation are considered, less than half (41%) of first-time Indigenous students complete a four-year degree over six years, compared to 63% of all other students (PNPI, 2021). Broadly, studies have identified that low education and retention rates among underrepresented populations are associated with several factors organized in an ecological framework, as discussed in the following paragraph.

Macro-level risk factors of low education and retention among underrepresented students include experiences with structural racism and oppression (Harper & Thompson, 2017). The increased experiences with ethnic microaggressions within an already stressful environment can significantly impact student success (Miller & Orsillo, 2020). Embedded within the structural educational institutions are barriers for Indigenous students that Westernized educational approaches and policies often fail to consider (Brown, 2019). Further, environmental-level factors also play a role in education and retention among Indigenous students, including family (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008), community dynamics (Patterson Silver Wolf et al., 2018), and having positive representation (Brayboy et al., 2012). Then there are individual-level variables that can impact educational outcomes, including victimization or trauma (Dion et al., 2022), a sense of belonging (Layous et al., 2017), academic preparation (Patterson Silver Wolf et al., 2018), self-efficacy (Chelberg & Bosman, 2020; Frawley, Ober, and Smith, 2017), and the completion of high school or alternative education (Espinosa et al., 2019). Overall, evidence shows that Indigenous students often bear the burden of vulnerability to violence due to the variety of ways oppression can occur within institutions and their environment (Becerra et al., 2015; Brave Heart & Weaver, 1999; Brown, 2019; Dion et al., 2022; Smallwood et al., 2021; Shield, 2004; Steinman & Kovats Sánchez, 2021)

The historical context of Indigenous victimization

Violence against Indigenous peoples derives from patriarchal ideologies sustained and reinforced by systems of colonialism (Fox et al., 2022; Hunnicutt, 2009; Monchalin et al., 2019). The U.S. was established based on settler-colonial ideals of liberty, resources, and property. These ideals are perpetuated in today's societal structures, institutions, and economy (Barker, 2012; Kiramayer et al., 2014; Monchalin et al., 2019). Ancestral Indigenous peoples

experienced direct forms of violence through violent settler resource acquisition takeovers, forced land removals, involuntary relocations, and acts of genocide (Veracini, 2018; Wolfe, 2006; Peebles, 1990). Furthermore, tactics of erasure through government-legitimized and government-sanctioned means of control normalized and encouraged violence used by settlers against Indigenous peoples (Glenn, 2015). The famous political slogan, “Kill the Indian and save the nan,” was created to make “civilizing efforts” that forced the assimilation and the removal of Indigenous peoples, including children, from their homes and culture, which unequivocally damaged the family unit and Indigenous communities (Churchill, 2004; Menzies, 2019; Pearcey, 2016). Structural institutions (such as governments and state systems) are apparatuses sustaining colonial dynamics that continue to perpetuate violence, racism, oppression, and marginalization, mainly resulting in socioeconomic adversity, invisibility, health disparities, and overall disenfranchisement of Indigenous peoples (Smallwood, 2021; Monchalin *et al.*, 2019; Butt *et al.*, 2019). Acknowledging these and other ongoing impacts of colonization is vital to understanding the reality of victimization among Indigenous populations and its effects on college students.

The inherently violent process of colonialism leaves lasting intergenerational impacts on Indigenous individuals, families, and communities (Kiramayer *et al.*, 2014; Mezieres, 2019; Weaver, 2009). Violence introduced with settler colonialism creates a legacy of trauma (Brave Heart, 1998; Monchalin *et al.*, 2019; Weaver, 2009;). Violent victimization of Indigenous peoples, past and present, leads to feelings of grief, anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anger, and hopelessness – and these consequences continue to create challenges for generations to come, which is known as historical trauma (Braveheart 1988, 1998; Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Weaver, 2009; Whitbeck *et al.*, 2004). Historical trauma increases the risk of experiencing discrimination and over-criminalization (Cunneen & Tauri,

2019), and individual deprivation, including suicide, self-harm, substance use, violence, and depression among Indigenous youth (Menziés, 2019). These unresolved colonialism-induced outcomes put Indigenous youth at risk of experiencing poor mental and physical health and subsequential victimization (Kilpatrick et al., 2003; Smallwood et al., 2021). Overall, the historical persecution of Indigenous people cultivated conditions that left Indigenous peoples and communities exploited and vulnerable to victimization without the proper funding, legal authority, or resources (Findling et al., 2019; Perry, 2010; Weaver, 2009; Wolfe, 2006).

MMIP is a stark reminder that Indigenous well-being, safety, and lives have never been a societal priority. Indigenous women ignited the initial grassroots movement and continue to lead globally, creating awareness of MMIP, motivated by frustration with and lack of trust in Westernized systems (Fox et al., 2020, 2022). Existing deficit framing narratives within society, media, and research, combined with the failure to recognize the impact of colonialism, preserve the racism, misogyny, racial stereotypes, apathy, and the dehumanization of Indigenous peoples (Lucchesi & Echo-Hawk, 2018; Meoke et al., 2018; Watson, 2018). Discriminatory language is often used to describe Indigenous victimization, which refers to victim-blaming references that highlight a victim's substance or drug use, sex work, and criminal history (Lucchesi & Echo-Hawk, 2018). In a study that analyzed media coverage across 46 outlets, approximately one-third of all media outlets used violent or discriminatory language to describe the crime and the Indigenous victim (Lucchesi & Echo-Hawk, 2018). These notions of erasure and invisibility prompted the "Not Invisible Act" enacted to address the disproportionate societal responses to Indigenous victimization (Howard-Wagner, 2021; National Inquiry into MMIWG, 2020; Not Invisible Act, 2020). Overall, the disappearances, murders, unsolved cases, media apathy,

invisibility, and systemic oppression of Indigenous peoples represent an extension of the colonist treatment and contribute to victimization, including MMIP (Monchalin et al., 2019; Deer, 2015).

Community-based reports. Community-based studies continue to expand the knowledge on violence against Indigenous peoples while highlighting the limitations of logged data involving violent victimization reported by law enforcement within national databases (Martin, 2019; National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center, 2020). For example, the Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI) began a study that revealed 5,712 MMIP-related cases, with only 116 logged within a federal database (Lucchesi & Echo-Hawk, 2018). In 2019, Arizona became the third state to examine MMIP-related cases and found that between 1976-2018, 160 women and girls were known to be missing, with an increase in reported homicide. Then, in 2020, the Sovereign Bodies Institute (SBI) released a report that shows 165 MMIP cases involving women and girls (Abinanti et al., 2020). Another study that examined MMIP cases in North and South Dakota, Montana, and Nebraska found a disturbingly high volume of 411 MMIP cases whose victims represent women and girls in 31 Tribal Nations (Lucchesi, 2019). Specifically, over the past 40 years in Arizona, homicides of Indigenous females have steadily increased, and homicides of Indigenous males have seen a noticeable increase since 2015 (Fox et al., 2020). These community-based efforts to address MMIP are one example of how Indigenous peoples address the historical adversities involving violence, under-representation in data, and poor record keeping. Most significantly, it is one example of how Indigenous communities build resilience.

Resilience

The Western definition of resilience

The American Psychological Association (2023) defines resilience as “the process and outcomes of successfully adapting to difficult or life challenging life experience, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands.” Broadly, resilience is defined as a process that includes positive adaptation in the face of adversity and risk (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Zimmerman et al., 2013). Resilience is often viewed as a continuum with varying degrees that span one’s life, which is in constant and frequent use to sustain well-being (Southwick et al., 2014). Protective factors are organized within an ecological framework comprising environmental, social, and individual factors interrupting a risk trajectory (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Zimmerman et al., 2013). Resilience is often ordered by various components of resilience, including adversity, emotional regulation, risk or protective factors, outcomes, trajectories, and adaptation (Heid et al., 2022; Southwick et al., 2014).

