

Locally Responsive Composition Pedagogy:  
A Tribal College Case Study

by

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## Dedication

For my grandparents, Jane Tucker Toth and Charles William Toth, who made me a reader and a writer; for Rita Ann Stacy, who introduced me to the field of Indigenous rhetorics; and for Crystal Rose Yazzie, whose words I will always carry with me.

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## Chapter One

### Looking for Locally Responsive Composition Pedagogy

“We writing teachers begin where our students *are* rather than where we would like them to be. Each writing course must be adapted to local conditions.”

—Howard Tinberg, “A Model of Theory-Making  
for Writing Teachers: Local Knowledge” (20)

“If you’re going to teach students, you begin locally. All politics is local.”

—James, Diné College English Instructor

This project sprang from a pedagogical question at the center of my teaching and scholarly life: How do we, as writing teachers, equip diverse students with literacies that support their intellectual, economic, and political empowerment while respectfully engaging with the identities, values, and motivations they bring to the classroom? It’s a Big Question, one that composition has been grappling with in various forms since its emergence as a discipline.

Perhaps because I came to the field through an interest in community college writing instruction, I have often turned to two-year college classrooms for answers. The access mission and local orientation of these institutions attract students who reflect the socioeconomic and ethnic diversity of the communities they serve (Cohen and Brawer). Furthermore, the nature of two-year college English instructors’ professional roles, which typically include teaching several

sections of composition per term, year after year, make them the most experienced writing teachers in the field (Lovas). Based on my own experiences teaching in community colleges, as well as my research with two-year college English faculty (Toth, Griffiths, and Thirolf; Toth), I understand these instructors as pedagogical “knowledge makers” (M. Reynolds, “Knowledge-Makers” 1), and I share Tinberg’s view that much of the knowledge two-year college faculty are making is *local* (“Model”).

Most tribally controlled colleges and universities (TCUs) are primarily two-year institutions, with a core mission to provide locally accessible and affirming education to adult learners in their communities. TCUs emerged from the Native American<sup>1</sup> self-determination and civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s: they were founded to improve educational outcomes for Native students, further the political and economic empowerment of tribal nations, and maintain and revitalize tribal languages and traditional<sup>2</sup> knowledge. These institutions provide a combination of adult basic, developmental, vocational, and community education programs, as well as academic preparation for transfer to off-reservation universities (Stein; Boyer).<sup>3</sup> Thus, TCU English faculty have an institutional imperative to teach composition in ways that equip students—and, by extension, their communities and nations—with powerful literacies while engaging with the values and identities those students bring to the classroom. In other words, these faculty are uniquely positioned to offer answers to my Big Question. Since 2011, I have been working with instructors and students at Diné College—a TCU serving the Navajo Nation—to learn from the “locally responsive pedagogies” (Gold, *Rhetoric* 153) that composition faculty have developed in this distinctive institutional setting.

In *Rhetoric at the Margins*, David Gold argues that non-elite postsecondary institutions historically have been sites of pedagogical innovation, and that these innovations were often

locally responsive in nature. He defines “locally responsive pedagogy” as teaching approaches that “[t]ake into account the needs and desires of diverse communities” (*Rhetoric* 153). This brief gloss contains an array of pedagogical possibilities, and it also raises intriguing questions. What are the parameters of the “communities” to which such pedagogies respond? Are they geographical? Socioeconomic? Ethnic? Political? Spiritual? Linguistic? Gendered? (Gold’s histories suggest that the answer to all of these questions is *yes*.) Likewise, how are instructors’ responses—their ways of taking community needs and desires into account—shaped by their own disciplinary training, their identities and life experiences, and their understandings of the communities they serve? In short, what is “the local”? And, pedagogically speaking, what does it mean to “respond”?

Gold’s concept of locally responsive pedagogy is part of a broader “‘spatial’ turn” in writing studies<sup>4</sup> over the last decade and a half (Grego and Thompson 16). As Rhonda Grego and Nancy Thompson note,

in recent years many compositionists have grown more aware of and articulate about issues of position, location, and space, becoming critical of spatial metaphors and exploring a plethora of theorists who work in fields that combine interests in postmodernism, architecture, education, cultural geography, cultural criticism, feminism, and others. (16)

These theoretical developments have fueled growing interest in “the local” as it relates to rhetoric, literacy, and pedagogy. Such conversations have emerged in the subfields of writing assessment (e.g. Gere et al.; Huot “Toward”; *(Re)articulating*; O’Neill, C. Moore, and Huot; Gallagher), basic writing (e.g. Bizzell; Gray-Rosendale; Otte and Mlynarczyk), multilingual composition (e.g. Tardy), writing center theory (e.g. Griffin et al.; M. Harris), and Writing

Across the Curriculum (e.g. J. Monroe), as well as revisionist disciplinary histories of rhetoric and composition (e.g. Gold, *Rhetoric*; “Remapping”; Donahue and Moon). Likewise, the community-based learning movement and growing interest across the humanities in issues of environmental sustainability, globalization, and digital writing have all contributed to a surge in scholarship about pedagogy that responds to local places, spaces, and ecologies (e.g. Brooke; C. J. Keller and Weisser; Mauk; McComiskey and Ryan; Lu and Horner; N. Reynolds, *Geographies*; “Imagined”; Vandenberg, Hum, and Clary-Lemon; Weisser and Dobrin; Dobrin and Weisser, “Breaking Ground”; *Natural Discourse*). Ecocomposition theorist Sidney Dobrin succinctly captures the zeitgeist when he asserts, “[W]riting as a phenomenon cannot be studied independent of the local contexts in which it is taught and learned” (9).

This project, then, speaks to ongoing scholarly conversations about the importance of two-year colleges as sites of first-year composition instruction, the intellectual work of two-year college English faculty, the relationships between location and composition pedagogy, and teaching writing at Native-serving institutions—the latter of which has received surprisingly little attention in either composition studies or the emerging field of Native/Indigenous rhetorics.<sup>5</sup> While the primary audiences for this dissertation are scholars in writing studies and Indigenous rhetorics, as well as English faculty at Diné College and other TCUs, it also takes part in conversations in education and Native American studies. Over the last three years, I have been a participant-observer of composition instruction at Diné College. I have taught writing courses and participated in faculty professional development activities, taken classes in Diné language and heritage knowledge, lived in faculty housing, attended campus and community events, and generally done a lot of “deep hanging out” (Renato Rosaldo, qtd. in Clifford 188) with members of the college community. I have conducted over a hundred interviews with Diné

College faculty, students, and alumni, observed more than fifty class sessions across the entire composition sequence, and collected dozens of course documents, including syllabi, writing assignments, readings, handouts, and feedback on student writing. Finally, I have spent more than a year analyzing these materials in consultation with study participants, working to theorize locally responsive composition pedagogy in a learning community that has come to mean a great deal to me. The findings I present here are locally specific. Conceptually, however, they provide a starting point for composition faculty and researchers at a variety of institution types who are seeking to develop pedagogies more responsive to their own local settings.

Each of this dissertation's five findings chapters focuses on a key dimension of locally responsive pedagogy as I have come to theorize it. In Chapter Three, I look at the four *faculty* at the center of this study, examining the ongoing process by which they interwove their personal backgrounds, disciplinary training, and professional experiences with their evolving understanding of the local context. In Chapter Four, I turn to the Diné College *students*, examining their diversity in relation to the sometimes-essentializing portraits of Native learners found in the literature. In Chapter Five, I examine how faculty responded to the unique student population they served, arguing that their responses extended beyond simplistic notions of culture to include many other aspects of students' locations. Then, in Chapter Six, I turn to faculty's pedagogical responses to the *institutional* context of Diné College, focusing specifically on their use of the Diné Educational Philosophy (DEP)—a framework rooted in traditional Diné knowledge—to teach writing process. Finally, in Chapter Seven, I examine faculty's responses to the *communities* of varying scale in which Diné College is situated, from the most local to the truly global. I argue that the locally responsive pedagogies I observed at Diné College are fundamentally cosmopolitan in nature; that is, they seek to prepare students to move between

knowledge systems and contribute to the transnational project of creating a more just world order. Taken together, these chapters illustrate the four interrelated dimensions of “the local” that inform locally responsive pedagogy: instructors, students, institution, and communities, all of which are located within larger social, economic, and political structures.

Several key themes emerge across these chapters. One is the remarkable diversity of Diné College students, which reflects the diversity of the twenty-first century Navajo Nation and contemporary Native identities: this reality complicates long-standing theories of culturally responsive pedagogy. Another theme is the spatialized structures of US settler colonialism, which have shaped students’ experiences as well as the rhetorical exigencies they are being prepared to respond to in their composition courses. A third theme is the role of Diné heritage knowledge in students’ lives and in the Diné College curriculum, including the complex intellectual work involved in bringing this knowledge into the composition classroom. Finally, I return frequently to the diversity of faculty’s pedagogical responses to their local context, and the reality is that there is not one locally responsive composition pedagogy at Diné College, but rather varying locally responsive pedagogies. Throughout the dissertation, I hope I succeed in communicating my admiration for the important work that Diné College English faculty and their students are undertaking in the composition classroom. I have found their work insightful and inspiring, precisely because it is neither abstract nor idealized, but, rather, situated and *real*.

In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I address four central questions that many readers will want answered at the outset. The first question—why me?—deals with my own position as a non-Native scholar: how I came to this project and how I understand my own relationships to the community that has made it possible. The second question—why Diné College?—relates to the research setting. What is Diné College, and why does it offer such

generative site for examining the Big Question? The third question—why not “culture”?—focuses on this study’s position in relation to the well-established scholarship on *culturally responsive pedagogy*. In this section, I lay out the theoretical and empirical concerns that lead me to seek an alternative framework. Finally, the fourth question—why “local”?—presents my argument for *locally* responsive pedagogy as that alternative. This section situates the framework I am proposing within ongoing conversations in writing studies and posits a definition of “the local” as it relates to pedagogical responsiveness. In the course of answering these four questions, I endeavor to provide enough orienting information about the Navajo Nation that readers who have spent little time in this part of the world are able contextualize the dissertation’s claims.

### *Why Me?*

When I present on this project in professional settings, someone almost invariably asks how I, a blonde-haired, blue-eyed graduate student at the University of Michigan with no known Native ancestry and no prior ties to the Navajo Nation, ended up doing research at Diné College. It is a legitimate question—one that only occasionally comes across as an accusation—and it is best addressed at the outset of this dissertation. My mother-in-law, Faith, is a librarian for the Nisqually Tribe in southwest Washington State, and in early 2010, when I was home for the holidays, she asked if I was aware of any research about working with Native student writers: several Nisqually patrons who attended the local community college had come into the library looking for help with their papers, and she wanted to know how to serve them better. When I began searching the composition literature for resources I could pass along to her, I found a burgeoning scholarly conversation about Indigenous rhetorics, but very little empirical research about Native student writers or how to meet their needs. I was already invested in the idea of two-year college English faculty as knowledge makers, and it seemed to me that the people who

would have answers to Faith’s question were composition instructors at TCUs; the handful of published essays I found by tribal college faculty supported this hunch. As I learned more about the history of TCUs and encountered Scott Lyons’ concept of *rhetorical sovereignty*—“the inherent right and ability of *peoples* to determine their own communicative needs and desires...to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles, and languages of public discourse” (“Rhetorical Sovereignty” 449–50)—I began to wonder what tribal college faculty might be able to teach me and the field of composition about the Big Question: how to impart empowering literacies while respectfully engaging the identities and values students bring to the classroom. Thus, what started as a database search on Faith’s behalf gradually morphed into a multi-year project.

In order to gain a better understanding of TCUs and their students, I spent the summer of 2010 researching the first ten years of *Tribal College Student*, an annual literary magazine published in *Tribal College Journal (TCJ)* that features stories, poems, essays, and artwork by TCU students from across the United States. As part of this project, I corresponded with Marjane Ambler, a former editor of *TCJ*, and when she learned of my interest in TCU writing instruction, she put me in touch with “James,”<sup>6</sup> a long-time English instructor at one of Diné College’s branch campuses. James invited me to visit the college in early 2011. That first stay turned into four weeklong trips over the next year and a half, during which I helped students with papers and other coursework, sat in on James’s classes, and met with faculty and administrators. In Fall 2012, I spent the entire semester at Diné College, conducting ethnographic research, taking classes, and teaching a writing course. Since that fieldwork semester, I have returned to the college five times to discuss dissertation draft materials, catch up with friends, and teach.

Over the last three years, I have built relationships with Diné College students, faculty, and staff that have been critical to this research. The instructors have been my mentors, colleagues, conference co-presenters, and friends, and I, in turn, have tried to be a source of academic support for both my own Diné College students and those who participated in this study. I intend to maintain these relationships for many years to come. James, who spent much of his own academic career conducting research on the Navajo Nation, once told me:

I owe the Navajos. The work I did and the things they helped me do with the kind of hospitality and the warmth you're beginning to sense yourself—I got a lot from this community and its tradition and everything, and it really is payback time, which is a very Navajo thing. A medicine man pointed this out to me, that you have to give back.

David, a student in the study who has become a good friend, said something similar in one of our interviews: “You got to take something, you got to give something back. You get something good, you give back twice as good.” I plan to spend the rest of my career—which I owe to Diné College and its students—endeavoring to live up to David’s challenge (for more on reciprocity and the study methodology, see Chapter Two).

### *Why Diné College?*

Founded in 1968 as Navajo Community College, Diné College was the first tribally controlled postsecondary institution in the United States, and over the last forty-five years, it has remained the largest, enrolling nearly two thousand students across six campuses and sites on both the Arizona and New Mexico sides of the Navajo Nation (see Appendix B). Its age, size, and role in the history of the educational self-determination movement have positioned the college as a leader in the ongoing process of determining what tribally controlled education can and should be (Stein). Diné College shares the vocational,<sup>7</sup> developmental, and academic

missions of many community colleges, including preparing students to transfer to off-reservation universities to complete baccalaureate and graduate degrees,<sup>8</sup> as well as a commitment to maintaining Diné language, history, and culture. This multifaceted mission is laid out in Diné College’s mission statement (see Figure 1, below). As I discuss in Chapter Seven, this mission is simultaneously tribal-nationalist—it seeks to maintain Diné heritage and serve the broader project of Diné nation-building—and cosmopolitan in its commitment to preparing students to navigate a “multicultural world” and further the “well-being of tribal, state, national, and global communities.” The college strives to address all of these goals within a single institutional structure, one which must fulfill the expectations of the regional accrediting body and university articulation agreements in two states while also being accountable to Navajo Nation leadership (Willeto, “Struggles”).

Figure 1: Diné College Mission Statement (2012-2013)

### **Mission Statement**

Diné College applies the Sa’ąh Naagháí Bik’eh Hózhóón principles to advance student learning through:

- Harmony with Nitsáhákees (Thinking), Nahatá (Planning), Iiná (Living), and Siihasin (Assuring);
- The study of Diné language, history, and culture;
- Preparation for further studies and employment in a multicultural world; and
- Fostering social responsibility, community service, and scholarly research that contribute to the social, economic, and cultural well-being of the tribal, state, national, and global communities.

Diné College was founded on the premise that a distinctively Diné educational experience would improve students’ academic outcomes. In the early 1960s, Native American students across the United States often encountered difficulties at off-reservation colleges and universities, and more than half of Diné students awarded tribal scholarships left college within their first year (Stein 9).<sup>9</sup> A 1966 study conducted by faculty at Arizona State University

identified more than twenty reasons why Diné students were struggling in higher education, including personal issues such as homesickness, family obligations, financial difficulties, and problems with alcohol, as well as institutional difficulties—namely, unsympathetic faculty and a lack of social acceptance on campus (Clark 169). Academic preparedness was also a barrier for many students: when Diné College began offering classes in 1969, 42% of the population of the Navajo Nation had never attended school, and 70% of eligible students were considered to have “limited English language usage” (Stein 12). In short, there was an acute need for an institution committed to helping Diné students succeed academically, one that would take their linguistic, socioeconomic, and academic backgrounds into account while enabling them to remain close to their homes and families. Many of the college’s founders also believed students needed an education grounded in traditional knowledge and values in order strengthen their Diné identities. Such an education would not only provide students with an important sense of their own heritage before they moved on to the academic and social challenges in off-reservation settings, but would also help cultivate the next generation of Navajo Nation leaders and ensure the transmission of Diné knowledge and values to future generations (F. Clark).

With its unique student population, distinctive mission, and situation within the specific social, political, and geographic context of the Navajo Nation, Diné College offers a compelling site from which to theorize locally responsive composition pedagogy. As an institution, it has been working for nearly half a century to equip Diné students with literacies that will empower them and their communities while engaging their identities, values, and motivations. To be sure, the institution has had its share of political, financial, and academic difficulties over the decades, and, as at many open-access colleges serving low-income student populations, retention and graduation rates remain a persistent concern. There is no alternative pedagogical utopia here.

Rather, there are writing teachers from many walks of life doing challenging work in a setting that demands local responsiveness. This study has been an effort to learn from the knowledge Diné College composition instructors are making in this context.

### *Why Not “Culture”?*

Readers with a background in educational studies might wonder why this project is not framed in terms of *culturally responsive pedagogy*, or CRP.<sup>10</sup> Drawing on over three decades of research—a significant portion of which has taken place in Native-serving educational settings<sup>11</sup>—CRP proceeds from the premise that aspects of children’s home cultures shape how they learn. The dimensions of culture that education researchers have found most salient to students’ experiences with schooling include communication and interaction styles; ways of understanding authority and demonstrating respect or attentiveness; values and motivations; epistemology; and culturally-specific methods of teaching young children that shape learning preferences in the classroom (Gay). According to CRP theorists, pedagogical approaches that respond to such cultural dimensions can help students—particularly students from groups that have long been poorly served in public education—to learn better, become more motivated, and ultimately experience greater academic success (Gay). Some education theorists working in this vein have also advocated for culturally relevant or sustaining course content that supports the cultural competence and positive identity formation of minoritized students while fostering critical consciousness about structures of social inequality (Gay; Ladson-Billings, “Toward a Theory”; Paris).

As this last point suggests, CRP has an explicit social justice orientation. It traces its roots to equity pedagogy, a post-civil rights education movement which observed that the tacit privileging of white middle-class values, behaviors, communication styles, and epistemologies in

most school settings systematically disadvantages students from other cultural and class backgrounds. This movement called for the acknowledgement and celebration of students' home cultures, and for drawing on the resources they brought to the classroom in order to improve teaching and learning without compromising students' cultural identities (see Banks; Gay; Paris). Like the equity pedagogy from which it derives, CRP seeks to address the institutionalized racism and classism in educational settings that perpetuate achievement gaps and, by extension, larger structures of social inequality. It is thus a form of critical pedagogy, one that, especially in formulations like Ladson-Billings', incorporates insights from Critical Race Theory regarding the interrelationships between race, culture, and power (Ladson-Billings, "Toward a Theory"; "Just What"; "Preparing Teachers"). As such, CRP would seem to have common cause with critical pedagogical movements in composition since the 1990s, particularly the race- and culture-conscious work of scholars like Keith Gilyard, Patricia Bizzell, Jacqueline Jones Royster, Min-Zhan Lu, Tom Fox, Cathy Prendergast, and Krista Ratcliffe.