A significant limitation of existing resilience literature is that the term exists within Westernized frameworks imposed upon Indigenous populations without adequate representation of Indigenous cultural realities (Usher et al., 2021). Globally, Indigenous peoples exhibit strength and resilience at various levels necessary to overcome adversities associated with disproportionate experiences with violence, societal marginalization, socioeconomic deprivation, and other social determinants of health (Brave Heart et al., 2011; Denham, 2008; Fast & Collin-Venzina, 2010; Usher et al., 2021; Wexler, 2014; Wilson & Rosenberg, 2002). These adversities are rooted in the legacy of colonialism, creating unique dynamics for understanding Indigenous resilience. Although some aspects of resilience may be similar among Indigenous populations, differences in resilience among Indigenous peoples depend on individual, contextual, cultural, and geographical factors. Thus, Westernized resilience models are limited because they were

created with non-Indigenous interpretations, lack Indigenous representation, and often assume that all Indigenous peoples deal with adversity similarly (Usher et al., 2021).

Indigenous definitions of resilience

Despite the overall lack of consistency among definitions of resilience, critical constructs of Indigenous resilience lie in culture and how a person's culture promotes positive coping through Indigenous identity and connectedness (Jongen et al., 2019). For many Indigenous communities, culture is vital to Indigenous identity and worldview (Burnette, Clark & Rodning, 2018; McIvor et al., 2009; Wilson, 2003). The foundation of Indigenous resilience is a collective strength and cultural knowledge power rather than individual attributes (Thomas, Mitchell & Arseneau, 2016). Indigenous resilience emphasizes the values of Indigenous cultures, the community, healing practices, tradition, language, collectiveness, and positive relationships with non-familial members, all factors at the center of this perspective (Heid et al., 2017). Resilience under this perspective also considers ongoing threats to legal and cultural existence by colonial practices (Steele, 2020).

Individual protective factors of resilience

Individual resilience considers the intrinsic factors that enable one to overcome adversity or hardship through emotional regulation, spirit, and hope (Heid et al., 2022). Such factors include—but are not limited to—self-reliance, accomplishment, sense of belonging, positive identity, optimism, self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-confidence, desire to be useful or having responsibility, individual contribution, being a role model, self-worth, having goals, having healthy routines (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008; Hensen et al., 2017; Kirmayer et al., 2009; McIvor et al., 2009; Pharris, Resnick, & Blum, 1997; Whitbeck, 2001). Research suggests gender differences among adolescents with protective factors of violence and responses to historical

trauma (Brave Heart, 1999b; Pu et al., 1998). Cultural factors of resilience can also refer to the individual practices, beliefs, and values that promote resilience (Heid et al., 2022).

Cultural reclamation and Indigenous spirituality are significant protective factors for Indigenous peoples that intertwine culture, tradition, worldview, and way of life (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008; McIvor et al., 2009; Smallwood et al., 2021). Enculturation, or the degree to which one is embedded within a culture (also called cultural connectedness), is measured by several cultural activities. This includes paying respect to ancestors through traditional practices, pow-wows, sweat, smudge, feasts, ceremonies, traditional healing practices, giveaways, fasting, traditional language, creative outlets (i.e., art, beading, weaving, basket-making, etc.), and hunting (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008). Cultural and spiritual orientation among Indigenous people predicted fewer suicides compared to Westernized beliefs (Garrouette et al., 2017). Indigenous culture is formed through intergenerational teachings and land-based ecological knowledge (McIvor et al., 2009). Elders and cultural knowledge keepers preserve distinctive cultural practices and teachings for generations (Grandbois et al., 2012). Thus, for Indigenous peoples, resilience refers to the practices, beliefs, and values based on positionality and relationality with their social environment, feelings, and nature (Heid et al., 2022).

Environmental protective factors of resilience

Environmental factors influence individual factors by enabling individual factors through supportive networks and external resources (Kirmayer et al., 2009). For instance, environmental protective factors comprise social and physical environmental resources. How families and communities respond to adversity influences how individuals respond to challenges. Familial relationships and the interactions that are produced provide valuable tools that help with an individual's ability to build resilience and support. For instance, having a safe environment,

sobriety within the household, providing a safe environment, parental support, feeling cared for, giving expectations, praise, affection, social support, and perceived monitoring are some of the familial protective factors Indigenous youth identified (Henson et al., 2017; Roh et al., 2016).

Additionally, relationality with the environment includes one's relationship with the land and nature. Many traditional customs use natural resources in prayers and cultural activities (McIvor, 2009). Nature and land are resources used to help foster spirituality, healing, and recreation (Kiramayer et al., 2011; McIvor, 2009; Wilson, 2003). The environment serves as a conduit for overcoming adverse experiences by promoting resourcefulness, enabling the intergeneration transmission of traditional ecological knowledge, and addressing economic deprivation through creative means of subsistence associated with living off the land (Burnette, Clark, and Rodning, 2018). Such adverse experiences are known as risk factors, as discussed in the following section.

Risk factors of violence

Indigenous peoples experienced intergenerational race-based adversities associated with colonialism, enabling positive and negative outcomes (Gone et al., 2019; Fast & Collin-Venzina, 2010). For Indigenous peoples, risk factors of adverse experiences include historical trauma, boarding school involvement, displacement, and a breakdown in the family unit (Yuan et al., 2006). Risk factors of physical and sexual assault include alcohol dependence, cohabitation, separation or divorce, and having an alcoholic parent (Yuan et al., 2006). Several risk factors associated with victimization have been documented, which may include gender, age, race, socioeconomic status, prior victimization, and substance abuse (Kilpatrick & Acierno, 2003). Socio-contextual barriers to addressing victimization include inadequate resources and a lack of culturally tailored programs (Singh et al., 2017).

Research on Indigenous peoples' risk factors is built upon the social determinants of health (SDH) framework (Blue Bird Jernigan et al., 2020; Kilpatrick & Acierno, 2003). Addressing SDH uses a macro approach through policy implementation to target conditions that impact individual health, such as neighborhood conditions, poverty, housing, and employment (Braveman & Gottlieb, 2014; Thornton et al., 2016; Wilson & Rosenberg, 2002). SDH are conditions within the general environment where people are born that affect health, functioning, and overall quality of life (Singh et al., 2017). Violence is one example of an SDH which increases the potential for subsequent stress, injury, death, violence, mental disorders, reduced quality of life, and overall physical health (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, n.d.). Consequently, limiting the focus to examining adverse outcomes can fuel deficit-framing narratives, viewed to contribute to the stigmatization of Indigenous peoples. Therefore, studies examining violence against Indigenous peoples must consider the cultural factors that enhance Indigenous healing and health (Heid, 2022; Wilson & Rosenberg, 2002).

Current Focus

It is important to note that although there are noteworthy challenges that Indigenous populations face, Indigenous peoples continue to utilize culturally distinctive concepts, strategies, and principles that encourage cultural and legal survival as individuals, peoples, and institutions (Kiramayer et al., 2011; Steele, 2020; Wexler, 2014). However, little is known about the positive concepts and strategies that transpire from experiencing violence, such as experiencing the loss of a loved one or community member, and how that impacts Indigenous college students. Therefore, this study aims to address that gap in the literature by using original data collected from an overarching study that focuses on the lived experiences of Indigenous college students regarding victimization, including MMIP, service use, and resilience. Therefore,

the current focus of this study takes a strengths-based approach to understand how Indigenous college students coped with their victimization and their experiences with MMIP by utilizing mixed methods to examine the following research questions:

1. How prevalent is victimization (personal and vicarious, including MMIP) among Indigenous college students?
2. What are Indigenous college students' perceptions of resilience among those with victimization experiences?
3. What protective factors enhance Indigenous college students' resilience among those with victimization experiences?