I share the social and political goals of CRP. In fact, I have done much of my teaching and research in access-oriented postsecondary institutions because I believe—I have *seen*—that literacy matters for the empowerment of individuals and communities who have been colonized, marginalized, and/or exploited. Likewise, I have little doubt that many of the “cultural” factors CRP researchers describe do indeed affect students’ educational experiences, particularly at the K-12 level.<sup>12</sup> When I began this project, I thought I would be using CRP as the framework. However, over the course of my teaching and research at Diné College and my growing engagement with the field of Native American studies, I have come to find the concept of *culturally responsive pedagogy* increasingly unsatisfying. My reasons for this position are fourfold: two are theoretical, and two are grounded directly in my observations at Diné College.

My first reason for choosing not to frame this study in terms of “culture” is stated most succinctly by Sidney Dobrin, who calls the term an “empty signifier” (17). It seems to have acquired so many contested and conflated meanings across so many disciplines that one must either devote tremendous space and energy to defining and justifying its use or risk perpetuating its most dangerously essentializing connotations. The anthropological definition of culture might be summed up as “the way of life of a people, *with all its variation...* which includes their behavior, the things they make, and their ideas” (Rosman and Rubel 1, emphasis mine).<sup>13</sup>

Cultural anthropologists have long acknowledged that people both shape and are shaped by their cultural environments, that cultures are always (and always have been) changing, and that they interact and overlap in complex ways. In recent decades, however, anthropologists have been grappling with the utility of the culture concept in the context of increasing economic and technological globalization and a postcolonial/settler colonial world order that is being rapidly reconfigured by urbanization, immigration, and political and environmental dislocation (see, for example, Appadurai). To whatever extent the world’s people could once have been neatly taxonomized into self-contained entities called “cultures” with a singular “way of life,” this kind of discreet categorization is increasingly problematic in the twenty-first century.<sup>14</sup>

The term “culture” is particularly vexed in Native contexts, which historically have been the objects of “salvage ethnography”: the effort to create a record of traditional cultures presumed to be unchanging and on the brink of extinction (Gruber). As I discuss below, this myth of the “vanishing Indian” is central to settler colonial ideology. Although there are more Diné people today than there have ever been (Shoemaker)—no one is vanishing—one consequence of this ethnographic history has been that the term “culture” is often applied *only* to those aspects of behavior, making, and ideas that are marked as distinctively Diné or Native. In

other words, the “with all its variation” part of the anthropological definition of culture, which today includes many behaviors, forms of making, and ideas that derive from or are engaged with sources beyond the Navajo Nation, often goes unacknowledged. In place of a *descriptive* definition of culture—that is, Diné is as Diné does at any given moment of time—the term often stands in for heritage knowledges, including language, values, and spiritual and material practices, that are understood as “traditional.” These knowledges and practices are an important component of Diné national identity, and they continue to be a valued part of many Diné people’s day-to-day lives. Under this definition, however, “Diné culture” is something that needs to be consciously preserved, taught, and, in some contexts, enforced, precisely *because* many Diné people no longer actually do it, or because they now do it in increasingly diverse, hybridized ways.<sup>15</sup>

As linguistic anthropologist and long-time Diné College faculty member Deborah House observes, both Anglos and Diné people participate in the essentializing and anachronistic discourses surrounding the idea of “Diné culture.” Drawing on interviews with faculty and students, as well as her decades of living, studying, and teaching at the main Diné College campus, she asserts:

There is no longer, and perhaps there never truly was, a homogenous entity known as “the Navajo.” Perhaps there was more justification for this usage in the past; perhaps there was greater uniformity and consensus in the period before Spanish contact, or in 1868, or at some other time in the past. Perhaps there indeed was a time when a statement about “the Navajos” was likely to characterize a majority of the Navajo people. If so, however, that time has passed. This is a hard thing to say and a hard thing to hear. Yet the essentializing discourse that represents the past as present is alive and well. It is fed by

Anglos and Navajos alike, whether they are politicians, educators, artists, or anthropologists. It is difficult to break old habits. (xxv)

House, it should be noted, is a staunch advocate of Diné language maintenance; she says this “hard thing” because she believes essentializing discourses about “the Navajo” have actually undermined efforts to halt or reverse the ongoing process of language shift.<sup>16</sup> In House’s estimation, the very aspects of their heritage that many Diné people value most are at risk if we cannot “challenge the widespread Navajo tribal and Diné College institutional discourse, which appears to claim that there is some consensus about what it means to be Navajo today” (xxvii).

In *X-Marks: Signatures of Native Assent*, Scott Lyons offers a persuasive critique of how essentialized notions of culture have been mobilized in many Native contexts, arguing that such “fundamentalism” is itself an imported ideology that ultimately undermines efforts to build tribal nations that can thrive in the twenty-first century. Invoking postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak, Lyons refers to monolithic assertions about Native cultures as *strategic essentialisms*—that is, rhetorical claims of essential sameness made for political purposes. I return to the rhetorical function of Native strategic essentialisms below. My point here is that the term “culture” has some specific and often highly politicized meanings in the Diné College context, meanings that differ from the (purportedly) descriptive sense of the term on which theories of CRP are based.<sup>17</sup> And this proliferation of meanings has resulted in scholarly confusion. With the best of multiculturalist intentions, much of the CRP research on Native learners seems to take strategic essentialisms about Native cultural difference as descriptions of actual Native students and communities, thereby eliding their diversity, their dynamism, and, I will argue, the source of many students’ most pressing school-related challenges: their locations within the spatialized social and economic structures of ongoing settler colonialism (see below). While I believe there

is a very important place in the composition classroom for Diné heritage knowledge—as well as for a range of other contemporary literacy and rhetorical practices marked as distinctively Diné or Native—the term *cultural* responsiveness confuses rather than clarifies the purpose of such inclusions.

This leads to my second reason for eschewing the framework of culturally responsive pedagogy, which is the particularly problematic ways in which discourses of Native cultural difference have functioned within the history and current structures of US settler colonialism. Historian Lorenzo Veracini offers a helpful articulation of the key distinctions between settler colonialism and the “exploitation colonialism” (e.g. the British colonial presence in South Asia) that has been the basis for most postcolonial theory. Both types of colonizers “move across space, and both establish their ascendancy in specific locales,” but exploitation and settler colonizers “want essentially different things” (“Introducing” 1). First, while exploitation colonialism requires the physical presence of nonindigenous colonial administrators, these individuals generally consider themselves to be temporary residents: they are citizens of the imperial nation-state who will eventually return to the metropole. Settler colonialism, however, involves the *permanent* settlement of nonindigenous people on Indigenous lands, which results in the formation of an independent settler state. Thus, in settler colonial contexts, “invasion is a structure, not an event” (Wolfe “Elimination” 388).

These two forms of colonialism have fundamentally different relations with Indigenous people. Exploitation colonialism aims to control the labor, extractive resources, and markets of the colony: as Veracini memorably puts it, exploitation colonialism says to Indigenous people, “you, work for me” (“Introducing” 1). Settler colonialism, on the other hand, is motivated primarily by a drive to acquire *land* and therefore seeks to dispossess and/or eliminate

Indigenous peoples who have prior claims to that land. In essence, settler colonialism says to the colonized, “you, go away” (Veracini “Introducing” 1), although the mechanisms by which it attempts such elimination vary across time and place. The United States, for example, used a combination of treaty-making, forced removal, land allotment policies, and outright warfare and genocidal violence to acquire Native land throughout the late eighteenth and most of the nineteenth century. The “domestic dependent nation” status of the 566 tribal nations currently recognized by the federal government—a legal status that distinguishes many Native peoples from other minoritized racial and ethnic groups in the US—is the result of that particular history of land acquisition (Veracini, “Introducing”; Wolfe, “Elimination”).<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, Veracini argues that a key feature of settler colonialism is an ongoing effort to erase the state’s history and current status as a *settler* state by ignoring or obscuring the continued existence of Indigenous peoples and/or denying their prospects for long-term survival. Settler culture may be eager to appropriate images of Indigenous people as a means of asserting local or national identities that distinguish the settler state from the colonial power that gave rise to it. However, such representations typically consign Indigeneity to the past or portray Native people as fragile and in the process of disappearing—see, for example, *The Last of the Mohicans* or the ubiquitous “End of the Trail” sculpture of the slumped, defeated Indian riding away from the vanquished frontier. Because settler colonialism wants Indigenous people to go away, their very survival is a form of resistance: continued Indigenous presence calls attention to the settler state *as* a settler state by revealing that the project of settlement is incomplete. It undermines the narratives of Native vanishment, perhaps tragic but always inevitable, that have long justified the settler colonial project.

As Veracini is careful to note, however, *resisting* settler colonialism does not mean *undoing* settler colonialism. While it may be possible to expel the colonizers in the context of exploitation colonialism, the realities of settler demographics and political independence render physical decolonization of the settler state unlikely. Rather, because the logic of settler colonialism is to eliminate Indigenous peoples by “extinguish[ing] the settler colonial relation”—i.e. to negate treaty agreements and the legal structures of tribal sovereignty—“the struggle against settler colonialism must aim to keep the settler-indigenous relationship intact” (Veracini, “Introducing” 7). In this situation, strategic essentialisms about Native “cultural difference” might understandably be deployed to bolster the settler-indigenous binary (see Wolfe, “Recuperating”). However, Lyons counsels, “[W]ith any strategic essentialism, you consider what’s at stake and weigh that against the problematic aspects of the essentialism evoked” (“Fencing” 78). Given the role that discourses of cultural difference have played within US settler colonialism, past and present, I have come to believe that the problems these strategic essentialisms pose to the long-term prospects for Native political sovereignty (the most important alterity for upholding the settler-indigenous relationship) outweigh their utility as a means of resistance.

Maureen Konkle’s historical examination of these discourses is illuminating. European countries and, later, the US settler state made treaties with Indigenous nations in order to legitimate their acquisition of territory. “A treaty,” Konkle writes, “is a contract between nations, and a contract cannot be made with an incompetent or an inferior: it requires the free consent of all parties” (3). In order to justify the “legal” acquisition of Native lands, settlers had to acknowledge sufficient commonality of understanding—i.e. similarity—between Native peoples and themselves to legitimate these contracts. However, once treaties became an impediment to

settler expansion, the logics of cultural similarity reversed. As Konkle writes, “[T]he only way out of the implications of treaty relations was to insist, ever more vociferously, that Native peoples were intellectually and morally incapable of forming true governments” (4)—in other words, to insist on their essential difference.

Konkle suggests that these discourses continue to function as a means of shifting attention *away* from Native political claims. She writes:

The *inordinate focus on Native difference and cultural identity*, while accepting at face value the moral correctness of Native incorporation into the United States, and the relative absence of Native peoples in the United States from the discussion of global colonialism and imperialism, are themselves effects of the relations peculiar to U.S. colonialism. (7, emphasis mine)

Thus, settler colonialism uses discourses of cultural difference—an academic concept forged in the context of European and US colonial projects—as a kind of double-edged sword to undermine Native political sovereignty: on the one hand, it can claim that Native peoples are too culturally different (i.e. too incompatible with modernity) to function as self-governing nations in the twenty-first century; on the other hand, by applying constructs of nationalism that take cultural difference as the *basis* for sovereignty, settler colonialism can claim that Natives are no longer sufficiently culturally distinct, thereby absolving the settler state of its obligations to them. Or, as Lyons puts it, “Assimilation and authenticity have always been language games designed for Indians to lose” (“Actually Existing” 303). Thus, though we might respect the political motivations and the strong emotions behind many self-proclaimed assertions of Native cultural difference, scholars should be leery of inadvertently participating in a settler colonial bait-and-switch.

It would, of course, be disingenuous to assert that there are not *differences* that many would describe as cultural on the Navajo Nation. As an Anglo friend of mine once said, “It’s the only place in the United States I’ve ever been where I felt like I was in another country.” (This statement was, perhaps, a reflection of his own location within the structures of US settler colonialism). These differences, however, are neither monolithic nor stable: in both my teaching and my research at Diné College, I have found students to be remarkably diverse across many of the very dimensions that the CRP literature tends to treat as points of commonality. As I discuss in Chapter Four, these students possess a wide range of intersecting identities, geographical experiences, language backgrounds, literacy practices, prior experiences with schooling, and goals and motivations. While all of the students who participated in this study identified as Diné, their familiarity with and level of interest in Diné heritage knowledge and practices also varied considerably. Whether or not one chooses to view this diversity as regrettable, it is undeniable. As opposed to a distinct “worldview,” what most of these students shared were persistent, spatialized socioeconomic challenges and issues of academic preparedness, particularly when it came to writing. As educational anthropologist Donna Deyhle observed in her own research with Diné youth in bordertown high schools (“Navajo Youth”), these difficulties with schooling were primarily attributable to structural racism and the social and economic conditions of rural reservation life, rather than to issues of cultural difference.<sup>19</sup>

My final reason for not using “cultural responsiveness” as the framework for this study is, quite simply, that the Diné College English faculty I interviewed, observed, and taught alongside responded to a much wider range of local factors than are encompassed by the term “culture.” Some of their responses *were* to characteristics of their students that the CRP literature might call “cultural.” As I describe in Chapter Five, faculty responded to students’ developing Diné

identities through discussions, readings, and writing assignments related to Diné history and heritage knowledge. Likewise, some of the faculty also drew on the linguistic and conceptual resources of Diné bizaad (the Navajo language) in their teaching. However, faculty also responded to a variety of other aspects of their students' lives and experiences that were shaped primarily by their locations within the structures of settler colonialism: their geographical experiences, their academic preparation, their goals for themselves and their families, and their socioeconomic challenges. And, quite frequently, faculty chose readings and created assignments that responded to a range of student interests *not* specifically related to their Diné identities, such as popular culture, music, sports, and technology.

Furthermore, faculty responded to dimensions of the local context other than students' backgrounds and interests. Much of their Diné-specific instruction—including their use of the Diné Educational Philosophy—was a response to the *institutional* mission to integrate traditional Diné pedagogical principles across the curriculum and promote the study of Diné language, history, and heritage culture. Likewise, as I discuss in Chapter Seven, faculty responded to the *communities* of varying scale in which the college is situated. Such responses included inviting students to grapple with pressing problems in their local chapter,<sup>20</sup> the Navajo Nation, the Southwest as a region, Native American communities across the country, the United States as a whole, and, in some cases, the “global community,” broadly conceived. Through these responses, faculty invited students to understand their own experiences in relation to larger social, political, and economic forces, and to think of themselves as rhetors with something to offer conversations about issues at tribal, state, national, and global scales.

I am making this argument against the “culture” framework with some trepidation. Many leaders on the Navajo Nation—and some of my friends among the students and faculty at Diné

College—are quite invested in discourses of Diné cultural difference, and, at this particular moment in history, such discourses undoubtedly carry rhetorical power. Amongst other things, they have proven an effective way to organize Diné people and politicians around educational projects, and they have also been used to secure both federal and private funding for tribally controlled education. Indeed, House traces these discourses back to the 1960s self-determination era, which gave rise to the tribal college movement. Drawing on the work of Antonio Gramsci, she describes discourses that assert a singular “Navajo-ness” (12) as being either “counterhegemonic” or “alternative hegemonic,” depending on how they are used; in either case, she insists, they are a response to American—i.e. settler colonial—hegemony (14). I have no desire to undermine rhetorical strategies that may be useful for furthering Diné self-determination merely for the sake of bolstering my own academic arguments. If that were all there was to it, I would leave well enough alone.

However, as Lyons reminds us, we must always evaluate strategic essentialisms in relation to the stakes. For House, one danger of these counterhegemonic discourses is that they prevent Diné educators and policymakers from recognizing the true nature and extent of language shift on the Navajo Nation, thereby impeding efforts at language maintenance. In the case of Diné College composition pedagogy, I believe that what is at stake is the ability to effectively prepare students with the literacies and rhetorical abilities needed to defend and further the sovereignty and self-determination of the Navajo Nation. While strategic essentialisms about Diné cultural difference might have the power to draw resources for needs like education, and perhaps fortify certain culturally-defined notions of Diné nationalism, they can also prevent instructors from recognizing—and thereby effectively responding to—the actual diversity of the students whom they are teaching. Likewise, in focusing exclusively on a narrow

definition of culture, such discourses can distract from the pressing need to equip students with the full range of literacies and rhetorical abilities they will need to respond to the exigencies of settler colonialism. The result may well be missed pedagogical opportunities and less learning, which ultimately undermines the nation-building project so central to the educational mission of Diné College.

### *Why “Local”?*

I encountered Gold’s *Rhetoric at the Margins* just as I was becoming doubtful about the utility of the CRP framework for this study, and the idea of “the local” seemed to offer a promising conceptual alternative to “culture,” one that would anchor my analysis spatially rather than pinning it to a signifier that seemed to be getting emptier by the minute. Of course, as a signifier, “local” carries its own freight of meanings and values, and much of the work of this project has been coming to an understanding of what the term might mean in relation to writing, to pedagogy, and to the experiences of students at Diné College. Etymologically, the word is closely related to “location,” a theoretical concept that has risen to prominence in postprocess writing studies over the last decade and a half. Peter Vandenberg, Sue Hum, and Jennifer Clary-Lemon offer a helpful overview:

[T]heories of location are grounded in the belief that a sense of place or scene is crucial to understanding rhetorical contexts. Such thinking also helps foreground an awareness of the possibilities and limitations created by location, how social control or power is “structured”...and how sometimes unequal differences among social actors are naturalized or held “in place.” (12)

In short, “writing takes place” (Weisser and Dobrin 19), locations are relational (C. J. Keller and Weisser), and those relationships are often about power. The more time I have spent at Diné

College, the more I have come to view “location” as a useful concept for understanding the locus of pedagogical responsiveness among its composition faculty.

Much of the value of the concept of *locally* responsive pedagogy is that it focuses inquiry not on some notion of essential “Dinéness” that all students supposedly share, but rather on what they indisputably do have in common: they are all in this particular *place*—a Diné College composition classroom—at this particular moment in history, within the social, political, and economic structures<sup>21</sup> of settler colonialism as they are manifest on the Navajo Nation. Settler colonialism is, after all, fundamentally about *land*. It is a spatial project. And in terms of their day-to-day life on the reservation as well as their longer-term efforts to find employment and create a measure of material security for themselves and their families, Diné students’ experiences are profoundly shaped by what I call the *social geographies of settler colonialism*. Social geography is the study of how social inequality is constructed and maintained through the organization of spaces (Del Casino), and the social inequalities of settler colonialism are certainly organized spatially.