Methodology

Trauma-Informed Approach. Since this study focused on severe forms of victimization, including MMIP, the data collection was careful to employ a trauma-informed approach. Trauma is experienced differently by each person and is broadly defined as an incident that results in lasting adverse effects on health or well-being (SAMSHA, 2023). Victimization, experienced before college or during, can result in long-term consequences that may profoundly impact people's lives. This project incorporated fundamental trauma-informed principles, including participant safety, transparency, support, collaboration, and empowerment. For example, recruitment materials and the data collection instruments contained trigger warnings to alert potential participants to the serious content. The informed consent form provided straightforward terms for participants to understand their rights. The survey contained additional trigger warnings, quick escape options, and continuous access to a printable national and local resource list for survivors of violence. Interviews contained several check-in points and opportunities for breaks. After the interviews, participants debriefed with the interviewer. They were then given a

supportive handoff to a second team member who debriefed with the participant again. The research team ensured all participants were in a healthy and safe frame of mind before terminating the interviews.

Human-Centered Design. All instruments were created and vetted using a human-centered design approach. The research team carefully constructed and scrutinized each survey and interview question to ensure cultural and victimization sensitivity and minimize re-traumatization risks. Additionally, the research team pilot-tested the survey such that each research team member completed the survey assuming their assigned “victim-persona,” which specified the gender identity, age of a potential participant, and their victimization and MMIP experience (e.g., 25-year-old female with personal MMIP experience). The research team conducted an in-depth meeting where each person shared their experience piloting the survey with their assigned persona, which included how participation made them feel, what feelings the survey produced, and any recommended changes. The interview questions were also pilot tested by the Indigenous victim advocate interviewer with several people in her trusted network. All concerns and recommendations for the survey and interview were implemented before distributing the research instruments.

Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR). This study is rooted in a CBPR approach, given that it reflected a collaborative project of researchers, university personnel and organizations, and community members to address the issue of MMIP (National Institute of Health [NIH], 2018). Community-based approaches to research with all Indigenous peoples are very important for ensuring cultural appropriateness, inclusivity/representation, and capacity building. Indigenous peoples place great value on their communities—including the community of their own Tribe(s), the community of Indigenous people, those within their reservation, and

the urban community of Indigenous peoples. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that Indigenous peoples have leadership roles and decision-making power when partnering with researchers.

Decolonizing Methodology. Decolonizing refers to the undoing of colonialism, of the colonial mindset or ideologies. Research in and of itself has colonial ties and is linked to historical events remembered by many of the world's colonized peoples (Smith, 1999).

Decolonizing methods confront Western academic philosophy, pedagogy, ethics, organizational practices, paradigms, methodologies, discourses, and the stories that it tells of Indigenous peoples (Smith, 2021). Re-learning and reconceptualizing the research process is fundamental to decolonizing research. How research is approached, constructed, produced, and valued should center on the community by embracing ecological knowledge and cultural protocols while providing outlets to exercise reciprocity and self-determination (Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021). This is achieved by being "critically reflexive," meaning being actively aware of one's situatedness in the research process (Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021). With this mindset, this research included several Indigenous team members, including students, and victim experts, who all contributed to the construction and production of measures. The team led with the understanding that the Indigenous students are the experts, and the research team are the learners.

Procedure. This study draws upon original data from two interrelated studies, including (1) surveys and (2) interviews with Indigenous students attending a large southwestern public university. This mixed methodology examines survey and interview data from Indigenous college students to understand the impacts of violence among this population while focusing on resilience and MMIP. Surveys were used to collect data on demographics, interpersonal and vicarious victimization, and resilience. Interviews were incorporated to conceptualize the

impacts of violence and how students dealt with and responded to their victimization and MMIP experiences.

Data were collected electronically from March to December of 2022. A question at the end of the survey invited participants with MMIP experience to participate in a follow-up one-on-one interview. Survey participants who wished to be included in drawings for gift-card incentives provided their email addresses, and 15 students were randomly selected for gift cards. Three students were each selected for \$75 Target gift cards, and 12 were selected for \$10 Starbucks gift cards.

95 Indigenous students completed the survey, and 16 participated in the interview. All interviews were semi-structured (see Appendix A for interview questions), conducted via Zoom, and recorded with permission from participants. The interviewer was an Indigenous professional with extensive victim advocacy experience and offered culturally appropriate practices such as prayer for the victims and their families and “smudging” (i.e., burning sage and other traditional herbal Indigenous medicine). All but one interview was joined by another research team member who kept their camera off while notetaking, offering resource links, monitoring the chat, and providing the links and codes for the \$75 Target gift card participation incentive.

Eligibility of participants. Survey participants must (1) be age 18 or older, (2) identify as Native American, American Indian, or Indigenous, and (3) be enrolled at the university. In addition to these eligibility requirements, interview participants must have some experience with MMIP, meaning that they have experienced or know someone who experienced MMIP.

Recruitment of participants. This study incorporated several approaches, including CBPR, which meant that recruitment efforts relied on an interdisciplinary network of staff, faculty, students, organizations, and leaders within the university. Our research team

collaborated with credible Indigenous-serving university organizations that endorsed and increased the study's visibility through various methods (e.g., tabling at events, sharing flyers via listservs and social media, providing physical space for information sessions, and posting on university websites). The flyer advertising the survey contained a QR code, which provided access to the electronic survey.

Analysis

Stata was used to analyze the quantitative data from the survey, and Qualtrics was used to analyze the qualitative data drawn from the interviews. Inductive coding was used to identify themes regarding resilience and protective factors that promote resilience among Indigenous college students who experience MMIP. One coder completed the coding for this study. Broad concepts were drawn from individual, environmental, and macro-concepts and were then categorized into subcodes organized into themes.

Results

Demographic results from survey participants

Of the 95 participants who met the eligibility criteria, the average age was 24 and ranged from 18 to 54 years old. Most of the sample was female ($n = 74$; 82%), followed by two-spirit, gender non-conforming, LGBTQ+ ($n = 8$; 9%), and then male participants ($n = 7$; 8%). In addition to their Native American, American Indian, or Indigenous identity, 28% ($n = 24$) identified as bi- or multi-racial. Tribal affiliation was intentionally omitted from the data collection to protect participants' identities, given the small numbers of students from each Tribal Nation. Only a few students had children ($n = 13$; 15%). The class standing of participants included freshman ($n = 16$; 17%), sophomore ($n = 18$; 20%), junior ($n = 21$; 23%), senior ($n = 18$; 20%), and graduate students ($n = 17$; 18%). Almost half (46%; $n = 44$) started college

between 2011 and 2020, and 32% started college after 2020. Notably, over a third of all students ($n = 37$; 41%) took a break from college. Many students grew up in rural and urban areas ($n = 32$; 36%), and about half of the sample ($n = 49$; 55%) grew up on a reservation. Nearly half of the sample were first-generation college students ($n = 45$; 47%). Less than half of the students indicated they plan to move to a reservation after graduation ($n = 38$; 40%). The vast majority of participants placed a positive value (i.e., “a lot” and “very much”) on their connection to their Indigenous communities ($n = 79$; 83%). See Table 1 for the demographics of survey participants.

Table 1: Indigenous college student survey descriptive statistics ($n = 95$)

| Descriptive Variable | Frequency (n) / Mean (SD) | Range |
|---|---------------------------|-------|
| Age | 24 | 18-54 |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 8% (8) | — |
| Female | 78% (74) | — |
| Two-Spirit/Gender Non-Conforming | 8% (8) | — |
| Multiracial | 25% (24) | — |
| Parent | 15% (13) | — |
| Class standing | | |
| Freshman | 17% (16) | — |
| Sophomore | 20% (18) | — |
| Junior | 22% (21) | — |
| Senior | 20% (18) | — |
| Graduate | 18% (17) | — |
| Started College | | |
| Before 2000 | .03% (3) | — |
| 2000-2010 | 10% (10) | — |
| 2011-2020 | 46% (44) | — |
| 2020-2023 | 34% (32) | — |
| Took a break from college | 41% (37) | — |
| First generation college student | 47% (45) | — |
| Grew up on a reservation | 56% (49) | — |
| Type of area student grew up in | | |
| Urban | 30% (29) | — |
| Rural | 26% (25) | — |
| Both | 36% (32) | — |
| Move to a reservation after graduation | 40% (38) | — |
| Value of connection to Indigenous community | | |
| None | 1% (1) | — |
| A little | 2% (2) | — |
| Neutral | 8% (7) | — |
| A lot | 35% (31) | — |
| Very Much | 54% (48) | — |

Demographic results of interview participants

Of the 16 interviewees, the average age was 24, ranging from 18 to 54 years old. Most interviewees were female ($n = 13$; 81%), two identified as non-binary or non-conforming (13%), and one participant identified as male (6%). Well over half of the interviewees were undergraduate students ($n = 10$; 62%), and two had children (13%). Over half of the interviewees grew up on a reservation ($n = 9$; 56%;). The student interviewees represented a diverse academic background in academic fields, including science, technology, social work, criminal justice, design, English, American Indian studies, architecture, and community advocacy and social policy. See Table 2 for the demographics of interview participants.

Table 2. College Student Interview Descriptive Statistics ($n = 16$)

| Descriptive Variables | Frequency (n) / Mean (SD) | Range |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------|
| Age | 28 (10.14) | 18-54 |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 6% (1) | — |
| Female | 81% (13) | — |
| Non-binary/non-conforming | 12% (2) | — |
| Class standing | | |
| Undergraduate | 62% (10) | — |
| Graduate | 38% (6) | — |
| Parent | 13% (2) | — |
| First generation student | 8% (3) | — |
| Grew up on a reservation | 56% (9) | — |

Results for research question #1: How prevalent is victimization (personal and vicarious, including MMIP) among Indigenous college students?

Survey results on direct and vicarious victimization

Direct victimization. Indigenous college students were asked whether they had ever been victimized by four types of interpersonal violence: controlling behaviors, physical violence, sexual violence, or abuse, and emotional or psychological abuse. The overwhelming majority

(82%) of Indigenous college student participants indicated they had experience with at least one type of direct or indirect victimization. Over half of all student participants had direct experience of interpersonal violence in the following categories: controlling ($n = 50$; 57%), physical ($n = 59$; 68%), sexual ($n = 46$; 53%), and emotional or psychological abuse ($n = 59$; 68%). Over a third of students ($n = 32$; 37%) revealed they had experience with all forms of direct victimization (see Table 3).

Indirect (vicarious) victimization. Participants were also asked whether the same four types of interpersonal violence happened to someone in their household, representing indirect (vicarious) victimization. Nearly half of the students who answered the question indicated that someone in their household had experience with physical violence ($n = 43$; 49%) and emotional or psychological violence ($n = 43$; 49%). This was followed by students who indicated that someone within their household had experience with controlling behaviors ($n = 40$; 46%) and sexual violence ($n = 35$; 40%). Additionally, a quarter of students ($n = 22$; 25%) indicated that someone within their home experienced all forms of interpersonal violence (see Table 3).

Table 3. Indigenous College Students' Experiences with Victimization ($n = 87$)

| Direct Victimization Experience | Percent (n) / Frequency |
|---|-------------------------|
| Controlling behaviors | 57% (50) |
| Physical violence | 68% (59) |
| Sexual violence | 53% (46) |
| Emotional/psychological violence | 68% (59) |
| Experienced all forms | 37% (32) |
| Indirect (Vicarious) Victimization Experience | |
| Controlling behaviors | 46% (40) |
| Physical violence | 49% (43) |
| Sexual violence | 40% (35) |
| Emotional/psychological violence | 49% (43) |
| Experienced all forms | 25% (22) |

Experience with MMIP. Nearly all 80 students who answered the question said they were aware of MMIP ($n = 75$; 94%), and only five were unaware (see Table 4 below). Of the 75 students aware of MMIP, 68 (91%) chose various types of MMIP experiences that explained their source of awareness. Direct experience of MMIP accounted for 65% ($n = 44$) of all responses, meaning their experience happened to them, a family member, or a friend. Social media is another considerable source of MMIP awareness (53%; $n = 36$ out of 68), followed by professional, academic, or research experience (35%; $n = 24$) and MMIP advocacy (30%; $n = 24$). Of the 75 students with MMIP awareness, 40% ($n = 32$) indicated that MMIP happened to them or their family members. Over a third of students ($n = 24$; 35%) specified that their awareness of MMIP comes from their professional, academic, or research experience.

Table 4: Indigenous college students' experiences with MMIP ($n = 80$)

| Experiences with MMIP ($n = 80$) | Percent (n) / Frequency |
|--|-------------------------|
| Awareness of MMIP | 94% (75) |
| MMIP experience of students aware of MMIP ($n = 68$) | |
| It happened to me | 4% (3) |
| It happened to a family member | 43% (29) |
| It happened to a friend | 18% (12) |
| It happened to a community member | 66% (45) |
| Professional, academic, or research experience | 35% (24) |
| Advocacy | 34% (23) |
| Social Media | 53% (36) |
| Other - i.e., friends family, media, news, internet | 5% (4) |

Interview results

Experiences with violence. All 16 student interviewees had experience with at least one form of direct or vicarious victimization in their lifetime, with many experiencing poly-victimization (multiple forms of victimization), including rape, sexual assault, murder, intimate partner and domestic violence, and stalking. Although childhood victimization was not directly

asked about, 13 students (81%) disclosed childhood victimization and shared the impact that it has had on their lives and overall resilience. The students shared insights on their experiences with structural violence, which produced common challenges associated with growing up as an Indigenous person, including experiences with racism, distrust in institutions, and lack of confidence in the police. Students also shared environmental risk factors of violence such as poverty, gangs, access to guns, being in a high-sex and drug trafficking area, substance use, domestic and intimate partner violence, witnessing unhealthy relationships, bullying, and peer-involved fighting. Further, students identified individual violence-related outcomes, including substance use or abuse, mental health issues, depression, suicidal ideation, and risks of not addressing mental health, such as self-harm and past suicide attempts.

MMIP experiences. Most interviewees indicated that someone within their family or friendship group was a direct victim of MMIP ($n = 13$; 81%). Two interviewees disclosed that they themselves were deemed missing or had been threatened with being murdered.

Alternatively, three of the 16 interviewees did not have direct experience but knew of victims within their community and on social media. Collectively, the 16 interviewees identified a combined total of 29 victims of MMIP, and just over half of the victims were identified as female ($n = 16$; 55%). The relationship interviewees had with the victim included family members ($n = 18$; 62%), family friends ($n = 2$; 7%), and community members ($n = 8$; 28%).

Vicarious victimization of MMIP on students. MMIP can significantly impact Indigenous college students regardless of their relationship with a victim. Interviewees shared their fear, pain, and concerns for their safety. However, the three interviewees who did not have a direct relationship with the victim shared that it still greatly impacted them based on their shared values with the victim, such as family, community, and shared identity as Indigenous

peoples. For example, one interviewee shared that the only experience they had with MMIP was through her mother's experience with having her friend go missing who was later found deceased:

My mom [was] recently was telling me about her best friend...I never really met them or anything, but I know she was really close to them [...] I felt like even though I didn't really know her, I knew her. She was murdered a couple of months ago and so it was just really hard on both my mom and I, just because even though she knew her more, I still felt connected to her. It was just hard to hear that, and the way it actually happened. I guess my mom read like through the reports and everything. She said it was really traumatic for her to see it.