At more than 27,000 square miles and nearly 174,000 residents, the Navajo Nation is the largest Native American reservation in the United States. As on many reservations, the socioeconomic situation is difficult. Nearly a third of households have incomes of less than \$15,000 a year; 38% of tribal members and 44% of children are considered to be living in poverty (*Demographic Analysis*). Official unemployment rates are higher than 20% in many communities, and in some places exceed 50% (*Needs and Assets*). With poverty come higher rates of social problems like chemical addiction, domestic violence, sexual assault, gang activity, and suicide. While there is much more to life on the Navajo Nation than these statistics—there is a great deal of love, laughter, hard work, and resilience—nearly all of the students I know have

encountered these issues in their communities and schools, and often in their own homes or extended families. These poverty levels are a function of the social geographies of settler colonialism, which have made it increasingly difficult for Diné families to sustain themselves through longstanding economic activities like sheepherding and ranching (Iverson) and offer insufficient alternative economic opportunity on or near the reservation.

The rural geography of the Navajo Nation is a defining feature of life. Many Diné people value rural living highly—raising livestock remains important in many families, and knowing how to live self-sufficiently, without running water or electricity, is considered by some to be a traditional virtue. Likewise, I have heard Diné elders blame social problems like drinking and youth violence on the density of Navajo Housing Authority communities, which is quite different from the diffuse family home sites on which previous generations of Diné people lived. Many Diné have long family histories in, and deep knowledge of, the land surrounding their home communities, and those ties to place are profoundly important. However, these rural conditions also present challenges. Housing shortages are a persistent problem in many communities, as are a lack of utilities infrastructure and poor road quality, particularly in the winter and during the summer monsoon season. For children in the most rural areas, residential schooling is still the only educational option, and others spend hours traveling to and from school on buses each day. For many families, it is an ongoing challenge to keep vehicles fueled and functioning. Commutes to work can be long, and in some cases, at least one parent—usually the man—will have to spend much of the year living and working off-reservation to send money home, which puts a strain on relationships and family structures (McCloskey).

Retail infrastructure in and around the Navajo Nation is one of the most visible reflections of the spatialized socioeconomic structures of settler colonialism. Although the

reservation is larger than the state of West Virginia, it has only half a dozen grocery stores. Larger communities like Window Rock, Shiprock, Chinle, and Kayenta have fast food restaurants, laundromats, and trading posts or gas stations with small convenience stores positioned at the intersections of major roads (often accompanied by food carts, a staple of local small business). On the other hand, off-reservation bordertowns like Gallup, Farmington, Holbrook, and Flagstaff have nearly every “big box” retail outlet, restaurant, and service provider imaginable. Many Diné people live in these bordertowns, many more work in them, and nearly everyone shops there: some families drive more than two hours each way to make weekend Wal-Mart runs. And, because the sale of alcohol is illegal on the Navajo Nation, the bordertowns have many bars and liquor stores with a visible Native clientele, which fuels stereotypes in the already racially-charged environments in many of these communities. Thus, while the majority of secure jobs on the reservation are with Navajo Nation or federal agencies, the majority of those dollars flow back off the reservation to businesses in the bordertowns. To be sure, some of these businesses are owned by Diné entrepreneurs and non-Native families with longstanding ties to the Navajo Nation (Powers; Iverson), but many are the same large corporate retailers found near interstate ramps all over the United States.

These social geographies are also manifest in the ways extractive industries shape local economies, communities, and public health. The terrible legacy of uranium mining on the Navajo Nation is well-known: the reservation has more than 500 abandoned mines awaiting cleanup, which still blow radioactive dust and contaminate water and continue to force the relocation of long-standing Diné communities, even decades after they have stopped operation (Frosch; Brugge and Goble). The coalmining companies, which are major employers on the Navajo Nation, pollute and divert water from Diné communities, even in the midst of a protracted

draught, and have also been the force behind involuntary relocations (Benedek; Randolph). Air pollution from the power plants on or near the Navajo Nation—which provide electricity to major urban centers like Phoenix, Las Vegas, and Los Angeles—has contributed to high rates of respiratory disease, particularly among children and elders (Bunnell et al.). Because unemployment on the Navajo Nation is so high, it is difficult to push back against industries that offer some of the few sources of steady employment that enable Diné workers to live and work close to home. In this way, the spatialized economic structures of settler colonialism allow industries—and major metropolitan areas—to extract resources from Diné lands, even as those lands nominally remain under Navajo Nation control.

Some of the faculty in this study were more politicized about these issues than others, and their responses to students' locations within these structures also varied. However, as means of understanding students' lived experiences and accounting for the breadth of instructors' pedagogical responses, I have found the concept of "location" much more satisfying and productive than "culture." That said, shifting the frame of inquiry from culture to location—and understanding what such a shift means, both theoretically and practically—is a substantial undertaking. CRP has been extensively theorized and articulated as a set of principles for teacher professional development, but locally responsive pedagogy is new and comparatively under-theorized. Gold's definition is capacious: it is intended to open a conversation about the historical sites of pedagogical innovation rather than to propose a fully developed framework for contemporary composition instruction. The only other uses of the term appear in a handful of articles in the K-12 education literature, most of which focus on the role of locally developed curricula in the context of the national standards movement (Gibbs and Howley; Jennings, Swidler, and Koliba; Kannapel). One of the major objectives of this dissertation project, then, is

to draw on one in-depth, site-specific study to contribute an initial framework for locally responsive composition pedagogy in contemporary settings. The first part of this contribution is clarifying just what the term “local” might mean.

A review of recent scholarship in composition and literacy studies reveals that researchers have defined the term variously, and these definitions are often left implicit rather than made explicit. In some cases, “local” seems to refer entirely to the characteristics and backgrounds of the *students* being taught (e.g. Kramsch; Wallace). In others, it is defined in terms of *institutional* characteristics, such as curricula, mission, size, faculty culture, and resources (e.g. Reinheimer; Lillis; Royer et al.). In yet other scholarship, local refers to social, economic, political, cultural, or physical characteristics of the *community* in which the institution is situated (e.g. Flower and Heath). More commonly, scholars combine two or more of these conceptualizations, defining local as both the institution *and* the characteristics of the student populations it serves (e.g. Tardy; Gallagher; Donahue and Moon; Barlow, Liparulo, and D. W. Reynolds; Griffin et al.; McLeod, Horn, and Haswell; Goggin and Waggoner; M. Harris; J. Monroe), as the characteristics of the students *and* the communities they come from (e.g. Lu and Horner; Blackburn and C. T. Clark; Flannery), or as both the institution *and* the community in which it is situated (e.g. Gold, “Remapping”). Finally, some scholars address aspects of all three (e.g. Tinberg, “Model”; Ritter; Winans; McComiskey and Ryan; Gold, *Rhetoric*). If these categories sound familiar, that is because they are quite similar to the major conceptual components of locally responsive pedagogy that emerged from my analysis of Diné College instructors’ approaches. This alignment is encouraging.

As a number of scholars in writing studies have pointed out, however, the local cannot be treated as isolated and self-contained. This is partly because of the function of literacy as a

technology. In “The Limits of the Local,” Deborah Brandt and Katie Clinton argue that, while reading and writing are undoubtedly

highly contextual, interwoven into local ways of life, sustained by talk, various in form and consequence, and sensitive to the ideological complexities of time and place...[I]literacy in use more often than not serves multiple interests, incorporating individual agents and their locales into larger enterprises that play out away from the immediate scene...In truth, if reading and writing are means by which people reach—and are reached by—other contexts, then more is going on locally than just local practice.

(338)

One of the major purposes of literacy, Brandt and Clinton point out, is “connecting people across time and space” (351): literacy exists to *transcend* the local, both spatially and temporally. The local is always being made and remade through literate activity. This suggests that writing faculty have an obligation to acknowledge the ways in which their locally-responsive literacy instruction “incorporate[es students] and their locales into larger enterprises that play out far from the immediate scene” (338).

As Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner point out, those broader forces include global capitalism, which *always* instantiates locally. Lu and Horner suggest that inviting students to become aware of these economic and social forces through their local experiences means “complicating notions of the *local* and *location* that confine our attention to immediately tangible and face-to-face situations” (127, emphasis in the original). In a globalizing economy that privileges “extra-territorial mobility” (127), Lu and Horner assert that “the text (written and social) of reading and writing needs to include a sense of the destabilizing connotations of *locality*, *local populations*, and *local community* ” (128, emphasis in the original). In other words,

local conditions are increasingly shaped by global forces—forces that are economic as well as political and technological—and to theorize locally responsive pedagogy without acknowledging that the very concept of “local” is in flux may be romantic and perhaps even irresponsible. Taken together, these arguments suggest that any attempt to understand “the local” as it relates to composition pedagogy must include a critical examination of the locale’s relationships to broader, often global forces and structures, particularly as those relationships are continuously reshaping students’ lives and literacies.

The locale of Diné College is most definitely in relationship with a wide array of global forces. I have already discussed some of the ways in which settler colonialism instantiates locally, but it is important to recognize that settler colonialism has always been an inherently transnational phenomenon (Byrd; Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*), and it is fully imbricated within the structures of global capitalism (see: bordertown Wal-Mart). Likewise, the effects of global climate change are instantiating locally on the Navajo Nation in the form of protracted drought conditions, which are harming livestock, forcing Diné ranchers to incur the expense of hauling more water (thereby rendering ranching an even less feasible way to make a living), and leaving some communities with so few water reserves that showers are banned, even as more pipes are being laid to nearby bordertowns. As I discuss in Chapter Four, globalizing digital communications technologies are also rapidly changing literacy practices on the Navajo Nation: some of my friends from Diné College are such avid users of Facebook that half my newsfeed is now Indigenous-related content, much of it transnational in nature. In short, the distinctive locale of Diné College is engaged with global structures in locally-specific and ever-evolving ways. And, as I discuss in Chapter Seven, faculty responded to that reality in their pedagogies.

### *One World*

Lyons suggests that “the next big project for Native American studies, and indeed for the indigenous movement as a whole, is to develop new ways of engaging with the irreducible *modernity and diversity* that inheres in every Native community and has for some time” (“Actually Existing” 297, emphasis in the original). House, who I suspect would agree with Lyons, offers an insightful analysis of the romanticism behind scholars’ widespread reluctance to sign on to this project:

This is not what many of us—Navajos and Anglos alike—want to hear. We want to believe there is, somewhere, someplace, where things are as they should be; we want to believe that in this sane, beautiful place that exists somewhere, there is hope and an example for all of us who look forward to a benign future where the problems that surround and even emanate from the Anglo world will not exist. We want this badly.

(xxvi)

House is identifying a version of the ““two worlds’ metaphor” (Deyhle, “From Break Dancing” 10), a common trope in the discourses of Native cultural difference, and one that is particularly ubiquitous in discussions of Native education. There is a desperate desire on the part of many people—Anglos and Diné alike—to believe that there are two distinct “worlds” and students can and should learn to move between them (or, in some versions, pick one and stick to it).

It is a spatial metaphor, and it does not hold. Deyhle draws on the words of a Diné teacher she met through her bordertown research to challenge this commonplace:

A Navajo teacher saw this differently: “No, I don’t think it’s two worlds, *we all live in one world*. What is learned in school can help at home.” I argue that we need to look at the *one complex, messy, conflictual, contemporary world* in which these youth do live to

make sense of their performances of resistance. (“From Break Dancing” 10, emphasis mine)

I have come to agree with Deyhle and her teacher friend. We live in one world: myself, my faculty colleagues at Diné College, the readers of this dissertation, and *all* of our students. The fact that we’re teaching, learning, reading, and writing in “one complex, messy, conflictual, contemporary world” makes it much harder to draw clear lines between “Diné” and “Anglo” ways, between home and school, between local and global. That is a crucial insight into the Big Question that led me to the Navajo Nation in the first place, and I see it as part of Lyons’ Big Project, too. Diné College faculty and students negotiate these ambiguities in the classroom every day—what follows is my effort to help the scholarship catch up with them.

## Chapter Two

### Methods

This chapter provides an overview of the process by which I planned and carried out this study, including how I moved from “raw” qualitative data to the arguments laid out in the dissertation. First, I present the research questions guiding the study. Then, I examine my own subjectivity in relation to the research site, followed by an outline of the key principles regarding research relationships that shaped the study design. I then describe and justify the specific methodologies I used to answer my research questions within the framework of these principles. From there, I provide an in-depth description of each phase of the project: pilot study, participant recruitment, fieldwork, data analysis, and validation (i.e. building trustworthiness). I conclude with a discussion of the limitations of the study and how I have sought to address them.

#### *Research Questions*

As often happens in qualitative studies (see Corbin and Strauss; Maxwell), I have reframed my research questions several times over the course of this study. Through an iterative process of developing questions, collecting and analyzing data, and reframing the project based on those preliminary analyses, I arrived at the following research questions, each of which contains several sub-questions connected to specific types of data, which I note in parentheses:

1. How do composition instructors *describe* their pedagogical approaches to teaching writing in the local context of Diné College? (Faculty interviews: see Appendix E)
  - a. How do instructors describe their theories of teaching and learning in the context of Diné College?

- b. To what dimensions of Diné College students' experiences, identities, interests, and goals do these instructors describe themselves responding?
  - c. To what dimensions of Diné College's institutional mission do these instructors describe themselves responding?
  - d. To what dimensions of the communities in which Diné College is situated do instructors describe themselves responding?
2. What locally responsive pedagogical approaches are these composition instructors *enacting* within the local context of Diné College? (Classroom observations, course documents)
- a. What do these instructors' pedagogical practices look like in the classroom?
  - b. How are these pedagogical practices enacted through course documents and materials?
  - c. How are these pedagogical practices enacted through feedback on student writing?
  - d. How do the pedagogical practices instructors enact respond to the local context?
3. To what pedagogical approaches do these instructors' *students* assign value? (Student interviews: see Appendix E)
- a. What relevant identities, experiences, and interests do students bring with them to the composition classroom?
  - b. What learning do students ascribe to their instructors' approaches?
  - c. What approaches do students experience as motivating, engaging, and/or helpful to their learning?
  - d. How do students describe transferring what they learn through these approaches to other writing and learning contexts, both in and out of school?

- e. How does responsiveness to dimensions of local context influence the value students assign to these approaches?

I have sought to answer these questions through a semester-long ethnographic case study of composition instruction at Diné College. This study included longitudinal faculty and students interviews, weekly classroom observations, and the collection of course documents, all of which I analyzed qualitatively. I elaborate on my methods of data collection and analysis below. First, however, I discuss my situational subjectivity and principles for research relationships.

### *Subjectivity*

Alan Peshkin argues that qualitative researchers should move beyond simply acknowledging that subjectivity is an inevitable part of their work and embrace an understanding of subjectivity as both “the basis of researchers’ making a distinctive contribution” and something that requires mindful awareness at every stage in the research process (18). I began examining my own “situational subjectivity” (Peshkin 18) during my Winter 2011 qualitative research methods class, in which I designed and carried out the initial pilot study for this dissertation (see below). I continued to reflect on my subjectivity throughout the summer and fall of that year—first in my second-year examination paper, and then in my ethnographic writing class and through the development of my dissertation prospectus. Throughout my fieldwork semester, I wrote fieldnotes nearly every week reflecting on my emerging understandings of the local context, including points of surprise, discomfort, and occasional disappointment. Following Peshkin’s lead, I draw on these notes, my correspondence with faculty advisors and friends, and my experiences analyzing the data and drafting and revising the dissertation to outline my situational subjectivity here. This subjectivity is informed by my own identities and life experiences, my personal values, my political commitments, and my disciplinary perspectives.

As I note in Chapter One, I am white (or, to use local terminology, Anglo or bilagáana). This identity has given me a keen awareness that, as a researcher, I am a guest in an Indigenous nation that has experienced—and continues to experience—violence, dispossession, and injustice at the hands of a predominantly Anglo settler state. This awareness has made me leery of being intrusive or imposing myself where I am not wanted. Because of this subjectivity, I have been very careful about seeking permissions and consent for all of my research activities. I have also striven to be sensitive to objections to my presence at meetings and events, both on and off the Diné College campus; indeed, unless invited by friends or colleagues, I have avoided attending cultural activities that were not either college-sponsored or explicitly open to the general public. Likewise, with the exception of conversations about language proficiency and classroom implementation of the Diné Educational Philosophy (DEP), I avoided asking questions about Diné heritage knowledge or practices during formal interviews (although some students and faculty brought these topics up of their own volition). One consequence of this subjectivity is that much of my understanding of Diné heritage knowledge and practices comes through reading, my coursework in Diné language and culture, and informal conversations with those faculty and students who were, for whatever reason, interested in telling me about their experiences. My direct participation in such practices has been limited. To address these gaps in my own knowledge and experience, I have sought feedback from knowledgeable faculty and students on sections of this manuscript that deal with topics related to Diné spirituality and tradition.

Another consequence of this identity-based subjectivity is that I have sometimes been hesitant to make critical observations or to present findings that counter the college's self-representations. This relates to another of my situational subjectivities: through my readings in Native American studies and my "openly ideological" commitment to pursuing research that

contributes to “a more just world order” (Lather 65–66), I have developed strong investments in Indigenous self-determination and the Navajo Nation’s efforts to assert the fullest possible measure of sovereignty. I view Diné College as an important expression and instrument of those efforts, and I have sometimes felt tensions between my desire to serve as an ally of the tribal college movement and my obligations as a scholar to be forthright about the social and political complexities of this pedagogical scene. I am aware of the risk of bias presented by this subjectivity, and throughout my fieldwork and the data analysis, I have sought to recognize the conflict and dissonance as well as the shared ideals I have encountered among Diné College faculty and staff. Ultimately, I believe I can contribute most meaningfully to Diné College’s nation-building project by offering the interpretations best supported by the data, even when those interpretations complicate official discourses.

My situational subjectivity also includes an investment in the value of local places and communities, particularly in relation to powerful interests that initiate changes over which those communities have limited control. This subjectivity has been shaped by my personal background. The daughter of two career military officers, I grew up in US Armed Forces communities in South Carolina, Hawaii, Maryland, Iceland, the United Kingdom, and Germany, as well as the English-speaking expatriate community in Santiago, Chile. As an adult, I have lived in Maine, South Africa, Oregon, Michigan, and New York. This mobility has given me a strong appreciation for the diversity and the inequity of human experience, as well as an ease with being a foreigner that turned out to be rather useful during my fieldwork. However, my own feelings of rootlessness have also fueled my appreciation for people who have strong ties to place-based communities. Such relationships to place were not a part of my own childhood, and my professional trajectory has made it difficult to establish such connections in my adulthood.

These experiences have made me critical of economic and political forces that function to dislocate people from places and communities that matter to them. This subjectivity is part of what initially drew me to community college teaching and research, and then to TCUs. It motivates my advocacy for postsecondary institutions that serve local communities and enable students to pursue their goals while staying close to family, and it fuels my respect for those who seek to use their education to improve conditions within their communities. However, this subjectivity has also required me to be vigilant about the risk of romanticizing local/tribal communities and the institutions that serve them, and to remain open to the perspectives of students who are not necessarily driven by a sense of responsibility to the Navajo Nation. Throughout this project, I have sought to understand the complexity of Diné College and the communities it serves—the negative as well as the positive—and to be receptive to the range of place-related perspectives and goals among its students and faculty.

Finally, my subjectivity includes my own somewhat complicated relationship with disciplinary knowledge and values. I am, by academic training and professional identity, a compositionist: the body of research and theory that rhetoric, composition, and writing studies scholars have developed over the last half-century has profoundly influenced my own teaching, and I believe that all writing instructors benefit from familiarity with the discipline’s “threshold concepts” (Wardle and Downs). However, like many two-year college English faculty, the instructors in this study had highly variable exposure to disciplinary knowledge from rhetoric and composition. At times, my own disciplinary perspectives led me to be skeptical about some of the teaching practices I observed and the theories behind them, and I had to consciously strive to stay open-minded: my research objective was to *understand* the pedagogical reasoning behind these instructors’ practices, not to evaluate it. On the other hand, I have long been critical of what

I have perceived as my discipline's marginalization of two-year college faculty (see Lovas; Hassel and Giordano). One of my major goals for this study has been to bring more positive scholarly attention to the work of instructors in these institutions. My sense of myself as an advocate for this professional group has sometimes made me hesitant to describe pedagogical practices that I knew would be viewed unfavorably by readers in writing studies. I am aware that these disciplinary and professional subjectivities might bias my interpretations, and throughout the study, I have endeavored to recognize the complexity of instructors' intellectual work without obscuring potentially problematic practices.

### *Research Relationships*

As they develop and implement their studies, scholars engaged in *any* kind of qualitative research have an obligation to carefully consider the relationships they will form with the people and communities who participate. These considerations include the nature of individual relationships; what participants and their communities stand to gain from their participation in relation to the professional benefits that will accrue to the researcher (Cushman, "Rhetorician"; Powell and Takayoshi; Marshall and Rossman); and the role that participants and their communities play in how they are represented in the published research (Mortensen and Kirsch; Lincoln and Guba). Such concerns are particularly pressing for a non-Native researcher working in a TCU setting, especially given recent critiques of academics' historical interactions with and representations of Indigenous communities (e.g. Smith; Wilson; Tuck). With these issues and my own personal values and political commitments in mind, I have operated from the following principles regarding my relationships with Diné College and its faculty, students, and staff:

1. Make my presence of both immediate and long-term benefit to the Diné College community.

Drawing on Freirean, activist, and feminist principles—and in line with recent work in Indigenous research methodologies (e.g. Wilson)—Ellen Cushman (“Rhetorician”; *Struggle*) and Katrina Powell and Pamela Takayoshi have argued compellingly for composition research that is *reciprocal*. I have endeavored to adhere to this principle at every stage of this project. Some forms of reciprocity have fallen within the parameters of the study itself: it is my sincere hope that this research will contribute to the work of Diné College composition instructors and ultimately benefit their students, a process that I am eager facilitate in any way I can. For example, I will present a discussion of the study’s findings to the Diné College English and Foundational Studies department in August 2014. Other forms of reciprocity involve lending my own resources to participants to meet self-determined needs that are outside the immediate sphere of research. I have, for example, given students rides, played with their children while they worked on assignments, and, in the course my frequent travels, brought back needed groceries and supplies from the bordertowns. In short, I have tried to be neighborly.

Cushman (“Rhetorician”) asserts that researchers should also share the intellectual and literacy resources afforded by our academic positions with the people and communities who participate in our studies. Over the last three years, I have endeavored to share such resources with Diné College students, faculty, and staff whenever possible. In addition to my teaching roles, I have provided current and former Diné students with feedback on writing assignments for other courses, scholarship essays, and job and internship applications; helped students with homework assignments in a variety of subjects; written letters of recommendation and served as an employment reference; and encouraged students to share their written work with wider audiences. I have also helped staff edit institutional documents; provided feedback to faculty on their own essay drafts; and shared instructional materials, lesson plans, and relevant academic

publications with my Diné College colleagues. In true reciprocal fashion, all of these activities have helped me build meaningful relationships that have provided me with additional insights into the institution, its students, and their communities.

2. Include research participants in the analysis and presentation of study data through ongoing dialogue.

Issues of representation are complex in qualitative studies of literacy (Cushman, *Struggle*; Mortensen and Kirsch) and in research with Indigenous communities (e.g. Smith), and they have proven to be particularly challenging when writing about people I consider colleagues and friends. I have followed Cushman's lead in *The Struggle and the Tools* and engaged in ongoing dialogue with faculty and student participants about my tentative analyses and interpretations of our work together. Likewise, I have solicited their feedback and permission to use direct quotes on all conference presentations, dissertation material, and articles deriving from this study. This dialogue—a form of member-checking (Maxwell)—has helped me address anxieties about representation that have been a concern since the beginning of the project. As I discuss below, this dialogue has also improved the validity of my study. In several places, I quote directly from conversations and correspondence with participants about early draft materials to show how this dialogue has furthered my thinking. With that said, I accept full responsibility for the analyses and interpretations presented here. Whatever participants' feedback or counter-interpretations, I do not make any assertions that are unsupported by data.

3. Strive to build long-term, collaborative research relationships with Diné College and its faculty.

Just as I believe it is important for my presence to be of both immediate and long-term benefit to Diné College, I also share Peter Reason and John Rowan's view that research should

involve participants in the development of the research questions, in the data analysis, and in the publication of findings. While this study was driven by the research questions I brought to the setting—a necessity of the processes by which dissertation studies are designed and evaluated—I do not intend to “take the data and run.” Rather, I am committed to maintaining personal, professional, and collaborative research relationships with Diné College and its faculty and students, to whatever extent they are interested and believe I can be useful. I have co-presented with Diné College faculty at two national conferences, and I plan to co-author publications with members of the community in the future. I have also offered my research expertise to the English and Foundational Studies department to support their own curriculum and assessment efforts, and I hope to continue teaching at the college periodically. Indeed, my decision to accept a faculty position at the University of Utah was driven in part by my desire to be well-situated geographically to continue working with Diné College faculty and students. In short, this dissertation project is the beginning of what I hope will be a long-term partnership in which I collaborate with Diné College faculty and students to design and implement projects that meet the institution’s self-determined needs.

At every stage of this project, I have adhered to the requirements of the Institutional Review Boards (IRB) at both the University of Michigan and Diné College. These requirements included securing written permission to conduct the study from Diné College administrators (see Appendix A), as well as honoring the college’s request that the findings of the study be shared with administrators and a copy of the dissertation stored at the Diné College library. Because this study was educational in nature and data collection was limited to the campus, the Diné College IRB committee determined that Navajo Nation Human Subjects Review Board approval was not required. Although I did make several informal visits to Diné College prior to receiving final

IRB approval for the study (see below), all data analyzed for this dissertation were collected under requisite IRB approvals. Finally, to protect knowledge understood to be sacred by many Diné people, all information about Diné spiritual knowledge and practices presented in this dissertation comes either from previously published academic sources, materials that are publically available on the Diné College website, or from observations, course documents, and conversations with faculty and students that they had the opportunity to review and approve.

### *Methodology*

This research project was designed as an ethnographic case study. I adopted this methodology because of the site-specificity of my research questions, and because I sought to understand multiple faculty and student perspectives that were likely to change over time. Roger Gomm, Martyn Mammersley, and Peter Foster suggest that case studies are an appropriate research strategy “when you want to understand a real-life phenomenon in-depth, but such understanding encompass[s] important contextual conditions” (18). They note that the case study strategy is valuable when the phenomenon being studied involves many variables that demand triangulation across multiple sources of evidence. By definition, my research questions about locally responsive pedagogy required an in-depth understanding of local contextual conditions at Diné College. The complex and multifaceted interactions between instructor and student characteristics, institutional conditions, and the broader communities in which the college is situated made triangulating across several kinds of data particularly important (see below).

*Ethnographic* case studies rely on immersive participant-observation methods, in which the researcher spends an extended period of time in the research setting, talking with people and observing interactions and events in order to better understand the experiences and range of

perspectives among participants (see Rossman and Marshall). In order to understand how composition instructors respond pedagogically to the local context at Diné College, I needed to talk with faculty and students, observe classroom dynamics, and collect documents over the course of an entire semester. The ethnographic approach enabled me to collect data from multiple sources over time while building reciprocal relationships with faculty and students that ultimately yielded candid and insightful interview data about their experiences. The term “ethnography” has a somewhat suspect history in many Indigenous communities, and I am not entirely comfortable using it to describe the nature of my relationships with Diné College faculty and students: personally, I prefer anthropologist Renato Rosaldo’s term “deep hanging out” (qtd. in Clifford 188). Methodologically, however, “ethnography” most accurately describes the process by which I collected the data I analyze and present here.<sup>22</sup>

### *Study Design*

This study unfolded through several phases: preliminary site visits, faculty participant recruitment, fieldwork, preliminary analysis and drafting, member-checking, and revision based on feedback from participants and my own faculty advisors. In the following section, I describe each of these phases in detail.

Phase 1: Pilot study and preliminary site visits. I made four trips to Diné College prior to beginning fieldwork in Fall 2012. The first weeklong visit, which took place during Winter 2011, was at the invitation of James, a long-time Diné College English instructor who taught at one of the smaller branch campuses. Treating the visit as a pilot study, I interviewed James about his teaching, sat in on several of his classes, and collected copies of course plans and handouts for each of his composition sections. Upon returning to Michigan, I qualitatively coded these data using a grounded theoretical approach, iteratively developing a codebook based on concepts that

emerged from the data (see Corbin and Strauss). The findings from this pilot study informed my eventual dissertation research design and the development of the faculty interview protocols I used in Fall 2012. These findings also contributed to my theoretical framework: they were an important part of my decision to frame the dissertation study as an investigation of “locally” rather than “culturally” responsive pedagogy. My pilot interview with James was conducted off-reservation and covered by University of Michigan IRB approval. Because it contained important insights into his personal and academic background as well as explanations of his pedagogical practices at Diné College, I included this interview transcript in the data analyzed for this dissertation study.

Prior to the fieldwork semester, I made two more weeklong visits to Diné College: one in Fall 2011, most of which was spent informally observing James’s classes and working one-on-one with students who requested help with coursework, and another in Spring 2012, during which I informally observed James’s classes, worked with students, and traveled to the main campus to meet with administrators and faculty. Although the primary purpose of these trips was to spend time in the community and develop relationships with faculty and staff, the time I spent working with students convinced me that I would need to include student perspectives in the dissertation study. In Summer 2012, I made another short visit to meet with faculty and staff and arrange logistics prior to my arrival. Because they were not covered by IRB approval, no course observations or fieldnotes from my preliminary trips have been included in the data analyzed for this study.

Phase 2: Faculty recruitment. I began recruiting faculty for the study in May 2012, as soon as I received official study approval from Diné College. James, my initial contact, had already volunteered to participate; throughout the summer, I contacted additional faculty at the

main campus via email (see Appendix C), seeking to recruit a group of four faculty balanced in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, and time at the college. I offered instructors a stipend of \$250 for their participation, along with the assurance that 1) the study was not an evaluation but rather an attempt to learn about what was working well in their courses; 2) their identities as participants would remain confidential; and 3) they would have opportunities to review and provide feedback on my analyses and interpretations before any study findings were made public. One of the instructors I initially contacted declined to participate, and another did not respond to my inquiries. Two faculty whom I contacted by email did agree to participate: Lily was an instructor that I had met during my visit to campus the previous spring, and Barb was a new instructor who would be arriving in August. While I was unable to recruit a fourth faculty participant before leaving Michigan in Summer 2012, I met Patrick shortly after arriving at the main campus, and he agreed to participate in the study.

The final group of faculty participants thus included two men and two women. Lily and Patrick are Diné, and James and Barb are Anglo. In Fall 2012, they ranged in age from their mid-forties to nearly eighty. While all were experienced composition instructors, their time teaching at Diné College ranged from less than a semester to more than thirty years. These faculty had taught widely across the English curriculum at Diné College, from the lowest-level developmental reading and writing courses through the two-semester required composition sequence to courses in literature, creative writing, and general humanities. While all four had held full-time faculty positions at some point in their career, only Lily and Barb were considered full-time English faculty during the semester the study was conducted: James and Patrick were technically adjunct English instructors, although both were carrying nearly a full course load. James, as I have noted, taught at one of the small branch campuses, and Patrick taught at both the

main campus and another branch campus, as well as online. Lily and Barb both taught their entire course load at the main Diné College campus. (For more on the personal, disciplinary, and professional backgrounds of the faculty participants, see Chapter Three).

**Phase 3: Fieldwork.** The ethnographic fieldwork portion of this study began in mid-August of 2012, the week before the start of the fall semester, and ended in mid-December, after instructors had submitted final grades for their courses. The study focused on the pedagogical practices of each of the four instructors in one of their composition sections. In order to triangulate instructors' self-described approaches to teaching with other sources of insight into their classroom practices, I collected faculty and student interviews, classroom observations, and course documents. I also engaged in a range of additional participant-observation activities.

**Longitudinal faculty interviews.** I conducted a series of four semi-structured interviews with each faculty-participant (see Appendix E) at four different points in the semester: the week before classes began in mid-August, early October, mid-November, and then after instructors had finished calculating students' final grades in mid-December. The initial interviews ranged from approximately ninety minutes to two hours; the subsequent interviews lasted between forty-five and ninety minutes.<sup>23</sup> The interviews focused on instructors' course design, pedagogical reasoning, mid-course adjustments, and ongoing reflections about the particular course section I was observing. For Barb, who was in the midst of her first semester at Diné College, these interviews focused largely on her ongoing assessment of her teaching practices in this setting and the pedagogical adjustments she was making as she became more familiar with her students, the institution, and the broader community. All faculty interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

**Classroom observations.** I also conducted weekly observations of one course section taught by each faculty participant. These courses included two sections of English 100B (Communications Workshop II) taught by Lily and Barb; one section of English 101 (Freshman English I) taught by James; and one section of English 102 (Freshman English II) taught by Patrick. Each of these sections was selected in consultation with the faculty participants to reflect a range of student preparation and points in Diné College’s writing curriculum, as well as to create a feasible weekly observation schedule, given that I would be traveling between two campuses that were more than 120 miles apart. Initial enrollments for each of the observed sections are presented in Table 1.<sup>24</sup>

Table 1: Initial Enrollment in Observed Courses

Instructor	Course	Initial Enrollment
Barb	100B	12
Lily	100B	26
James	101	10
Patrick	102	20

During the first class meeting of each of observed section, I introduced myself, explained the purpose of the study, and asked students to either sign or decline to sign an informed consent document (see Appendix D) indicating that they understood that a) the class was part of a study; b) I would be recording what transpired in the class through written fieldnotes; and c) I would not include students’ actual names in these notes. I also informed the class that, if they declined to participate, I would refrain from retaining notes about their speech or actions in the class.<sup>25</sup> Throughout the semester, I sat among the students during these observations, taking fieldnotes on my laptop using the software program EverNote, which enabled me to tag notes by instructor, lesson topic, and emerging themes. I occasionally supplemented these electronic fieldnotes with handwritten notes, typically when the instructor drew something on the board that I could not

easily render on my computer. For the most part, I was unobtrusive during these observations, although I did occasionally joke with or answer questions posed to me by either the instructor or one of the students. Lily and Barb sometimes talked to me while their students were engaged in in-class assignments or group work, offering additional commentary about what they were doing in class that day or their assessments of students' performance on recent assignments. Because James and Patrick structured most of their classes as workshops in which students worked independently, I also had additional opportunities to chat informally with students in those sections.

**Course documents.** I collected a range of course documents from each observed section, including syllabi, handouts, assignment sheets, rubrics, readings, and materials posted on course websites. James, Lily, and Barb also occasionally provided me with documents from other courses they taught when those materials were relevant to something we discussed in our interviews. In addition, Barb and James volunteered to share their typed feedback on students' papers with the names removed, which I accepted, and Barb provided me with anonymized copies of her students' end-of-semester reflective essays and course evaluations. In the analysis, I did not code documents from course sections I did not observe, nor did I code the reflective essays or evaluations. I did, however, review the reflective essays and evaluations to triangulate the valued pedagogical practices and self-described learning discussed by student participants.

**Longitudinal student interviews.** In order to understand students' perceptions of their instructors' pedagogical approaches, I conducted a series of four semi-structured interviews (see Appendix E) with four students from each observed section, for a total of sixty-four interviews with sixteen individual students. I recruited these students during their first class meeting: in addition to the informed consent document for the course observation, I invited every student to

complete an additional one-page questionnaire (Appendix C) if they were interested in participating in the interview portion of the study. I offered students \$25 per interview, for a total of \$100 over the course of the semester, and also suggested to students that reflecting on their experiences in these interviews might enhance their learning in the course. Depending on the section, between 53% and 100% of the students who consented to the observation portion of the study indicated that they were interested being interviewed, yielding a recruitment pool of forty-two students across the four sections. Using their questionnaire responses, I identified and contacted four students from each class who represented a range of genders, ages, parenting statuses, and educational and career aspirations.<sup>26</sup>

The gender ratios in two of the courses did not yield enough consenting male students to achieve a fifty-fifty gender balance: of the sixteen students who participated in interviews, six were male and ten were female, with at least one male student participant in each of the sections. Eleven of the students were between the ages of 18 and 21, while the other five ranged in age from 25 to 43. Five of the student-participants had children (see Table 12). On the recruitment questionnaire, seven students indicated that they aspired to earn an associate's as their highest degree, five sought bachelor's degrees, and four hoped to earn a master's degree or higher (for more demographic information about the student participants, see Chapter Four).