Another participant also articulated the impacts of MMIP on Indigenous communities:

When something like [MMIP] happens, it just impacts the whole community itself. Even if you don't even know [the victim]. You still feel that hurt because you lost somebody in the community. I don't know. Sometimes I think about it, but I don't want to think about it just because there's pain involved.

Further, the speculated details that are tied to MMIP are often vivid, gruesome, and disturbing, as described by a student who described a murder of a distant relative:

After, I think, two weeks or something they found her. She was murdered. I don't think they ever found out who did it, too. I think they said [the perpetrators] did stuff to her while she was with [them]. They left her on the side of the road. Two cowboys found her when they were walking by. They said the animals got to her before people could find her.

These experiences reveal that the relationship between the victim and Indigenous students is still impactful and is based on cultural identities. Indigenous cultures place a high value on relationships, family, culture, and their connection to their communities, which may indicate the devastating vicarious victimization among Indigenous students.

Results for Research Question #2: What are Indigenous college students' perceptions of resilience among those with victimization experiences?

Survey results

Two survey questions (one qualitative and one quantitative) were analyzed to gain insight into Indigenous college students' perspectives on whether they considered themselves resilient. The quantitative survey question revealed that most survey participants identified as resilient ($n = 67$; 84%), whereas only 13 students (16%) said they were not resilient. Of those who considered themselves resilient, 78% ($n = 52$ of 67) of students provided qualitative responses that resulted in several themes of why students considered themselves resilient, which will be discussed in the following section.

Defining resilience. By explaining why students perceived themselves as resilient, the students naturally began to define resilience. Broad themes on the experienced adversities were drawn from the student's responses. Most students recognized that resilience arises from experiencing adversity. Just over half of students ($n = 27$; 52%) attributed their resilience to their past, while others specifically attributed their resilience to overcoming victimization, trauma, issues with family, addiction, mental or physical health, and family issues. Several students defined resilience more broadly, accrediting that their resilience comes from their ancestors, families, and Indigenous communities ($n = 15$; 29%). Students also mentioned survival ($n = 5$; 10%) as a defining resilience attribute. Finally, most students recognized that

their qualities and actions helped them manage, overcome, or cope with challenges. For instance, 62% (n = 32) of students shared individual factors that helped them in challenging situations. In analyzing responses among students who explained why they considered or did not consider themselves resilient, several themes were drawn from the broad concepts discussed in the following section.

Reclaiming identity. For those who experience victimization, reclaiming purpose and establishing who they are is fundamental to overcoming victimization by establishing a sense of self-identity. Not letting the victimization experiences define how students perceive themselves provides a sense of control seen to help build resilience. One student explained, “I’ve finally learned to not let things hold me down. I’ve had a lot of challenges in my life but they don’t define [me] nor do I make them part of me. I learn lessons and grow from them.” Reclaiming one’s identity also includes accepting Indigenous identity for some, which is mentioned in this response: “In some ways, trying to accept my Indigenous identity is an act of resilience because I am not erasing it.” Another student mentioned, “I experienced a life-long disconnect until I understood the concepts of resiliency and finding my authenticity as a part of that.” Establishing their identity by figuring out who they are and their purpose in life helped students overcome the challenges.

Reciprocity. Several students expressed the importance of giving back to their community, explained by a respondent who stated: “Participating with [the Indigenous] community is also important, and helping include others so that everyone can benefit and receive help.” In addition, indigenous students who had victimization experiences often expressed the desire to be positive role models, inspire others, and share their stories. Thus, it is evident that

Indigenous students value community and yearn to be the solution to help others receive the resources needed in life.

Taking healing actions. Another commonality was letting go, taking active steps to heal, and finding ways to move forward by evaluating the bigger picture, being goal-oriented, planning, seeking help, and allowing oneself to cry and let emotions out. As one student stated:

Resilience is always used as the counterpart to difficulties in life. It's to stay strong in the face of trouble. But that becomes so exhausting. Sometimes you just want to break down and not feel this pressure to be resilient all the time. I am told I am resilient because I stay strong through the hardships in my life. But I feel like it has caused me to ignore and bury these problems. I see myself as resilient because I have sought treatment and I let myself cry and hurt. I have experienced trauma and I am allowed to not be ok. To me, learning to live with and work through all of that is what resilience is.

Self-reflection. Several mentions of self-reflection were expressed by students who experienced victimization. Self-reflection is perceived to help with moving forward and not blaming oneself for their victimization experiences. Further, evaluating oneself allows time to reflect, adjust, and adapt to current situations. This is suggestive that resilience is a process that requires constant adjustment, which is reflected by one student who explained their resilience by stating:

I like to think that I am always in the process of being resilient. Sometimes I feel like I still have a ways to go. Some things I have overcome and closed the chapter on, while on the other hand, I still have to work on the other areas that are hindering my growth. I feel that it is a never-ending process to be resilient because you can still be reminded daily of what it is that made you become a certain way and it is up to you to act on it.

Taking healthy risks and having goals. Taking healthy risks was also indicated by several students who took chances in life and made positive changes that helped them despite being scared, unsure, or worried. This included receiving or asking for help, moving and accepting failure, and pursuing higher education. These goals provided paths of change for students, which allowed them to better themselves. They are also closely tied to the students' reciprocity, as reciprocity requires the student to be in a position that provides the opportunity to give back, which requires students to work on themselves before giving back. This student's response reflects this: "...I think that [I'm] resilient because I decided to make a huge change in my life to better myself so that I can help Indigenous peoples within my tribe and others."

Community and family. Many students associated their resilience with their Indigenous identity, described by one student who stated, "I know that I come from very strong people. I know that my ancestors fought their hardest for generations after them to be able to live life.". This sentiment was shared by others who mentioned ancestors, community, and family. Students attributed their strengths to their people's teachings and their perceived family expectations. Motives to persevere are tied to their family, community, and lineage. This is reflected in an answer from a student who stated, "...I think I'm resilient because I have the motivation of my family, community, and pals behind me." Another student mentioned, "I carry on, for myself and my future generations."

Courage and strength. Of the students who explicitly indicated "victimization" or "trauma" in their responses (n = 11; 21%), notions of courage, strength, and determination were underlining factors that enhanced resilience, which is explained by a student who defined resilience:

Resilience is courage in itself because we have to make that tough choice to still want to better ourselves even after going through tough times. We are resilient because we are strong.

Defining non-resilience. Thirteen students stated they do not consider themselves resilient. Of those students, ten responded to why they felt that way, which is discussed in the following paragraphs.

Self-esteem. A low sense of self-esteem was an overarching theme encompassing having diminished self-worth, self-confidence, and increased fear. For example, not telling anyone about their abuse was one reason a student did not see themselves as resilient by stating, "I'm not brave enough to say what happened to me." Another student recognized confidence in others yet had trouble identifying it in themselves by explaining:

I don't think I am resilient because I still don't fully understand my own definition of resilience. I can consider and know those around me who I consider resilient, but I can't include myself in that list because I don't think I belong with those people. Maybe when I feel confident enough I could use it to describe myself.

Comparison to others. Another theme involved comparisons of experiences with others whom they perceive as resilient. For instance, one student mentioned that they did not think they would handle situations like others did, which was explained by the following quote:

When I think of the word resilient I think of the many women in my life that have been victims of abuse and seeing them today be strong and very driven people. Although I would like to see myself as resilient, I can't imagine how I would have handled the same hardship as they have.