I interviewed students in early September, mid-October, mid-November, and mid-December, after they had completed all of their assignments for their composition courses but before they received their final grades. The interviews lasted thirty to seventy minutes, depending on the student, and focused on their family situations; their language and educational backgrounds; their in- and out-of-school literacy practices; their personal and professional goals; their reactions to the instructor's pedagogical approaches; and their ongoing assessment of their

learning and growth as writers. As the semester progressed, I also asked students a variety of questions that sought to gauge how their construction of college writing was evolving over time, and how they were transferring what they were learning in their composition courses to other academic, professional, and personal domains. All sixteen students remained in the study for the duration of the semester, and all student interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

**One-time faculty interviews.** In order to understand the pedagogical practices of the four primary faculty participants in this study within the broader range of self-reported teaching approaches at Diné College, I conducted one-time interviews with five additional English faculty at three different campuses of the college (see Appendix E). I invited all full-time English instructors who had been teaching at the college for more than a year to participate in these interviews, offering them \$50 for their time. The interviews typically lasted between one and two hours and focused on instructors' course design, pedagogical reasoning, and perspectives on Diné College students' writing abilities and needs. I also collected composition course syllabi from each instructor. All one-time faculty interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed. To narrow the scope of the dissertation, I ultimately chose not to include these transcripts in the formal data coding. I did, however, review these transcripts to corroborate parts of the codebook (see below).

**Alumni interviews.** I attempted to conduct one-time interviews with two former Diné College students of each of the four primary faculty participants (see Appendix E). Unfortunately, only two faculty were able to recommend alumni to contact, and only three of the former students whom I contacted responded to my email, phone, and Facebook overtures. These interviews, which lasted from thirty to forty-five minutes each, focused on alumni's perspectives

regarding the role their composition coursework at Diné College played in helping them achieve their academic and career goals, with particular emphasis on the pedagogical approaches they valued most in retrospect. All alumni interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. While these interviews were enlightening, I chose not to include them in the analysis for this dissertation, both because my recruitment efforts had been only moderately successful and because I sought to narrow the scope of the dissertation.<sup>27</sup>

**Additional participant-observation.** Because developing an in-depth understanding of local context was essential for this project, throughout the Fall 2012 semester I was a highly engaged participant-observer at Diné College with multiple roles. Perhaps the most important of these roles was teaching a section of English 100B at James's branch campus. This role allowed me to interact with faculty and administrators as a colleague, and it also enabled me to attend a part-time faculty orientation as well as the weekly Diné Educational Philosophy (DEP) trainings provided for faculty and staff. The DEP trainings gave me important opportunities to learn about Diné heritage knowledge and also helped me understand how the institution attempts to infuse that knowledge throughout the curriculum. As an adjunct instructor, I was not privy to all of the meetings, announcements, or email conversations that were part of the institutional lives of full-time faculty. However, I did hear about many of these events and discussions through conversations with instructors and staff.

My adjunct faculty position gave me firsthand experience of some of the challenges as well as the joys of teaching writing in this setting. I had to navigate institutional policies and procedures, adjust my course design as I encountered the realities of students' preparation levels and competing priorities, and work around technology access issues. I also had the opportunity to get to know my Diné students well through our discussions, their writing, and individual

conferences, as well as many informal conversations in the lobby or library. From the women and men in my English 100B course, I learned a great deal about the linguistic backgrounds, educational experiences, family situations, and personal aspirations of Diné College students. Teaching was thus invaluable for understanding the local context in which Diné College faculty were teaching and for engaging in the process of developing locally responsive composition pedagogy myself. In addition to my formal role as an instructor, I also regularly helped students at the branch campus with writing assignments for other courses, both in James's class and the distance courses many students took through Intercampus Television (ITV). This one-to-one work provided me with additional insight into the range of Diné College students' writing preparation and interests, the role of composition courses within the broader curriculum, and students' perspectives on instructional technologies.

I got a taste of the student experience at Diné College through the Navajo Language 101 and Foundations of Navajo Culture courses that I took at the branch campus where I was teaching. I enrolled in these courses to gain a better understanding of Diné language and heritage, and I learned a great deal from my instructor, Ms. Shirley Bowman, as well as my classmates. I found that these classes gave me unanticipated opportunities to build peer relationships with other students, many of whom were my age or older, and several of whom were also my students in English 100B or enrolled in James's English 101 course. We did group work together, chatted and joked in the lobby, and even had an end-of-semester party during which we slaughtered, butchered, and cooked one of my classmates' sheep.

My living situation during the fall semester also provided helpful opportunities to learn more about Diné College as an institution and life on the Navajo Nation. Because I was splitting my time between two campuses, I spent two nights a week with the two sisters at the local

Catholic mission, who run an informal bed-and-breakfast out of their home. We would often talk well into the evening about the latest goings-on in the community, and I learned a great deal from their perspectives, as well as from the Diné community members involved with their parish. The other five nights of the week, I stayed in faculty housing on the main campus with a long-time Anglo faculty member at the college who also runs a ranch with her Diné partner. In addition to allowing me to stay in her modern hogan-style housing unit, this instructor often invited me to her ranch and mountain sheep camp. She took me horseback riding, told me about raising sheep and cows, and included me in meals with her partner's extended family. Janet also provided me with a great deal of insight into the history of the college, faculty life, and the challenges faced by many of the students in that highly rural part of the reservation.

Throughout my time at Diné College, I attempted to experience as much of community life as I could while respecting appropriate boundaries. I shopped at area stores, ate at local food stands, and went to community events like fairs, powwows, rug auctions, and Keshmesh (Christmas) bazaars. During my long drive between campuses, I listened to countless hours of the mix of country music, traditional Diné songs, and news and public service announcements broadcast on Navajo Nation Radio. I read the *Navajo Times* and the *Gallup Independent*, and, following recommendations from various students and faculty, I also read books and watched films about Diné-related issues. I went to public lectures on Diné culture, history, and contemporary issues and visited museums and cultural centers throughout the region. I also had the opportunity to participate two sweat ceremonies: a traditional Diné sweat with women at the college and a Native American Church-style sweat at the home of one of the student participants in the study. Finally, I became friends with the faculty participants and, in some cases, with their partners. We spent long evenings listening to music, discussing books and family and sharing

insights about teaching. All of these experiences contributed to my understanding of the locale in which Diné College composition faculty teach and in which their students strive to learn.

Phase 4: Data analysis. Table 2 presents an overview of the data collected and coded for this study. I analyzed these data using a process of open and axial coding derived from Corbin and Strauss' grounded theory approach: I developed the codebook iteratively, allowing concepts to emerge from the data themselves rather than applying a predetermined set of codes, although some of the conceptual thinking behind the code development was informed by my readings in the composition, education, and Native studies literature as well as my previous pilot study.

After an initial review of the dataset, during which I wrote a series of memos documenting my emerging sense of the major themes, I engaged in four distinct rounds of analysis and code development, each driven by a broad question that constituted a kind of axial code: I discuss each of these questions and the process by which I coded for it below. For each question, I developed preliminary descriptions of the data in Excel spreadsheets. Based on these descriptions, I devised initial codes organized under conceptual categories. Once I had developed this set of conceptual categories and codes, I applied the codes to the actual interview transcripts and course documents using the qualitative coding software HyperResearch.<sup>28</sup> As I was coding, I periodically revised code names and descriptions as well as categories. A complete codebook with definitions and examples is presented in Appendix G.

Table 2: Overview of the Data

Data Type	Collected	Coded
Interviews	89	81
Primary faculty	17	17
Students	64	64
Additional faculty	5	-
Alumni	3	-
Observations	50	50
Course documents	77	77
Additional fieldnotes	83	-

**Who are the faculty?** Based on my pilot study with James, my early reflections in my fieldnotes, and my initial review of the data, I had a strong sense that the knowledge and experiences faculty were bringing *to* their teaching situation played an important role in how they understood and responded pedagogically to the local context. To develop a conceptual framework that described this role, I conducted a preliminary descriptive analysis of all seventeen faculty interviews, focusing on the portions of the transcripts where instructors described their backgrounds and pedagogical influences. These discussions were most extensive in the initial interviews, when I asked faculty directly about their personal, academic, and professional backgrounds, but also emerged in other conversations about their teaching practices throughout the semester. I followed this examination of the interviews with a targeted analysis of the observation fieldnotes and course documents, looking for additional indications of instructors' backgrounds and pedagogical influences (such as disciplinary terminology in their course materials, the concepts and narratives they brought up in class discussions, and the nature of the feedback they gave students on writing assignments).

My initial spreadsheet for this question included forty-four descriptive codes, which I organized into eight conceptual categories (Table 3). After reexamining the content of these initial categories, I reorganized the codes into four categories that more clearly reflected the

major self-reported influences on instructors' composition pedagogy. I then applied these codes to the faculty interviews, observation fieldnotes, and course documents. By the end of the coding, each of the four major conceptual categories contained between four and eleven codes, all of which I organized under the broad category *faculty pedagogical influences* (for category descriptions and code examples, see Appendix G.1). Findings from this portion of the analysis are presented in Chapter Three.

Table 3: Faculty Pedagogical Influences

<b>Initial categories</b>	<b>Final categories</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. personal background</li> <li>2. education</li> <li>3. career experiences</li> <li>4. teaching orientations</li> <li>5. community experiences</li> <li>6. experiences at Diné College</li> <li>7. current life situation</li> <li>8. other interests</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. personal background/experiences</li> <li>2. disciplinary background/knowledge</li> <li>3. other professional experiences</li> <li>4. local knowledge/experience</li> </ol>

**Who are the students?** Throughout my fieldwork and during my initial review of the data, I was continually struck by the diversity of the students in this study, which seemed to depart from many of the representations of Native students in the literature. This diversity began to emerge as an important finding in and of itself. In order to identify the major dimensions of this diversity, I conducted a preliminary analysis of all sixty-four student interviews, focusing on those portions of the transcripts in which students described aspects of their backgrounds, personal lives, interests, and goals. Such discussions appeared most frequently in the first half of the initial interviews, in which I asked questions about students' backgrounds, and in the latter half of the final interviews, in which I asked about their motivations and future plans. It was not uncommon, however, for students to volunteer additional information about their personal lives in response to other questions across all four interview protocols. I also analyzed portions of the

course observation fieldnotes in which students referenced aspects of their own backgrounds, interests, and goals, as well as writing samples that reflected their personal histories and interests.

My initial descriptive spreadsheet for this question included fifty-two descriptive codes, which I organized into seven conceptual categories (Table 4). These categories contained between four and fifteen codes each. As I applied these codes to the student interviews, I revised some of the category names and parameters—most notably, I split ‘language and literacies’ into two separate subcategories. At this end of this analytic process, the codes were organized into eight conceptual categories, each of which contained between four and fourteen codes. I organized these categories under the broad category *student dimensions of diversity* (for category descriptions and code examples, see Appendix G.2). Findings from this portion of the analysis are presented in Chapter Four.

Table 4: Student Dimensions of Diversity

<b>Initial categories</b>	<b>Final categories</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. identities</li> <li>2. place</li> <li>3. friends and family</li> <li>4. languages and literacies</li> <li>5. school experiences</li> <li>6. goals</li> <li>7. challenges</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. intersecting identities</li> <li>2. geographical experiences</li> <li>3. social networks</li> <li>4. languages</li> <li>5. literacies</li> <li>6. prior experiences with schooling</li> <li>7. goals and motivations</li> <li>8. challenges</li> </ol>

**How do faculty respond pedagogically to the local context of Diné College?** This question, which gets to the central inquiry of the study, required the most extensive analysis across all three types of data: instructor interviews, observations, and course documents. I began by analyzing the seventeen instructor interviews, focusing on their self-described teaching practices, which made up the latter two-thirds of the initial interview and continued through the

second, third, and fourth interviews. I developed four initial descriptive spreadsheets summarizing these self-reported practices, each of which tracked one of the following broad categories: *theoretical orientations, teaching practices, perceptions of the local context, and responses to local context*. Then, I analyzed the observation fieldnotes, followed by the course documents. As I discuss below, the initial categories and codes in each of these four spreadsheets evolved substantially through the process of being applied to the data (see Appendix H).

Theoretical orientations described the major theories and principles related to teaching that informed instructors' practices. This category initially included twenty codes, twelve of which were freestanding and eight of which were organized under four subcategories (Table 5). As I applied these codes to the data, I determined that they could be reorganized into two broad subcategories: teaching/learning goals, which ultimately included eighteen codes, and teaching strategies, which included seven codes (for subcategory descriptions and code examples, see Appendix G.3). I renamed this broad category *faculty pedagogical orientations*; findings from this portion of the analysis are presented in Chapters Three, Five, Six, and Seven.

Table 5: Faculty Pedagogical Orientations

<b>Initial broad category</b>	<b>Initial categories/codes</b>	<b>Final categories</b>
1. theoretical orientations	Categories: 1. teaching goals 2. language 3. reading 4. indicators of instructional effectiveness  Freestanding codes: 1. writing process 2. cognition 3. motivation 4. collaboration 5. rhetoric 6. genre 7. transfer 8. technology 9. orientations toward adaptation/responsiveness	1. Teaching/learning goals 2. Teaching strategies

*Teaching practices* initially had six categories that included between two and nine codes each (Table 6). As I applied the codes in these categories to the data, I determined that both ‘information literacy’ and ‘technology’ were better understood as *teaching/learning goals*, and I collapsed the remaining categories into single codes, to which I added ‘course policies.’ I ultimately renamed this category *dimensions of instruction* (see Appendix G.4); findings from this portion of the analysis are presented in Chapter Three.

Table 6: Dimensions of Instruction

<b>Initial category</b>	<b>Initial subcategories</b>	<b>Final codes</b>
1. teaching practices	1. materials 2. assignments 3. information literacy 4. assessment 5. in-class activities 6. out-of-class communication 7. technology	1. materials 2. assignments 3. assessment 4. in-class activities 5. out-of-class communication 6. course policies

*Perceptions of local context* focused on instructors' individual constructions of their teaching context. Initially, this spreadsheet had six codes (Table 7). As I applied these codes to the instructor interview transcripts, I determined that the data I had been coding as 'perceptions of language' were better interpreted as codes under the *faculty pedagogical influences* category and/or under the category of *teaching/learning goals*. I also added the code 'perceived parallels/contrasts in other contexts' and collapsed 'positive' and 'negative aspects' into a single code: 'perceptions of observed section' (see Appendix G.5). I determined that the course observations and course documents provided insufficient evidence for me to apply this category of codes, so I restricted its application to the instructor interviews. Selected findings from this portion of the analysis are presented in Chapters Three and Five.

Table 7: Perceptions of Local Context

Initial category	Initial codes	Final Codes
1. perceptions of local context	1. perceptions of students 2. perceptions of the institution 3. perceptions of language 4. perceptions of the community/tribal nation 5. perceptions of the United States 6. positive aspects of the Fall 2012 semester 7. negative aspects of the Fall 2012 semester	1. perceptions of observed section 2. perceptions of Diné College students 3. perceptions of institution 4. perceptions of local community/Navajo Nation 5. perceptions of Native Americans 6. perceptions of US context 7. perceived parallels/contrasts in other contexts

*Responses to local context* initially included sixty-three codes organized under two broad categories: *students* and *institution*. As I applied these codes to the data, however, I saw the need for a third category—*communities*—which included several codes that I had originally organized under *institution* categories related to the Diné College mission statement. Thus, the *responses to local context* category became three distinct code categories (Table 8, see Appendix G.6-8).

These three categories of local responsiveness, which address major themes in the composition and Native studies literature, have shaped the structure of this dissertation. Instructors' pedagogical responses to *students* are presented in Chapter Five, select findings about their responses to the *institution* are in Chapter Six, and their responses to *communities*—from the local to the global—are presented in Chapter Seven.

Table 8: Responses to Local Context

<b>Category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
1. faculty pedagogical responses to students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. individual student</li> <li>2. Diné identities</li> <li>3. languages</li> <li>4. epistemology</li> <li>5. learning styles</li> <li>6. interpersonal communication norms</li> <li>7. personal interests</li> <li>8. personal/family experiences</li> <li>9. geographical experiences</li> <li>10. academic preparation</li> <li>11. socioeconomic</li> <li>12. goals/motivations</li> </ul>
2. faculty pedagogical responses to institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. mission: Diné Educational Philosophy</li> <li>2. mission: teaching Diné history and heritage knowledge</li> <li>3. mission: preparing for transfer/multicultural knowledge</li> <li>4. mission: social responsibility/community service</li> <li>5. accreditation/articulation agreements</li> <li>6. institutional/departmental policies/structure/culture</li> <li>7. institutional facilities/resources</li> <li>8. institution/class size</li> <li>9. workload</li> </ul>
3. faculty pedagogical responses to communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. immediate community</li> <li>2. Navajo Nation</li> <li>3. state</li> <li>4. region</li> <li>5. Native America</li> <li>6. United States</li> <li>7. global</li> </ul>

As I was coding the faculty interview data, I began to realize that I also needed to account for the *process of pedagogical responsiveness*: that is, the mechanisms by which faculty developed locally responsive practices over time. Five codes emerged from this effort (Table 9). I also moved the code ‘indicators of instructional effectiveness’ from *theoretical orientations* to this new category (see Appendix G.9). Findings from this portion of the analysis are presented in Chapter Three.

Table 9: Process of Pedagogical Responsiveness

Category	Codes
1. process of locally responsive pedagogy	1. attempted practices 2. adopted practices 3. adjusted practices 4. abandoned practices 5. perceived indicators of instructional effectiveness

Taken together, the categories and codes that emerged from this analysis for this question—“How do faculty respond pedagogically to the local context of Diné College?”—yielded the conceptual framework for locally responsive pedagogy I present in this dissertation.

**What pedagogical responses do students value?** Once I had a conceptual framework for locally responsive composition pedagogy in place, I returned to the student interviews to identify the teaching practices that they valued. In my initial analysis, I focused on those portions of the interviews in which I had asked students to assess their own learning in the course and identify pedagogical practices that they found most enjoyable, engaging, and/or useful. These items appeared at the end of the first interview protocol and the first half of the final interview protocol, and made up the bulk of the second and third interviews. Based on this analysis, I developed twenty-one codes that I organized under the category *valued pedagogical practices*. As I applied these codes to the student interview transcripts, I developed two more codes for

valued pedagogical practices. I also added three additional categories: *evaluation of instruction*, *responses to dimensions of instruction*, and *student academic self-descriptions*. I ultimately organized all four categories derived from this final round of analysis under the broad category *student experiences of writing pedagogies* (see Appendix G.10 for code descriptions and examples). To limit the scope of this dissertation, I report only on the *valued pedagogical practices* category. Findings related to this category are presented in relation to relevant discussions of faculty's pedagogical practices in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven.

Phase 5: Establishing Trustworthiness. Patti Lather offers four validity categories for "establishing data trustworthiness" in "unabashedly ideological research": triangulation, construct validity, face validity, and catalytic validity (67). *Triangulation* involves seeking patterns and counter-patterns across multiple sources of data, methods, and theories. In this study, I have triangulated multiple types of data gathered through several methods—interviews, course observations, and course documents—in order to understand instructors' locally responsive pedagogies (for a sample of my triangulation of codes across multiple data types, see Appendix J). As I have noted, I also reviewed the one-time instructor interview transcripts to corroborate the four code categories under *faculty pedagogical influences*, and I reviewed Barb's student reflective essays and course evaluations to corroborate the codes in the category *valued pedagogical practices*. Finally, in each of the five findings chapters, I have put my interpretations into conversation with theoretical frameworks from multiple academic disciplines, including rhetoric and composition/writing studies, education, and Native American studies. In those chapters, I identify points of convergence as well as divergence between theoretical discussions in these fields and the findings of this study.

*Construct validity* requires the researcher to engage in “systematic reflexivity” in order to document “how the researcher’s assumptions have been affected by the logic of the data” (Lather 78). One way I sought to be reflexive about my interpretations was to review the codebook and samples of each code with two graduate colleagues in the University of Michigan’s Joint Program in English and Education who are trained in qualitative research methods. These reviewers asked for clarifications of one code name and four code descriptions, which I revised to address their questions. They expressed confusion about the application of one code (‘intersecting identities’) to the example provided in Appendix G.2; once I clarified that the speaker was female, they concurred with my application of the code. These reviewers reported finding the rest of the codebook clear and well-supported by the examples I provided.

I have already discussed my efforts to remain reflexive regarding my subjectivity in relation to the research site. In fact, several of this study’s findings do not entirely align with the ideological predispositions I brought to the work. As I discuss in Chapter One, this project forced me to rethink some of my prior attraction to discourses of Native cultural difference. I have also grappled with unexpected findings related to the role of Indigenous epistemologies in Diné College writing classrooms, which were not being implemented as I had initially anticipated—I discuss these findings in Chapter Six. Likewise, the findings of this study have forced me to interrogate my own romantic commitments to ideas of “the local,” and to think in new ways about Indigenous communities’ relationships with “the global.” In short, the “logic of the data” has required me to reconsider several of my own ideological assumptions.

*Face validity* refers to involving participants in discussions about the emerging analysis, interpretations, and conclusions drawn from research. As I have noted, member-checking has been central to the principles for research relationships guiding this study. As I analyzed the data

and drafted and revised the dissertation, I remained in dialogue with all of the primary faculty participants and most of the student participants: however, not all of the students had stable contact information, which presented difficulties in the later stages of member-checking. I discussed my findings with faculty in person during five separate post-fieldwork visits, and also through periodic conversations via phone, email, and Facebook messaging. In June 2013, I emailed early draft materials to the faculty participants, highlighting the sections pertaining to their classes and requesting their permission to include specific quotations. Both Patrick and Barb sent me written feedback, and I incorporated their insights into my revisions. One student, David, was a particularly enthusiastic participant in the study, and he also gave me feedback on several conference papers and sections of the dissertation during the summer and fall of 2013.

In March 2014, I sent faculty an advanced draft of the dissertation prior to visiting campus, again with the sections pertaining to their classes highlighted. Barb, who by that time had left her position at Diné College, sent several factual corrections via email. I discussed the draft with the other faculty in person: all three offered positive comments but no suggestions for revision. During that visit, I also met with six of the student participants (Johnny, William, David, Cloud, Madison Lane, and Jeffrey) to discuss sections of the draft in which they were quoted or paraphrased. Johnny, William, David, Madison Lane, and Jeffrey each offered minor corrections and additional insights, and all six approved the final versions of these sections. I member-checked quotes and interpretations with eight additional students (Dezba, Nicholene, Judy, Sherry, Johona, Kurt, Anastasia, and Cookie) via phone, email, and/or Facebook: seven of these students approved the materials I sent with no changes, but Cookie offered several corrections and additional insights. We collaborated over phone and email to revise the two sections in question to our mutual satisfaction.

Finally, in June 2014, I traveled to the Navajo Nation with the defense draft and met with Patrick, James, and Lily in person to discuss several recent revisions and additions I had made based on feedback from members of my dissertation committee. Patrick and Lily suggested several minor corrections, but all three voiced their approval of my interpretations and the implications I offered for the college. Barb, who was no longer living in the Four Corners region, reviewed and approved this close-to-final draft via email. During this visit, I also met in person with one more student (Morning Star) to member-check quotes and interpretations. She approved all of these sections with no changes. Despite my best efforts, I was not able to reestablish contact with one student (Eden). However, the face validity of this study has been substantially improved by the corrections, suggestions, and insights offered by the other nineteen participants throughout the member-checking process.

Lather's final category is *catalytic validity*, or evidence that taking part in the research has led participants to develop new critical insights. I have some evidence that this study provided many of the participants with such opportunities. Both Lily and Barb specifically requested information about their students' experiences in the observed course—indeed, both noted that their primary reason for participating in the study was to get feedback that would help them improve their teaching. In January 2013, I provided Lily and Barb with reports summarizing their students' responses, and they indicated that they used these reports to make adjustments to their teaching practices the following semester. In Fall 2013, Barb shared an essay with me in which she described our work together as a form of "mentorship" during her first semester at Diné College: this characterization surprised me, but it suggests that our collaboration provided a valued reflective space during her transition to a new teaching context. Lily has used our collaboration to engage more deeply with the professional communities in

rhetoric and writing studies: she has attended multiple conferences in relation to our on-going work together, has sought out disciplinary scholarship with which she was previously unfamiliar, and is now considering further graduate study. For James, our relationship has come at the end of long teaching and scholarly career, and he has remarked that he views participating in this study as a kind of “passing of the torch.” Nonetheless, in our final Fall 2012 interview, James stated that our conversations had led him to think critically about some of his own longstanding teaching practices, laughingly observing that, at his age, that was no small accomplishment. Finally, after a long hiatus following his own graduate work, Patrick has begun writing essays for publication again, something he said was partly due to my encouragement. In short, I believe the work these instructors and I have done together has been intellectually engaging for them as well as for me, and the long-term consequences of this engagement are still unfolding.

During our final interviews in Fall 2012, I asked the students how they thought participating in the study had affected their experiences in their writing course. Several students said they had volunteered because they hoped being in the study would help them learn more, and fifteen of the sixteen said they believed they had benefited from their participation. Eight spoke about the value of having an opportunity to “think,” “talk about,” or “reflect” on what they were learning, and five said they had worked harder, kept better track of their assignments, and/or persisted in the course despite personal challenges in part because they knew they would be speaking with me and showing me their work. I still communicate regularly with most of the student participants, and a few have told me that taking part in this study contributed to their growing interest in reading, writing, public speaking, conducting research, and/or pursuing a more advanced degree than they had originally planned. As David wrote in Spring 2014, after I thanked him for the role he had played in helping me achieve my own goal of becoming a

professor, “I’ve grown into something else from your help and you from my help. We are all interconnected in our lives mission.”<sup>29</sup> Such comments humble me—this is not a responsibility I take lightly—and they bolster my commitment to being a resource for these students, now and in the future.

### *Limitations*

As with all research, this study has limitations. Some of these limitations relate to my own identity, and others are inherent in the study design and methodology. I conclude this chapter by acknowledging these limitations and discussing how I have endeavored to address them.

Researcher identity. One set of limitations in this study relates to my position as an Anglo woman associated with a large research university. Most students knew I was an English teacher and was therefore likely to value reading and writing highly, which may have influenced how they presented their literacy practices and experiences with English instruction. Likewise, some students probably declined to discuss aspects of their personal experiences that they did not want to share with an outsider, or that they assumed I would not understand. Students may have been particularly leery of discussing issues related to Diné heritage knowledge and spiritual practices, either because they had a sense that they were not supposed to talk about these topics or because they felt it was not worth the difficulty to try to explain to me.<sup>30</sup> I often sensed that students were seeking to connect with me over the experiences we did have in common (e.g. family connections to the military, shared acquaintances, and references to popular culture), and some may have avoided topics that would highlight the ways in which we were different. The longitudinal nature of this study helped mitigate this limitation. Because I got to know students and develop rapport through multiple interviews and weekly course observations over a four-

month period, most were relatively comfortable in my presence by the end of the semester and many were willing to speak with what I perceived to be remarkable candor.

My outsider position also had benefits: in our final interviews, several students indicated that they found it helpful to talk about their lives with someone who was not in their family or circle of friends; three described the interviews as being like “therapy.” Other aspects of my identity, like my age and gender, were also helpful in this context. I was thirty at the time of my fieldwork, but people often assumed I was younger. The ambiguity surrounding my age gave me flexibility: most of the younger students seemed comfortable with me; I could relate as an age peer with many of the older students; and faculty connected with me as a colleague and, in James’s case, an emerging professional and mentee. As a woman, I was able to form particularly strong connections with some of the female participants in the study. I became close friends with Barb and Lily, and both Morning Star and Sherry, the two women students closest to my age, openly discussed gendered aspects of their life experiences that I suspect they would have been less inclined to share with a male researcher.<sup>31</sup> In sum, my own identities presented both limitations and affordances in this study, and establishing and maintaining meaningful long-term relationships has been an important way in which I have sought to make the most of the affordances and mitigate the limitations.

Language. Another limitation of this study is my lack of proficiency in Diné bizaad, which is spoken by roughly two-thirds of Diné people living on the Navajo Nation. In the limited time I had for language study in the lead-up to my fieldwork, I studied Diné bizaad using Rosetta Stone software prior, and in Fall 2012, I successfully passed my Navajo 101 course at Diné College. Through this coursework, I learned to recognize clan introductions and other routine communication as the semester progressed. However, I often missed significant portions of what

was being said at trainings and meetings where speakers switched between languages. On those occasions when Lily or Patrick would use Diné phrases or shift to Diné bizaad entirely during course observations, I missed much of what they were communicating to the students. In my fieldnotes, I could only indicate that Diné bizaad was being spoken and note the English words or phrases that were interspersed, along with whatever bits of Diné bizaad I could recognize. If I had come to this project with a better working knowledge of the language, I would have a more complete picture of what was transpiring—rhetorically and pedagogically—in those moments. Fortunately, Lily and Patrick have helped me address this limitation by working with me to reconstruct and understand the Diné bizaad terminology they used on those occasions.

Time. The constraints of my dissertation timeline and the material resources available for this research placed inevitable limitations on the duration of the study. While my preliminary site visits, fieldwork, and follow-up trips have taught me a great deal about Diné College, the student population it serves, and the Navajo Nation more broadly, my time in the community has been brief compared to many of the non-Native faculty who teach in this setting, much less the Diné faculty who have been part of the community in various ways for their entire lives. My familiarity with Diné history, heritage knowledge, and the range of spiritual practices on the Navajo Nation has been limited by the timeframe of this study, as has my understanding contemporary Diné social, economic, and political issues. If I had been able to spend more time in this setting, I might have been able to gain a deeper understanding of the institutional culture of Diné College, as well as the communities in which it is situated. A more extended fieldwork experience would also have given me more time to improve my comprehension of Diné bizaad.

While it is always possible to know more about a context, I have taken several steps to maximize what I could learn in the amount of time I had for this study. First, I gathered as large a

dataset as I could reasonably analyze in order to gain a wide array of perspectives and experiences. Second, the teaching and coursework I undertook at Diné College enabled me to learn much more about this local context in four and a half months than interviews and observations alone could have. Third, I have returned to the Navajo Nation as frequently as possible since Fall 2012—at least once every four months—and I have maintained many relationships, often facilitated by social media, that allow me to keep up events and issues on the Navajo Nation. Finally, over the last three and half years, I have read a range of academic, journalistic, and literary works by Diné authors that have provided me with additional insights into the local context from a variety of viewpoints. Ultimately, the limitations of my contextual knowledge may be counterbalanced by my disciplinary expertise, which enables me to offer a distinct and, I hope, useful perspective on the composition pedagogies I have observed at Diné College.

Selection bias. Another limitation of this study springs from my recruitment methods: the faculty and students who volunteered were probably more inclined than the norm to become involved in research about writing, an inclination that could be associated other traits or orientations. The instructors were willing to share their materials and allow me into their classrooms, suggesting a level of confidence and openness to academic research that might not characterize the faculty as a whole. And the students, whether because of temperament, life experience, or some combination of both, may have been more open to talking to a bilagáana stranger than a random sample of Diné College students would have been. Likewise, the students who signed up may have been more interested in or confident about reading and writing, and/or more engaged or motivated as students, than the norm. Therefore, I cannot claim that the processes, practices, and perspectives I describe in this dissertation are representative of the

entire Diné College faculty or student body. Rather, this study offers an in-depth examination of some of the range of these processes, practices, and perspectives for the subset of students and faculty who volunteered to participate. These participants were generally enthusiastic about their involvement and may have been more candid about their experiences than a random sample would have been.

Outcomes. Finally, it is important to note that these pedagogical investigations were not linked to any direct measures of student learning or longer-term academic success. The students in the study spoke at length about their own self-assessed learning and growth as writers, and, as I discuss in Chapter Three, faculty repeatedly detailed indicators of instructional effectiveness that they were using to gauge their own success as teachers. I also tracked which students in the study passed their Fall 2012 writing course, as well as which students have persisted at Diné College and/or transferred to another institution over the last year and a half. However, my conversations with students and faculty suggest that these figures primarily reflect instructors' assessment criteria and late work policies, as well as the personal and socioeconomic challenges that have disrupted students' schooling: they are certainly not a direct measure of students' learning or academic abilities. Therefore, I do not (and never intended to) make claims about the relationship between the kinds of local pedagogical responsiveness I document here and student learning outcomes. Instead, I offer an examination of instructors' pedagogical reasoning—including the evidence *they* used to assess the effects of their practices in this setting—and put these observations in conversation with what *students* said they valued and found motivating. In order to determine the relationships between locally responsive pedagogies and student learning, we first need to understand what locally responsive pedagogies are (and, perhaps, what they could be): this dissertation offers a first step toward that larger project.

## Chapter Three

### “What I Bring”: Diné College Faculty as Local Knowledge Makers

*It's evening, a quarter past seven, and most of the students have found their places around the rectangle of tables. I sit in my usual spot at one of table corners, laptop open in front of me, poised to take notes. Last week, the English 101 students read Luci Tapahonso's "Leda and the Cowboy" (Appendix F) and wrote short answers to a series of open-ended questions about the poem; several leaf through the photocopied handouts in their binders as they wait for class to start. James is seated at the head of the table, gray head bent over his notes. He looks up at the students over the top of his reading glasses and smiles.*

*"Before we get to the questions," James says, "I want to share some previous responses from other classes for number three. What is meant by 'the raw music that was her life'? Some students said she's had a rough life. Some said she didn't like people who drank. Some said the Cowboy didn't know her. And some said it was the music you can barely hear from outside."*

*"I wrote something like the third one," says Johnny.*

*James nods. "That's a good response." He looks around at the rest of the class. "Can you think of any country-western songs that you like? Judy, can you think of an old classic country-western music song?"*

*"I don't listen to country," she says.*

*He smiles. "Well, that blows that approach." A few students laugh. "Stephanie, what about you? Do you listen to country music?"*

*“Only my parents do,” she responds.*

*“I like ‘Picture to Burn’ by Taylor Swift,” offers Sherry.*

*James nods. “I like that old song with the line, ‘You can hug the bottle, but you can’t hug me no more.’” At the students’ blank looks, James asks, “Do you all know ‘Help Me Make It through the Night?’” Silence. “‘Bobby McGee?’” When no one responds, he says, “No one knows ‘Bobby McGee.’ I can’t believe you’re so uncultured.” The students laugh.*

*James leans forward. “Well, anyway, in the poem, they meet in a country music bar. Maybe they have a hard life. Maybe they’re sad. Who knows? You have to read Luci Tapahonso the same way I read a student paper, thinking, what is it she could possibly mean when she writes this?”*

*He turns to Jessica, who is seated to his right. “Did you have a kinaaldá?” he asks.<sup>32</sup>*

*Jessica nods.*

*“Were there guitars or violins at your kinaaldá?”*

*“No,” she laughs.*

*“There was no musical accompaniment at all,” James says. “Could that be raw music?”*

*Jessica nods.*

*James rereads the last stanza of the poem. After a pause, he says, “There’s ‘raw music’ and there’s ‘stark beauty’ in the old stories. In the stories leading up to kinaaldá, when Changing Woman agrees to live with the Sun, and she goes west, and on the way, the Holy People change her body. Could that be what Luci is talking about?” He turns to Stephanie. “Have you been to an NAC ceremony?”<sup>33</sup>*

*“Yes,” she says.*

*“In a peyote ceremony, there are drums. Could that be raw music?”*

*Stephanie nods.*

*“What I’m driving at,” say James, “is that, yes, the poem is confusing, and I’m very sympathetic to that, but you’ve got to look at the words. One of the themes we’re dealing with in this class is that thinking and remembering are almost the same.”*

*James begins to list lines from old songs. “Take that ribbon from your hair.’ ‘Stand by your man.’ ‘Kiss an angel in the morning.’ ‘Go ’way from my window.’” It’s all music from the 1960s, when he was a young professor teaching baby boomers back east. The students show no signs of recognition. “Maybe you don’t know those songs,” he says. “Anyway, as you’re reading, don’t be too quick to say you’re confused. Or if you are, don’t stop when you’re confused.”*

*Johnny says, “That was the last question I answered. That was the last one I worked on, and then I got tired of thinking about it. It drives me nuts when I’m trying to think about something and can’t make sense of it.”*

*James chuckles. “Well, Johnny, you’ll just have to get over it!” He looks around the table at the rest of the class. “Now, I’ve talked to Luci about this poem. I asked her why it was so confusing. At first, I thought the Cowboy had made Leda pregnant and then left her.”*

*“Da-ang!” Johnny drawls, and the whole class laughs.*

*James smiles and continues. “I had a hunch the first time I read the poem that he made her pregnant and left her. Where did I get that hunch? I can point to the line—it’s at the very end, when she says, ‘he has already left his own life behind.’ Is there logic to that?” he asks Judy.*

*“I guess,” she says. “But that’s not the way I see it.”*

*“Right!” he exclaims. “There’s ambiguity! Things can have double meanings. As long as you can defend your interpretation.”*

*James moves on to discuss another Tapahonso poem he had assigned the students to read.*

*Eventually, James begins talking about how they might come up with ideas for short essays. On the whiteboard, he writes:*

*Luci Tapahonso's poem "Leda and the Cowboy" confuses me.*

*James asks the students, "What do you find confusing?" When no one volunteers a response, he writes up on the board:*

1. She uses a few confusing words
2. It's not clear what happens
3. I don't know much about the "Q Bar"

*"This would be a perfectly legitimate essay to write," James says. He looks over at Johnny. "But being tired notwithstanding, you have to think about specific reasons why you were confused. In the process of thinking, you have to remember. Break it down. Begin your essay by summarizing what you want to tell the reader. In reaching your conclusion, think, 'How do I know? What makes me think so?' Be willing to share your reasoning. This is what you do when you're writing. You're sharing your reasoning. Reasoning can mean, among other things, speculating. You can consider the possibility that Leda and Cowboy have complicated lives, or that Luci sees a similarity between Leda's situation here—and this is going from checkers to chess—and a poem by Yeats about another woman named Leda that Luci said this Leda resembles."*