Age. In addition to comparing themselves to others, another critical factor for why students did not consider themselves resilient was because of their age. One student mentioned, “I have pretty strong maternal figures in my life and I'm nowhere near as resilient as they are. I'm only a baby compared to them but over time I hope to be resilient like them.” This suggests that resilience and strength are perceived to be associated with age.

Perceived expectation. Participants who did not consider themselves resilient described expectations of being resilient that are placed on them because of their Indigenous identity. Within this perspective, the resilience of Indigenous people is inherent due to the collective historical events experienced by Indigenous peoples, particularly Indigenous women, which is reflected in this quote:

I've always had a problem with people saying Native women are naturally resilient and can get things done. I'm not that. I am not strong, I am not able to bounce back and feel like I am not worthy of much. It took me two years outside of an abusive relationship to attempt getting my life back in order and each time I experience a set back, it feels like I'm right back at square one with my emotions. I sometimes think that if I die, then I die. Don't resuscitate me. I am done and often think that I blew my shot at making the right choices when I was younger.

Results for research question #3: What protective factors enhance Indigenous college students' resilience among those with victimization experiences?

Survey results

Self-identified strengths. Participants were asked about the skills they use when facing challenging situations. The most common strength participants self-identified for coping with challenging situations is an awareness or understanding of challenging situations, people, or

things ($n = 63$; 79%). The following most common skills that Indigenous college students use to overcome challenges were humor and social support ($n = 56$; 70%), spirituality ($n = 50$; 62%), physical activity ($n = 44$; 55%), seeking opportunities and using imagination ($n = 40$; 50%), taking the time to evaluate and assess complex situations ($n = 37$; 46%), setting boundaries ($n = 36$; 45%), and being flexible ($n = 34$; 42%).

Table 5. Skills that enhance Indigenous college students' resilience ($n = 80$)

| Skills | Description | Percentage/ (n) |
|-------------------|---|--------------------|
| Intuition | I have awareness or understanding of challenging situations, peoples, or things | 79% (63) |
| Initiation | I seek opportunities and act on my own | 50% (40) |
| Humor | I use comedy to express myself | 70% (56) |
| Creativity | I use imagination to produce results and outcomes | 50% (40) |
| Appraisal | I take the time to evaluate and assess difficult situations | 46% (37) |
| Spirituality | I recognize there are somethings greater than me to avoid being overwhelmed | 62% (50) |
| Flexibility | I feel comfortable making compromises and changes | 42% (34) |
| Physical Activity | I use physical activity as an outlet | 55% (44) |
| Social Support | I have people in my life that are supportive of my decisions | 70% (56) |
| Boundary Setting | I do not hold myself personally responsible with aspects of others' lives | 45% (36) |

Maintaining wellness. Several themes emerged when students were asked what they do to maintain their wellness beyond using formal services to address their victimization. First, half the survey participants discussed the importance of practicing healthy routines (50%; $n = 36$ of 72 respondents). These students engaged in regular physical activity, sufficient sleep, sobriety, attending healthcare appointments, and taking medications as prescribed. A second theme that emerged among students who experienced victimization was having a support network that students felt they could confide in and spend time with, which includes friends, family, elders, and the community. Spending time with loved ones and their community was another way students maintained wellness ($n = 32$; 44%). This was followed by being able to talk to or

confide in parents, friends, and elders about their victimization experiences ($n = 17$; 24%). Similarly, practicing cultural and spiritual beliefs through prayer, ceremony, and meditation or using traditional medicine was also mentioned ($n = 17$; 24%). Participating in activities encouraging healing, such as art, dance, journaling, and listening to music, was another outlet students used to manage wellness ($n = 15$; 21%). Finally, many students talked about the importance of nature, with 21% ($n = 15$) of students attributing spending time outdoors to ground themselves or relax. Students also value staying busy, having goals ($n = 14$; 19%), and attending therapy ($n = 7$; 10%). These responses provide insight into the unique process of overcoming victimization, which often depends on multiple factors that contribute to the development of resilience.

Interview results

Four main themes emerged from the interviews that serve as protective factors for building resilience in response to victimization among Indigenous college students, including Indigenous reciprocity, cultural embeddedness, acceptance, and community. These validated the survey questions' findings regarding whether they consider themselves resilient.

Indigenous reciprocity. Consistent with the survey responses, interviewees discussed the importance of giving back, honoring others, mentorship, and helping their communities to build resilience. In addition, many students explained how their individual experiences relate to their community:

One of the biggest reasons for continuing my work in higher education is, one, to lift myself out of situations where these problems perpetuate and also to support my loved ones in my community.

Indigenous students talked about how their creativity and passion align with their goals to address the needs of their community. For instance, one student described her desire to pursue fashion to address her community needs. Although many students valued Western measures of success, such as monetary gain, financial independence, and being the first in their family to pursue higher education, making a difference for others was another factor that helped them in their journey to overcome their challenges. For Indigenous individuals who had experience with victimization, having an outlet to give back was viewed as a component of building resilience, such as doing so through education.

Cultural embeddedness. Participating in cultural activities, ceremonies, and events, helps students overcome challenges. For example, as it pertains to overcoming victimization, one student expressed the importance of leaning on their traditional upbringings and practicing ancestral ways to help them deal with challenges by stating:

If there are instances where I feel that I need prayers done or something. Then usually I can go feel like I can go to him, and he can help me to get those services done, or if he says like, you know, maybe you just need to say a prayer on your own, and so going back to like saying a pray with like cedar or corn pollen, or something, and just simple things like that feels like something that I can lean on to a degree.

Historical Awareness. Recognizing colonialism and its systemic impacts on Indigenous populations has increased the understanding of violence against Indigenous peoples. This has helped students understand that their adversity is not entirely due to their shortcomings or decisions. Considerations of historical traumas help students navigate their adverse experiences. For instance, one student explained that governmental policies, erasure, assimilation, and

genocide have made Indigenous populations susceptible to adversity, such as experiencing

MMIP:

There [were] government policies that were against us, so it was systematic. Trauma was visited on all of us, and when you look at the fact that we're still here, despite everything they had to throw at us to [ensure] we were eradicated. They decimated our culture. They took our land. They took our children. They force sterilized our women. They're now taking our kids in foster care, which I think is the new residential school system. Through all that [we must] recognize that we're still here.

Community. Students shared that their communities give them the strength and motivation to proceed despite hardships. As stated by one student who explained they are harder to break when they are community embedded, “I only grow stronger when I am in community. So, community is what gives me that strength to keep going forward.” Students explain how the community, including family and elders, often makes up their support system that helps them deal with life experiences. As stated by one student, “My support system [is made up of] very like-minded people who see the world the same way that I do and are committed to helping those who have been hurt and [increasing] safety in [Indigenous] communities.”

Discussion

Indigenous students' resilience within academic settings refers to the meaningful ways students create paths for their future, despite the legacy and outcomes of colonialism (including violence), by creating spaces of survivance within dominant societal institutions that were not initially intended for them (Sabzalian, 2019). Managing adulthood, balancing responsibilities, physically relocating to attend college, and independent living are life challenges that students face when attending college (Miller & Orsillo, 2020). However, these experiences are unique for

Indigenous college students considering their worldviews, identities, cultures, and relationships with institutions. Acclimating to college is difficult enough for students in general, and traumatic experiences with victimization and MMIP exponentially complicate the challenges faced by Indigenous people attending college. This study recognized these unique challenges and prioritized the students' positionality throughout the research process.