*James leans back to his seat. "If you go to page 18, you'll see another poem. Get ready for some confusion. Here's that poem that Luci was thinking about, by a poet named William Butler Yeats. It used to be famous. In reproducing this poem, I included a gloss, or a footnote, providing some background. It's a lot of information that I think is useful or interesting. It explains that Leda was the wife of the King of Sparta."*

*James pauses and looks around at the group, his eyes stopping on Sherry. "Sherry," he says, "what do you know about Helen of Troy?"*

*Sherry says she doesn't know anything, but then Judy volunteers, "She was very beautiful. She was fought over."*

*Johnny adds, "She ran off with the Prince of Troy. I watched that movie over and over."*

*James says, "Good! You're using your memory! If I was writing a movie, I'd write about a guy who drives into Crownpoint in a Ferrari with the top down.<sup>34</sup> Then he sees this cutie in a pasture."*

*"A married cutie," Johnny interjects, and everyone laughs, including James.*

*"So he stops and asks her for directions to Becenti,"<sup>35</sup> James continues, "and then whisks her off! Then her father and brothers go off to look for her."*

*The students listen intently.*

*"Helen was born in an egg," says James. "Her father was Zeus. Sherry, do you know who Zeus was?"*

*Sherry says yes.*

*"Zeus was mean, and determined," says James. "He could change himself into any shape he chose when he was attracted to a beautiful mortal." James looks down at his copy of "Leda and the Swan" (Appendix F) and reads the poem aloud.*

*"Being so caught up/So mastered by the brute blood of the air/Did she put on his knowledge with his power/Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?" James lets the last lines of the poem hang in the air for a long moment before he says, "You get a picture in your mind of a swan descending on a beautiful, innocent woman. He's going to make her pregnant. When Luci talks about this poem, she talks about how powerless and innocent Leda is in the face*

*of the Swan. If you look at the part where the Cowboy comes up to kiss Leda, maybe it's similar. She tries to push him away. Zeus sees an attractive woman, disguises himself as a Swan, pounces on her and rapes her. Helen of Troy is born, and this endless war begins. A single rape by a powerful male on a helpless female starts a long, long war.*

*"What Luci said about this poem, she says, 'As a Navajo woman, I don't like images of the helpless female. Navajo women are strong.' She decided she was going to write a companion poem to 'Leda and the Swan' in which it's not the male who takes control, but the woman. In light of that, let's read the poem again, and see now if maybe, just maybe—I say this tentatively—it makes more sense. Let's read it one more time."*

*James reads "Leda and the Cowboy" aloud. Again, he lets the final lines hang for a moment: "East of here, above the dry fields of the Hoohookamki/the stars are sparse, and as he follows Leda through/the stark beauty of the old stories/he has already left his own life behind."*

*After a long pause, James says, "'The night sky was darker.' A swan comes from the sky. Eye contact in a bar." He looks at each of the students over his reading glasses, and his gaze finally settles on Jessica.*

*"Now, Jessica," James says. "I know you're never going to go into a bar. But if you do?" He waits a beat. "Don't make eye contact."*

*Jessica laughs.*

*"You don't make eye contact, right, Johnny?"*

*"I wouldn't know," Johnny responds, feigning innocence, eyes smiling.*

*"Well, I know from personal experience," says James. "I'm sharing details from my sordid past." The class laughs.*

*"So this line," James resumes, "'the raw music she lived.' It could be country-western. It*

*could be a hard life. It could be music from kinaaldá. Whatever it is, it's something that draws him to her. There's a second meeting. Maybe he went to the rodeo. He can't get her out of his mind, and he comes back. That part still confuses me. Do you think he's going to give up the cowboy life?"*

*Sherry says, "Yes."*

*James nods. "Because he found something better. A strong Navajo woman."*

*There's a moment of quiet as the class ponders this statement. Then Johnny exclaims, "It's scary, man!" Everyone laughs.*

*"Are you a bachelor?" James asks Johnny.*

*"Yeah," he says.*

*"Then you shouldn't make eye contact when you go into the Q Bar."*

*The class laughs again, and James tells them they can take their break. When they come back, they begin working individually on a series of short-answer questions about the week's reading.*

*Later, as the class is wrapping up for the evening, James returns to Tapahonso's poem. "You've got to do what Leda did in the Q Bar," he tells the class. "She sees this cowboy, and for some inexplicable reason, she makes eye contact with him. And, lo and behold, she's got a husband, a good one who put rodeo behind him—although there's a student here whose husband has been doing rodeo for years, so I don't want to be too hard on cowboys. Make eye contact with the poem. Ask questions. Ask yourself questions. You don't necessarily need me to ask them. See if your mind doesn't get busy in ways it otherwise wouldn't. See if you can't reach conclusions that you otherwise wouldn't."*

*James gazes around the room one more time, and then sends the students off into the*

*evening.*

James's discussion of "Leda and the Cowboy" illustrates the complex intellectual work of enacting locally responsive pedagogy. The lesson highlights several *dimensions of instruction* that can be adapted to the local context: the readings James introduces, the content and interpersonal dynamics of the class conversation, and his writing assignments are all locally responsive. Furthermore, the lesson responds to multiple *dimensions of the local*. These dimensions include the characteristics of the *students* in his class—for example, their Diné identities, their knowledge of regional rodeo culture, and their familiarity with the communities in which James sets his reimagined abduction of Helen of Troy. He also responds to Diné College's *institutional* mission to further student learning through the study of Diné history and culture, first by assigning a text written by Diné poet Luci Tapahonso, and then by invoking the story of Asdzáqá Nádleehé, or Changing Woman. Finally, by discussing Tapahonso's poem as an intertextual engagement with Yeats' "Leda and the Swan," James is responding to several of the *communities* in which Diné College is situated: the Diné community from which Leda comes; the wider community of Arizona, with its cowboys and country-western bars; and the global community, broadly conceived, whose literary heritage encompasses the ancient Greek poet Homer, the early twentieth-century Irish writer Yeats, and contemporary Indigenous authors like Tapahonso. The result of these pedagogical adaptations is a lesson about reading, writing, and critical thinking that is unlikely to have taken place in any other locale.

This lesson also demonstrates the highly individualized ways in which Diné College faculty *interwove* personal, disciplinary, and professional knowledge and experiences with their understanding of the local context. James turned eighty years old in Fall 2012. The son of working-class Jewish immigrants who fled the pogroms of Eastern Europe to settle in western

Pennsylvania, James spent his early adulthood “carousing through coal-mining country”—this, he later confirmed, is the “sordid past” to which he jokingly refers—before he was drafted into the Korean War, subsequently attended college on the GI Bill, and went on to make his career as an English professor at an East Coast liberal arts college. James’s class and ethnic background were important influences on his pedagogy: the study of literature had been central to his own mid-century socioeconomic and cultural mobility, and he was committed to familiarizing *all* students with canonical works by figures like Homer and Yeats. Throughout his career, however, James also retained a strong working-class identity, and he maintained an appreciation for the stories and perspectives of people from marginalized backgrounds. These commitments undergirded his interest in Native American literature—both oral traditions like the story of Changing Woman and written works by authors like Tapahonso—as well as the value he placed on inviting students to write about their own life experiences and family histories. As his celebration of the “strong Navajo woman” of Tapahonso’s poem hints, James believed his students needed to develop a positive sense of Diné identity rooted in their heritage, and he saw his English composition classroom as an important site for fostering such identities.

James’s pedagogy was also informed by his academic training and lifetime of professional experience as a teacher and scholar. Because of his many years of researching and teaching literature, James valued literary interpretation as a basis for teaching analytic reading, writing, and critical thinking. His academic and professional engagement with composition theory, on the other hand, reflected his particular generational experience in English studies. James’s graduate preparation predated the emergence of rhetoric and composition as an academic discipline, and while he had attended a few composition conferences and was friendly with some of the field’s key figures in the 1980s, his writing pedagogy was more directly

influenced by theoretical linguistics—particularly Noam Chomsky’s transformational-generative grammar—than by process or postprocess theoretical developments in composition. This trajectory led James to favor assignments like the “short essay” he outlines for students in his lesson on Leda. Expressing his specific disagreement with compositionist David Bartholomae’s focus on teaching first-year students to grapple with academic discourse (see Bartholomae; Bartholomae and Petrosky), James told me, “I don’t think [students] are ready yet. I place a lot of emphasis on sentences and paragraphs and short essays.”

In his Diné College writing classes, James interwove these personal, disciplinary, and professional insights with a deep knowledge of local context. James was widely read in Native American literature and personally acquainted with many Diné authors, including Tapahonso, a resource he readily drew on in class discussions. James was a well-known scholar of Diné Baháné, the Diné Emergence Story: as his discussion of kinaaldá and the story of Changing Woman shows, James readily brought this familiarity with traditional Diné knowledge and spiritual practices into the writing classroom, as well. James’s wife was an anthropologist in the community where he was teaching, and he had done extensive interview-based research with traditional Diné weavers in New Mexico. Through this work, the couple had longstanding friendships with many Diné families in the area, and the students in James’s class were often related in one way or another to people he had known for years. James had a remarkable ability to keep track of these connections, and regularly invoked them in class discussions. James drew on his two decades of teaching experience at Diné College, integrating insights from previous students’ essays and his knowledge of their family lives into class discussion. He facilitated these conversations with the kind of teasing and good-humored self-deprecation that he believed helped him build warm relationships with his Diné students. The result of James’s interweaving

of these different kinds of knowledge was a distinctive locally responsive composition pedagogy, one that, as I will discuss, was unlikely to be developed by any other instructor.

Each of the four faculty in this study brought a unique body of knowledge and experience to Diné College, and each had a different basis and vantage point for understanding the local context. As a result, they each developed their own locally responsive approaches to teaching composition in this setting. That pedagogical diversity is the subject of this chapter. Before I examine the various influences that contributed to these instructors' teaching, however, I define *locally responsive pedagogy* as I have come to theorize it through my engagement with the scholarly literature and my observations and experiences at Diné College.

### *Defining “Locally Responsive Pedagogy”*

In *Rhetoric at the Margins*, David Gold defines *locally responsive pedagogy* as teaching approaches that “t[ake] into account the needs and desires of diverse communities” (*Rhetoric* 153). Gold develops this concept through archival research into the practices of rhetoric faculty at three Texas institutions—a Black liberal arts college, a public women’s college, and a working-class teacher training school—in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He coins the term locally responsive pedagogy to valorize the work of faculty teaching in non-elite settings during this period, countering disciplinary narratives that locate pedagogical innovation primarily in elite institutional spaces. Gold also challenges the assumption that, prior to the emergence of composition studies as an academic field, rhetorical pedagogies were inherently uncritical or oppressive. As Gold describes in rich detail, rhetoric teachers at the turn of the twentieth century

introduced politics and discourses of power into the classroom; encouraged both self-expression and participation in public discourse; took great personal interest in students’

emotional, academic, and social development; and tried to develop dynamic, useful, locally responsive classroom methods and materials. (*Rhetoric 4*)

Although the Diné College instructors who participated in my study were teaching more than a century after the faculty in Gold's, they could be described in strikingly similar terms. I seek to build on Gold's historiographical foundation to posit a theorization of twenty-first century locally responsive pedagogies, one grounded in ethnographic research at a “non-elite” institution whose mission demands local responsiveness.

To define locally responsive pedagogy for contemporary composition classrooms, we might begin by examining the term’s constituent parts. I examine the concept of “the local” at length in Chapter One, but what about “pedagogy”? The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines pedagogy as “the art, occupation, or practice of teaching. Also: the theory or principles of education; a method of teaching based on such a theory.” The term pedagogy, then, includes the practice of teaching—what the teacher actually *does*—as well as the theory and principles informing that practice. As Shari Stenberg and Amy Lee put it, “theory and practice necessarily function in interplay, and pedagogy encompasses both” (328). In the case of composition instruction, teachers’ practices are informed by their theories of language, rhetoric, literacy, and learning, as well as by their professional, political, and/or spiritual principles. The theories writing teachers hold may be explicit or implicit, consistent or contradictory, but they inevitably have political implications: as James Berlin has taught us, rhetoric is “always already ideological” (477). Tracing the various theories and principles faculty brought to their Diné College teaching helps explain why this distinctive context elicited not one locally responsive pedagogy shared by all instructors, but rather an array of locally responsive pedagogies, none of which were politically neutral.

With these definitions of “local” and “pedagogy” in place, what do we mean by “responsive”? The culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) literature offers helpful a starting point. Gay asserts that culturally responsive teaching applies six principles (be validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory) along four “foundational pillars of practice”: teacher attitudes and expectations, classroom communication, curricular content, and instructional strategies (46). In Gay’s formulation, being responsive means adapting each of these four categories of practice to students’ home cultures, and the nature of those adaptations is informed by the six principles of CRP. From the postsecondary disciplinary perspective of rhetoric and composition, however, Gay’s “pillars” seem both vague and overlapping—it is, for example, conceptually difficult to separate “communication” from curriculum *or* instruction in a writing class. Thus, rather than adopting Gay’s four pillars of practice, I have taken a grounded theoretical approach. Based on my analysis of instructor interviews, observation fieldnotes, and course documents, I identify six *dimensions of writing instruction* that Diné College composition faculty adapted to their local context (see Table 10; Appendix G).

Not all faculty adapted their teaching along all of these dimensions, and the nature of their responses varied based on the theories and principles they brought to their teaching. Taken together, however, these dimensions suggest the range of pedagogical practices that can be made locally responsive in Diné College composition classrooms. As I discuss below, such responsiveness is not a one-time adaptation or a codified curriculum. Rather, it is an on-going process by which faculty continuously attempt practices that they then choose to adopt, adjust, or abandon based on their classroom experiences in a locale that is continuously changing.

Table 10: Dimensions of Instruction

Dimension	Components
Course materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assigned readings</li> <li>• handouts/supplementary materials</li> <li>• online resources</li> </ul>
Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• writing assignments/projects</li> <li>• other assignments/exercises</li> </ul>
In-class activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lectures</li> <li>• full-class discussions</li> <li>• individual tasks</li> <li>• group work/presentations</li> <li>• guest speakers</li> <li>• fieldtrips</li> </ul>
Individual communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in-class conversations</li> <li>• before/after class conversations</li> <li>• conferences/office hour meetings</li> <li>• informal conversations on campus/in the community</li> <li>• phone/email communication</li> </ul>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• formative: oral and written feedback from peers/instructor</li> <li>• summative: summative comments, rubric evaluations, assignment grades, quizzes/exams, portfolio reviews</li> </ul>
Course policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attendance/tardiness policies</li> <li>• late work policies</li> <li>• assignment submission guidelines</li> <li>• technology requirements</li> </ul>

Taken together, then, my readings of the scholarly literature and my analysis of the study data lead me to define *locally responsive pedagogy* as follows:

Locally responsive pedagogy is teaching adapted to a specific institution, the student populations it serves, and the communities of varying scale in which the institution is situated. Local responsiveness can manifest across multiple dimensions of instruction and emerges from an ongoing process by which instructors interweave personal, disciplinary, and professional knowledge and experience with their evolving understanding of the local teaching context, which is itself always in flux. Because all locations are situated within structures of power, and all rhetorics are ideological, locally responsive

composition pedagogy responds, directly or indirectly, to local instantiations of broader social, economic, and political forces.

To clarify this last point, not all forms of local pedagogical responsiveness are inherently or explicitly “critical,” in the sense that critical pedagogues and CRP theorists use the term.

However, both my research and my teaching at Diné College lead me to conclude that locally responsive composition pedagogy can, sometimes does, and in my view *should* support student, institutional, and community/tribal-national goals while maintaining an overtly critical perspective on the structures of inequality and dispossession that give rise to many of the challenges those communities face.

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to understanding the Diné College composition instructors in this study: their professional profiles as two-year English faculty; their unique personal, academic, and professional paths to teaching writing at Diné College; how those paths shaped the locally responsive pedagogies they enacted in this distinctive local context; and the processes by which they developed those pedagogies over time. In tracing these instructors’ pedagogical influences, I am not necessarily endorsing their specific approaches—in fact, readers who are grounded in composition studies might well question some of these instructors’ theories, principles, and practices. There is, however, a richness to their transdisciplinary interweaving of local and global knowledge that offers insight to a field increasingly attentive to the locations of composition pedagogy. We stand to learn much from this process.

### *“That’s What I Bring”*

Over the last two decades, two-year college English faculty have begun asserting their unique professional identities as teacher-scholars who are making pedagogical knowledge in their classrooms (Andelora). As Jeff Sommers writes,

Because two-year faculty teach so much and so often, we are, in effect, in a working laboratory, one offering many rich opportunities for study...Two-year campus English faculty are already immersed in the work that produces a scholarship of teaching. (21–24)

Howard Tinberg argues that writing teachers at two-year colleges should embrace the “messy and impure mélange” (“Seeing Ourselves” 15) of their scholarly lives and pursue the kinds of local knowledge that they are uniquely situated to develop in their institutional contexts (“Model”). Whether or not they consider teaching to be a form of scholarship (see Toth, Griffiths, and Thirolf), and whether or not they seek to present at conferences or to publish, two-year college faculty *are* making local knowledge: they are engaged in an on-going process of developing locally responsive pedagogies that meet the ever-evolving needs of their students, institutions, and communities.

These locally responsive pedagogies may, however, be less closely tied to knowledge-making in the field of rhetoric and composition than colleagues at four-year institutions would assume. As Mark Reynolds (“Knowledge-Makers”) and Carolyn Calhoon-Dillahunt have noted, two-year college English faculty come from a range of disciplinary backgrounds, both within and beyond English studies. This disciplinary diversity reflects the hiring criteria at many two-year colleges, where the required credential is often a master’s degree in any area of English studies or a related field. It is also a function of the “expert generalist” teaching role that many two-year college English faculty assume (M. Reynolds, “Twenty-Five” 233): composition typically makes

up the bulk of these instructors' teaching load, but they are also likely to teach a range of additional courses, including developmental reading or writing, literature, creative writing, journalism, film, and general humanities (Nist and Raines). Because two-year college faculty are not usually expected to conduct research or publish, and many institutions offer little reward for participation in disciplinary professional organizations, the extent to which instructors maintain active connections to any academic discipline can vary widely (Townsend and Twombly; Twombly; Toth). Furthermore, two-year college English faculty who participate in professional organizations often do so across multiple disciplines related to their teaching and administrative roles (see Toth, Griffiths, and Thirolf; Toth). This transdisciplinarity, which differs from the narrow disciplinary norms among faculty in many university settings, diversifies the range of theories and principles two-year college instructors bring to their pedagogy.

As a subset of two-year college faculty, TCU instructors share much with their colleagues at other community colleges, but they also have distinguishing characteristics. Although TCUs stress that teaching qualifications are their most important concern when recruiting faculty (Voorhees), they typically prefer to hire Native instructors—especially tribal members—whenever possible.<sup>36</sup> As of 2007, 53% of TCU faculty nationwide were Native, although this percentage is probably lower in many of the liberal arts and science disciplines (*AIHEC Fact Book* 146). According to surveys, TCU instructors are more likely than other community colleges faculty to be new or first-time faculty, less likely to have a master's or doctoral degree, and more likely to be drawn to teaching at TCUs for altruistic reasons (Voorhees). These differences are important, given the extent to which personal, academic, and professional backgrounds shaped the locally responsive pedagogies of the Diné College faculty in this study.

Work conditions at TCUs also differ in key ways from those at other community colleges. In surveys, TCU instructors were more content with their workload, their time to keep current in the field, and the quality of the students at their institutions. However, they also earned roughly \$10,000 less per year than their counterparts at other two-year colleges and were more likely to say they would accept full-time work at another institution or outside of postsecondary education altogether (Voorhees). These findings reflect the long-standing struggles many TCUs face in retaining faculty, a challenge that Diné College also shares. While several of its English faculty have been at the college for decades, it is also common for new instructors to leave after just a year or two: long-time members of the Diné College community attribute this retention problem to the college's remote rural location and, in some cases, to institutional politics. This reality has implications for the development of locally responsive pedagogy, which, as I discuss below, requires time and experience in the local setting.

As Table 11 suggests, the paths that the four faculty participants in this study took to teaching writing at Diné College were diverse. Patrick and Lily were both Diné, albeit from opposite sides of the Navajo Nation. Both were first-language speakers of Diné bizaad, had learned English in residential elementary schools run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and were among the first generation of their families to attend college. Patrick studied visual arts in the 1970s, first as an undergraduate at a public university in the Southwest, where he was profoundly influenced by the Red Power movement, and then as a graduate student at a public university in the Midwest. After completing his Master's in Fine Arts, Patrick returned to the Navajo Nation, where he secured a position as an art instructor at Navajo Community College. He taught art for several years, during which time he completed most of the coursework for a PhD in philosophy, but when the college tapped him for an administrative position, he switched

over to a doctoral program in educational leadership. Patrick worked in various administrative capacities at the college until the early 2000s, when he decided to return to teaching, this time in the Humanities division. By Fall 2012, Patrick's primary course load was in philosophy and general humanities, but he took on additional sections of English 102 as an adjunct instructor.

Compared to Patrick, Lily was relatively new to Diné College and had taken a less direct path to her teaching career. After spending her elementary and middle school years at a BIA school on the Hopi reservation, she completed most of high school in Utah, where she participated in a Mormon homestay program—not an uncommon experience for Diné students of her generation who wanted access to a college preparatory curriculum. Although her first attempt at postsecondary education was unsuccessful, she enrolled at a community college after she became a single mother, then went on to a public liberal arts college in the Southwest, where she majored in English literature and completed extensive coursework in Native American Studies. After graduating, Lily worked as a consultant on multicultural issues for radio station and then as an editor at a bordertown publishing house specializing in Native American titles. Eventually, she decided she wanted to return to the Navajo Nation, and she began working on and near the reservation as a substitute teacher. After taking several online education courses, she enrolled as a full-time graduate student at a bordertown university, where she completed a master's degree in English with additional coursework in bilingual/bicultural education. She was hired at Diné College as a specialist in developmental reading and writing—a teaching role about which she was passionate—but she also regularly taught English 101 and Native American literature.

Both James and Barb were Anglo. James, as I have described, had many years of experience researching and teaching on the Navajo Nation, but Barb was in her first semester at Diné College in Fall 2012. She was born into a working-class family in the urban Midwest, and

her early educational experiences were shaped by the 1960s-era gender expectations in her community: as she put it, “I thought I was supposed to get married and start cranking out babies.” After high school, Barb spent two years studying horticulture at a land grant university, but she left before graduating to get married and help her husband run their farm. Over time, he became controlling and abusive, and in her early thirties Barb returned to college, seeking to become financially independent so she could remove herself and her two young children from an increasingly dangerous situation. She earned a bachelor’s degree in English with a minor in journalism and spent the next ten years of her life as a reporter and editor for three Midwestern newspapers, a career that enabled her to leave her husband. She then spent another decade working in marketing communications and public relations. Barb was in her fifties when she moved to a bordertown near the Navajo Nation, in the mid-2000s, to earn a master’s degree in English with an emphasis in creative writing. She taught her first composition courses at that university as a graduate teaching assistant (TA), then went on to teach writing at several other institutions, including a Hispanic-serving community college in Texas and a bordertown community college with a large Diné student population. In Fall 2012, Barb was teaching several sections of developmental writing, as well as English 101 and a Southwestern literature course.

Table 11: Demographic Overview of Faculty Participants

Instructor	Gender	Ethnicity	Age	Graduate Preparation	Years at DC
Barb	Female	Anglo	Early 60s	MA, English (concentration in Creative Writing)	< 1
Lily	Female	Diné	Mid 40s	MA, English (concentration in English Education) Coursework in Bilingual/ Bicultural Education	4
James	Male	Anglo (Jewish)	Late 70s	PhD, English Literature	22
Patrick	Male	Diné	Late 50s	MFA, Visual Arts Coursework in Philosophy EdD, Educational Leadership	30

In the rest of this section, I examine the theories and principles these faculty brought to their composition pedagogy at Diné College, which came from four sources: their personal backgrounds, their disciplinary knowledge, their professional backgrounds, and their evolving understanding of the local context. These four categories inevitably overlap. Instructors' personal backgrounds often shaped their disciplinary interests, their disciplinary and professional experiences were frequently intertwined, and personal, disciplinary, and professional perspectives all contributed to how they understood the local context. Likewise, instructors' experiences at Diné College sometimes provided access to new forms of disciplinary knowledge. Thus, while I am distinguishing these categories for analytical purposes, they should be understood as interrelated and mutually informative. Each instructor interwove these knowledges to develop the distinctive fabric of their locally responsive pedagogical practices.

Personal background. Instructors' personal backgrounds and experiences were an important influence on their pedagogies, particularly as these backgrounds shaped their understandings of Diné College students' lives and informed the political commitments that motivated their teaching. These backgrounds included social identities such as class. All four

instructors grew up in low-income or working-class households and had been among the first generation of their families to go to college; they all knew what it meant to live with persistent financial uncertainty. Over the course of the semester, each of these faculty mentioned experiences related to socioeconomic difficulties during class discussions, thereby communicating their understanding and sense of common experience with the challenges that many of their Diné College students faced.

As I describe at the outset of this chapter, James's class background directly informed his commitment to helping his students develop positive Diné identities. As he said in one interview, "My own working-class identity, even though it's so far behind me, is really strong for me, you know? And maybe this is why I think their identity should really matter." From James's perspective, identity issues were at the heart of many of the social problems on the Navajo Nation, and he believed that all young people, Diné and otherwise, benefitted from a firm grounding in their cultural heritage. As he said,

It's a sense of identity. This is what I was constantly harping to my [liberal arts college] students about. I used to argue with younger colleagues or people in other disciplines, that really knowing your tradition, having this identity, gives you strength... I would say, "If you want to know who you is, you got to know who you was." I want students to understand, at least bring a part of the cultural past with them, as they continue learning.

James readily acknowledged that his concerns about maintaining cultural memory were related to his own advanced age and his ambivalence about the rapid social and economic changes unfolding on the Navajo Nation and across US society more broadly. These age-related perspectives contributed to his belief that required composition courses offered an important opportunity to pass along heritage knowledge to the next generation. James took advantage of

this opportunity by assigning readings in his English 101 course that perpetuated both the local and global “cultural past.” Such readings included passages from Diné Baháné, a translation of a traditional Tewa song, and oral histories from Diné and Tohono O’odham elders, as well as poems by canonical authors like William Shakespeare, John Milton, Henry Longfellow, Walt Whitman, Thomas Hardy, and Yeats.

As might be expected, faculty’s tribal backgrounds also influenced their pedagogical approaches. For Patrick and Lily, their Diné identities were a point of connection and common experience with their students that they drew on theoretically and rhetorically. Lily’s own educational experiences, for example, had given her a strong sense of the tensions Diné students might face between their home lives and the ways they were being asked to think, speak, and behave at college.<sup>37</sup> In class, she often relayed stories from her own life in order to normalize this experience. On the first day of English 100B, for example, she told her students the following story:

I have lots of conflict with my mother about who I am. Many of you have moms, aunties, who say you can’t do anything until you do work, cooking and cleaning. When I was a teen, I liked reading novels, and one day I was reading rather than having cleaned up the table. My mom says, [*speaks in Diné bizaad, and then translates into English*] “Who is this young girl? Why is she always reading?” And then she threw my book in the stove! I was devastated. My mom comes from a different background. She’s illiterate, but she knows about Navajo culture.

Even as Lily described what was clearly a difficult moment in her relationship with her mother, a conflict that sprang directly from the literacy practices Lily had acquired through schooling,<sup>38</sup> she was also at pains to validate the important knowledge that her mother held, refusing to

equate illiteracy in English with general ignorance. Based on her own experiences, Lily believed it was important to support students' growth as academic readers and writers while also cultivating an appreciation for their parents' and grandparents' out-of-school knowledges.

Lily also drew on her personal experiences to encourage students to persist in their education and to impart strategies that would help them negotiate some of the possible divides between home and school. She described this pedagogical approach in one of our interviews:

I tell them, "You can be a great writer. You can be a great reader. All it takes is you, because look at me!...I'm just from [a small reservation community], just like you. Mom and Dad spoke to me in Navajo. Even when I go home right now, they get after me. They have to speak Navajo to me, and I have to kind of adjust and be part of that." I said, "But you just have to learn to do that transition. You have this academic language—you get into that. Then, when you leave a classroom, you're back to you, yourself. It's just—you just play that world."...In a way, I do storytelling as a way to infuse and embed it when I teach. I think I use myself to get at, "I was there, like you, and I'm here. It's achievable, obtainable."

Lily used these stories to model "playing that world" for her students. Even as she acknowledged the anxieties of moving between home and academic languages, however, Lily made it clear to students that it was the support of her family that made her education possible, particularly after she returned to college as a single mother. As she told her students, "My parents invested in me. Some of you will need to ask your families to help you. Navajo families are very understanding." In this way, Lily encouraged students to draw on the resources of their social networks, rather than pitting family and schooling against one another.

Faculty's language backgrounds also influenced their pedagogical practices. As I discuss in Chapter Five, James, Lily, and Patrick all routinely integrated Diné words and phrases into class discussions, and Lily and Patrick would occasionally switch over into Diné bizaad entirely: the language was a resource they drew on for additional insights into the issues under discussion, and in some cases served as a basis for linguistic comparison with Edited American English (EAE). Instructors' language backgrounds also informed their perspectives on literacy instruction. Lily, in particular, had vivid memories of being an English language learner in school:

Within that schooling, my boarding school elementary years, all my teachers were non-Native, and so grammar was pounded. I mean, I had to learn grammar. I think to me, when people ask me about my elementary, I think I went to a "grammar school" *really*...I was drilled with grammar sheets, drilled, drilled, drilled. I mean, adjective, pronoun, adverb—I was like bombarded...English was not [initially] my major just because I think of it as grammar only. Then I went back to college and I discovered English is more than grammar.

Because of her own K-12 schooling, Lily was committed to helping her students experience writing as meaningful social action rather than rote grammar instruction. As I discuss below, she drew on disciplinary knowledge to present writing as a rhetorical process of claiming a "voice" on issues that mattered to students and their communities, a perspective that she had not encountered until relatively late in her own education.

As Lily's story about her conflicts with her mother suggest, instructors' gender experiences also informed their pedagogies. Barb, for example, often made references during class discussions to issues of gender-related discrimination as well as the gendered (and classed)

challenges of juggling school and parenthood in a rural setting—this was a point of common experience she shared with many of her female Diné College students. Gender issues were also at the fore of several of her writing assignments. For their final research paper, for example, Barb explicitly invited students to write about issues of gender in community college education. James had also been influenced by the gender-related social changes that had played out over his lifetime: both his daughter and his wife were committed feminists, and, as his discussion of Tapahonso’s reinterpretation of Leda suggests, these perspectives informed James’s appreciation for the strength and status ascribed to women in matrilineal Diné society. Patrick, however, took a somewhat different lesson from the social activism of the 1970s: he encouraged his students to research and write about persistent issues of gender *inequality* on the Navajo Nation, particularly the barriers women face to becoming political leaders.<sup>39</sup>

These personal backgrounds and experiences—particularly class, tribal identity, and gender—shaped instructors’ political commitments, which fueled their motivations for teaching writing at Diné College and often informed their pedagogical approaches. In interviews, James, Patrick, and Lily each spoke about the racism Native people face in the Southwest, and all four faculty had a strong commitment to Diné College’s mission to provide educational access that would enable students to improve their own lives and those of their families and communities. For Patrick and Lily, this was an overtly tribal-nationalist project. Patrick’s experiences during the Red Power movement laid the groundwork for his commitment to Diné self-determination and his belief that tribally controlled education was essential for furthering the social, political, and economic development of the Navajo Nation. Perhaps the most obvious way Patrick brought this activist knowledge into his teaching was through his English 102 assignment sequence. The first two writing assignments in this course were argumentative genres—a persuasive letter and a

research essay—focusing on key problems facing the Navajo Nation. Patrick believed it was important to provide Diné students with opportunities to develop and defend their views on these issues. As he told me in one of our early interviews:

One of the biggest obstacles that I have to try and get them to do is have them take a position on an issue, which they're always afraid to do. I'm sure if you ask a student at the University of Michigan, it would be no problem because, no offense, white folks are taught from day one to be individuals and have an opinion. You grow up your whole life having an opinion on something<sup>40</sup>...Our students don't. It's foreign to them.

For Patrick, academic genres and discourses were tools that could be used to further Diné self-determination, a way to level the rhetorical advantage that “white folks” often have in educational, political, and legal settings.

Like Patrick, Lily was also deeply invested in the project of Diné nation-building. For her, tribally controlled education was

about establishing consciousness about who you are as a people, as a nation, as a community. If we could all do that, I think we will have better communities, and then we will not have these [social, economic, and environmental problems]. If we could be creative and bring our own jobs, our own business people, teach our own children, be our own nurses, then we elevate this social responsibility.

Lily shared James’s sense that helping students develop a “consciousness” about who they were “as a people” meant providing opportunities for them to construct identities grounded in Diné language, history, and heritage knowledge, as well as a broader understanding of Native American history and political struggles. For Lily, the ultimate purpose of literacy instruction at Dine College was to give “voice” to Diné people and issues, with the goal of improving

conditions on the reservation and furthering Diné self-determination and sovereignty. As she told her students, “We have to elevate each other...We can’t have outside people doing for us. It has to be us. We can’t depend on others. They can help us. [But] they’re just visitors. They’re only here for a while. They will go back.” Lily’s motivation for teaching English at Diné College was to help cultivate the necessary rhetorical and literacy resources *within* the Navajo Nation to address the reservation’s persistent social, economic, and political problems.

As Lily’s commitments suggest, these instructors’ personal backgrounds and experiences were shaped in many ways by their own locations within the structures of US settler colonialism (see Chapter One). These locations informed their perspectives, their politics, and their pedagogies. Both Patrick and Lily seemed to be motivated by a sense of the literacy demands of pursuing Diné self-determination, while James was more focused on issues of identity and cultural loss, concerns that intersected with his own experiences as the child of working-class immigrants.<sup>41</sup> He was less engaged with the politics of the Navajo Nation or with contemporary Native American activism. Likewise, Barb, who had relatively little personal experience in Native communities, expressed respect for students’ Diné cultural identities and an awareness of their socioeconomic challenges, but she rarely spoke about the legal and political structures that shaped conditions on the reservation. Although she was committed to the individual and community empowerment of students, she did not share Patrick and Lily’s sense that this was a tribal-nationalist project. Both James and Barb seemed to understand Diné identities as primarily cultural, rather than political or civic, and these understandings informed their pedagogies, albeit in distinctive ways shaped by their disciplinary and professional backgrounds.

Disciplinary knowledges. In developing their composition pedagogies, the four faculty in this study drew on insights from a range of academic disciplines. Lily’s description of her

theoretical influences exemplifies the kind of pragmatic transdisciplinarity that Diné College instructors brought to their teaching:

[My master's program in English] is where I get a lot of this—the approaches, techniques, and methods. These are what I use to teach the language and the reading and writing, and then also building with my Native American studies, with the English background...That's what I bring to this college...And, of course, I have my bilingual and bicultural, multicultural background theory, too. I kind of mesh them together. That's what I bring.

The disciplinary strands woven through the “mesh” of Lily’s locally responsive pedagogy—strands that included rhetoric and composition, English education, bilingual/bicultural education, literature, and Native American studies—were manifest across many dimensions of her teaching: her course materials, her use of class time, the assignments she gave, and her assessment practices. Although the specific theories and principles varied, all four faculty exhibited similarly transdisciplinary patterns.

Of the instructors in the study, Lily had the most extensive training in rhetoric and composition. This disciplinary background had given her a strong process orientation toward writing, as well as a belief in the value of peer feedback and collaborative learning. Her approach to sentence-level writing issues was also shaped by principles from composition. As she said, “Through my master’s program in my English Department, I was told that grammar will come together for them. It’s their voices. A lot of time we supersede grammar. They’re going to lose their voice, their ideas and voice.” The idea of “voice,” which has a long history in rhetoric and composition (e.g. Yancey; Elbow), was a linchpin concept in Lily’s teaching: in interviews, she repeatedly identified connections between cultivating her students’ voices and the larger political

project of making Diné perspectives heard. In contrast to the rote grammar instruction she remembered from her own K-12 education, Lily drew on disciplinary knowledge to discuss writing in terms of audience and purpose. In Lily's composition courses, communicating ideas was the primary objective, and, although she acknowledged that "grammar does matter," she presented sentence-level "correctness" as subservient to broader rhetorical goals.

Although Lily had the strongest background in rhetoric and composition, all of the faculty in the study were influenced to some degree by its theoretical frameworks. James, as I have noted, was most engaged with the discipline during the 1980s. He credited several composition scholars with influencing his pedagogical approaches. The most notable of these influences was Joseph Trimmer, whose work first got James thinking along lines that could be called locally responsive. As James said,

Joe really had this notion that the best way to teach, the best way to introduce students who were first-generation college students, was to start them where they were. So if a student comes to Ball State from Muncie, Indiana, then what that student wants to learn about is, start with the manufacture of glass or canned goods. And that's where I began to get some of my ideas, you know? You start students with their culture