Resilience is primarily associated with positive development and overcoming adversities like violence. Comparatively, Indigenous resilience considers culture and communities a fundamental component of resilience, as reflected in the findings (Heid et al., 2022; Kirmayer et al., 2011). Building upon the Indigenous resilience literature, Indigenous college students who had victimization experiences and attended a large public university were asked if they consider themselves resilient. Of those who chose to answer, 84% ($n = 67$) self-identified as resilient, while 16% ($n = 13$) said they were not. Students shared their direct experience with interpersonal violence that included controlling behaviors ($n = 50$), physical violence ($n = 59$), sexual violence ($n = 46$), and emotional or psychological violence ($n = 59$). Students also shared whether someone within their household experienced the same types of violence, with physical and emotional or psychological violence being the most extensive indirect victimization experience ($n = 43$), followed by controlling behaviors ($n = 40$) and sexual violence ($n = 35$). Likewise, awareness of MMIP was also remarkably high ($n = 75$; 94%), with direct experience accounting for 65% ($n = 44$) of all responses, meaning their MMIP experience resulted from it happening to them, a family member, or a friend.

Several factors that enhance Indigenous students' resilience that is consistent with the literature include reciprocity, being in nature, being community-embedded, practicing cultural or spiritual beliefs, having goals, and confidence (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008; Hatala, 2020; Heid et

al., 2022; Kirmayer et al., 2011). Additionally, specific cultural factors emerged, including students' lineage, ties to their ancestors, and notions of community and cultural survival. Three themes emerged from the interviews with Indigenous students with lived experience with victimization and MMIP that add to the Indigenous resilience literature. The first theme was reclaiming identity and identifying one's purpose in life. Identifying one's purpose in life and establishing who they are is crucial in addressing victimization. Then, having an awareness of the detrimental impacts of colonization also helped students cope with their negative experiences surrounding MMIP and victimization. Having a greater understanding of violence enabled them to cope with their situation, which protected them from blaming themselves. Third, self-reflection helped several students make adjustments that helped them manage their victimization experiences. Overall, there are clear overlaps with existing literature regarding ways Indigenous peoples overcome adverse situations. However, there are unique strategies that are used among those who have personal and vicarious victimization experiences.

These self-identified perceptions of resilience are essential to understand what students value and consider when dealing with challenges. For example, several Indigenous students had experience with all forms of direct victimization ($n = 32$) and vicarious victimization ($n = 22$). Students shared how they maintained wellness or coped with their victimization, which includes practicing healthy routines, spending time with family or loved ones, being in nature, practicing spiritual or cultural beliefs, engaging in hobbies, and therapy. Specifically, students who experienced MMIP (meaning a family member was deemed missing or murdered) valued reciprocity, acceptance, being in their Indigenous community, and being culturally embedded.

Strengths, limitations, and directions for future research

This is the first known study to examine culturally-specific ways Indigenous college students build resilience, who have experienced forms of direct and vicarious victimization – including experiences with MMIP. This study provided insight into a vastly underrepresented population often excluded from data/research, media, and even universities (Brayboy et al., 2015). This study focused on an essential population to study given the gaps in knowledge and recent work identifying Indigenous women of college age (18-34) are at the most significant risk of being murdered compared to other ages (Fox et al., 2020). Finally, this research acknowledges the systemic injustices and consequences of colonialism by centering the Indigenous worldview and the situational relationship between Indigenous peoples and governmental or institutional systems (Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021).

Despite these strengths and consistent with all studies, the current project had important limitations to acknowledge in the hopes that future research can build upon and expand this work. First, this study collected data from one university, drawing from cultural and contextual experiences specific to the Southwest region. As a result, the findings may not be generalizable to Indigenous college students in other universities across the nation and the globe. Second, the smaller sample sizes of quantitative and qualitative data reflect the small proportion of Indigenous college students and the barriers to entry into college that many Indigenous peoples face (Brayboy et al., 2015). Third, while conducting theoretical tests was beyond the scope of the current study, there are many unexplored opportunities to advance knowledge on resilience, victimization, and MMIP through theoretical applications. As one example, strain theory may be applicable here, given the research on vicarious victimization that suggests strains associated with victimization can create negative feelings, which may lead to maladaptive behavior (Agnew, 2002; Walker, 2020). Lastly, given that so little research has focused on MMIP to date,

there are many opportunities to advance this knowledge – as long as Indigenous peoples have active roles in the research to ensure cultural representation is respected.

Policy Implications

Based on the findings, policy recommendations are needed to prevent victimization and MMIP and allow for healing among those who experience victimization and MMIP. Specifically related to Indigenous college students, it is crucial for universities to foster environments that enhance resilience for students by: (1) establishing, funding, and dedicating resources to provide culturally-competent supportive programming for students, which integrates traditional aspects to protect and foster healing among those impacted by violence; (2) increasing Indigenous representation across all academic disciplines, including research, to generate an understanding of the impacts of colonialism, Indigenous perspectives and knowledge, through Indigenous-specific content, methods, and applications; (3) create specific outlets for Indigenous students to have the opportunity to build reciprocity, help others, and serve their communities while building a professional and supportive network; (4) incorporate cultural factors of Indigenous resilience into the evaluation processes to identify needs and successes of academic and student-serving programs; and lastly, and (5) provide training for faculty, staff, and students, that facilitates conversations around the impact of interpersonal violence with a focus on prevention and reducing stigmas of Indigenous peoples.

Conclusion

Although many Indigenous college students have experiences with interpersonal violence, it is essential to acknowledge that many students exhibit protective behaviors that enhance their resilience. Understanding how Indigenous college students deal with their victimization experiences is vital in addressing violence. Addressing violence against Indigenous

peoples requires collaborative support by Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, including those in positions of power to make a change. Victimization research that involves Indigenous populations will continue to benefit this population by incorporating a decolonized strengths-based approach to reduce deficit-framing narratives of Indigenous victimization.

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APPENDIX A
STUDENT SURVEY QUESTIONS GUIDE

| <p style="text-align: center;">PLEASE DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ON THIS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PLEASE REFRAIN FROM USING NAMES (YOURS OR OTHERS) WHEN ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.</p> | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | How old are you? | _____ years old |
| 2. | Are you a student at Arizona State University? | <input type="checkbox"/> - Yes <input type="checkbox"/> - No |
| 3. | Are you Native American, American Indian, Alaskan Native or identify as Indigenous? | Please check: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> or No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. | Do you identify as any other race or ethnicity other than Native American? | Please check: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/> if yes, please identify your ethnicity: _____ |
| 5. | What Tribe(s) do you belong to or are affiliated with? | _____ |
| 6. | What is your marital status? | Please check all that apply: <input type="checkbox"/> - Single <input type="checkbox"/> - Long-Term Relationship <input type="checkbox"/> - Married <input type="checkbox"/> - Widowed <input type="checkbox"/> - Divorced |
| 7. | Could you please describe your gender identity? | Select All That Apply: <input type="checkbox"/> - Male <input type="checkbox"/> - Female <input type="checkbox"/> - Transgender <input type="checkbox"/> - Non-Binary/Non-Conforming <input type="checkbox"/> - Two-Spirit <input type="checkbox"/> - Other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> - Prefer Not to Respond |
| 8. | What is/are your university major(s)? | _____ |
| 9. | What is your class standing? | Please check: <input type="checkbox"/> - Freshman <input type="checkbox"/> - Sophomore <input type="checkbox"/> - Junior <input type="checkbox"/> - Senior <input type="checkbox"/> - Graduate |
| 10. | What year did you first start college (including community college and/or Tribal college)? | _____ |
| 11. | Did you take any breaks from college? | Please check: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/> If yes, in a short phrase, please explain why. _____ _____ |
| 12. | Are you a first-generation college student, meaning the first person in your immediate family to go to college? | Please check: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. | Did you grow up on a Reservation? | Please check: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/> If yes, please indicate how much time you've spent on the reservation: <input type="checkbox"/> - More than half my life <input type="checkbox"/> - Half my life |

| | | | |
|-----|--|--|--|
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> - Less than half my life <input type="checkbox"/> - Summers only <input type="checkbox"/> - Never | |
| 14. | Did you grow up in a rural area, urban area, or combination of both? | Please check one of the following: <input type="checkbox"/> - Urban <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> - Rural <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> - Combination of both <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> - Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 15. | Do you plan on moving to a Reservation to work once you graduate? | Please check: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 16. | Where do you live now? | Please check one of the following: <input type="checkbox"/> - On-campus <input type="checkbox"/> , alone <input type="checkbox"/> - On-campus <input type="checkbox"/> , with roommate(s) <input type="checkbox"/> - Off-campus, alone <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> - Off-campus, with parents or family <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> - Off-campus, with roommate <input type="checkbox"/> (s) | |
| 17. | Are you a parent? | Please check: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 18. | Please rate how much you value your connection to the Indigenous community? | Please check one of the following: <input type="checkbox"/> - None <input type="checkbox"/> - A little <input type="checkbox"/> - Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> - A lot <input type="checkbox"/> - Very Much | |
| 19. | Have you ever experienced any of the following abuse? <i>We have listed a few examples as a reference, but there are many other examples of each type.</i> | | |
| | <p style="text-align: center;">Controlling Behaviors may include any of the following: <i>Controlling aspects of your life such as: your money, finances, friends, what you do, where you go, who you contact, your children, pets/livestock, online activity, vehicle, hygiene, spiritual/religious practices, or unwanted communication</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Physical Violence may include any of the following: <i>Kicking, hitting, punching, choking, strangulation, branding/marketing your body, pinch, biting, stabbing</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Sexual Violence may include any of the following: <i>Rape, molestation, grooming, sodomy, genital touching, fondling, incest</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Emotional or psychological abuse may include any of the following: <i>Putting you down, calling you names, minimizing your experiences/feelings, making threats or ultimatums, playing mind games</i></p> | | |
| | Type of Abuse | It happened to me | It happened to someone else in my household or family |
| | Have you ever experienced controlling behaviors by another person who controlled certain aspects of your life? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Have you ever experienced physical violence by someone else? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Have you ever experienced sexual violence or abuse? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Have you ever experienced emotional or psychological abuse by someone else? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20. | Beyond using services, what are some things you have done to maintain wellness in your life? | <hr/> <hr/> | |

| | | |
|------|---|--|
| 21. | When experiencing challenges, which of the following skills do you utilize? | <input type="checkbox"/> Insight – I have strong awareness or understanding of someone or something <input type="checkbox"/> Humor – I use comedy to express myself <input type="checkbox"/> Initiative – I seek opportunities and act on my own <input type="checkbox"/> Creativity – I use imagination to produce results/outcomes <input type="checkbox"/> Appraisal – I take the time to evaluate and assess difficult situations <input type="checkbox"/> Spirituality – I recognize there are somethings greater than me to avoid being overwhelmed <input type="checkbox"/> Flexibility – I feel comfortable making compromises and changes <input type="checkbox"/> Boundary Setting – I do not hold myself personally responsible with aspects of others’ lives <input type="checkbox"/> Social Support – I have people in my life that are supportive of my decisions <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Activity – I use physical activity as an outlet |
| 22. | Please list 5 words that come to mind when you think of what it means to be “Resilient” | 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ |
| 23. | Do you consider yourself to be resilient? | Please check: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 23b. | Would you care to explain your answer? | _____ |
| 24. | Are you aware of the Missing and Murder of Indigenous Peoples (MMIP)? <i>This includes the Missing and Murder of Indigenous Women, Girls, Relatives, Two-Spirit, and Persons.</i> | Please check: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 25. | Please select the type of experiences you have with MMIP. | Check <u>all</u> that apply: <input type="checkbox"/> - It happened to me <input type="checkbox"/> - It happened to a friend of mine <input type="checkbox"/> - It happened to someone in my family or extended family <input type="checkbox"/> - It happened to someone in my community <input type="checkbox"/> - It happened to someone I know on social media <input type="checkbox"/> - I have professional experience <input type="checkbox"/> - I have academic/research experience <input type="checkbox"/> - I participate in building awareness and/or activism work <input type="checkbox"/> - Other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> - None Apply to Me <input type="checkbox"/> |

APPENDIX B
STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS GUIDE

| Interview Questions | Probes (Can ask clarifying questions if needed) |
|--|--|
| <p>1. Okay, let's start with you telling me a little about yourself and your family.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where's home? |
| <p>2. You're here at ASU. What inspired you to take this journey to be in college?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why did you decide to go to college? |
| <p>3. Can you tell me about some challenges or barriers you had to overcome to get here?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How did you work through these challenges? |
| <p>4. I've been asking you about the services you've used in response to your victimization. Now I'd like to ask you what you do to take care of yourself more holistically or more generally?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This could include things you do culturally, spiritually, physically, creatively, socially, and things like that. - As a Native student it can be hard to balance your traditional values and navigating college life. Since you've been in college, are there any other coping mechanisms that you've adopted? |
| <p>5. You've shared with me a lot of personal traumas related to MMIP. These experiences can have profound impacts on you. Can you now tell me how you've handled those stressful experiences? I'm hoping you can walk me through some of the <u>good ways</u> and even some of the <u>bad ways</u> that you've handled these situations.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I want to focus on the good things that you did. Can you talk about how you were resilient in these instances? - How did you manage/navigate those experiences? - Are there any other examples that you can think of? |
| <p>6. How does being an Indigenous person play a role in your <u>resilience</u>?</p> <p>[IF NEEDED]</p> <p>7. We think of resiliency as the ability to adapt or respond positively to stress and adversity.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Each Tribe has their own traditions. I wonder if any of those traditions helped you become more resilient in the MMIP experiences you faced. For example, community support, family support, or culture. - Has your support system changed over your life? Since you entered college? |

APPENDIX C
IRB APPROVAL



APPROVAL: EXPEDITED REVIEW

[Kathleen Talbot](#)
[WATTS: Criminology and Criminal Justice, School of](#)
 602/496-2347
katefox@asu.edu

Dear [Kathleen Talbot](#):

On 1/27/2022 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Type of Review: | Initial Study |
| Title: | Women and Philanthropy Research on Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) |
| Investigator: | Kathleen Talbot |
| IRB ID: | STUDY00015240 |
| Category of review: | |
| Funding: | Name: Women and Philanthropy, Grant Office ID: FP26430, Funding Source ID: FP26430 |
| Grant Title: | FP26430; |
| Grant ID: | FP26430; |
| Documents Reviewed: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _W&P MMIP FLYER - 1_25_2022.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials; • Proposal Summary, Category: Sponsor Attachment; • Protocol, Category: IRB Protocol; • STAFF Informed Consent 1_9_2022.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • STAFF interview questions 1_19_2022.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • STAFF recruitment email 1_12_2022.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials; • STUDENT Interview Informed Consent 1_9_2022.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • STUDENT Interview Questions 1_19_22.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • STUDENT Survey Informed Consent 1_9_22.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • STUDENT Survey Questions 1_13_2022.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); |

The IRB approved the protocol from 1/27/2022 to 1/26/2027 inclusive. Three weeks before 1/26/2027 you are to submit a completed Continuing Review application and required attachments to request continuing approval or closure.

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 1/26/2027 approval of this protocol expires on that date. When consent is appropriate, you must use final, watermarked versions available under the "Documents" tab in ERA-IRB.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

REMINDER - - Effective January 12, 2022, in-person interactions with human subjects require adherence to all current policies for ASU faculty, staff, students and visitors. Up-to-date information regarding ASU's COVID-19 Management Strategy can be found [here](#). IRB approval is related to the research activity involving human subjects, all other protocols related to COVID-19 management including face coverings, health checks, facility access, etc. are governed by current ASU policy.

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator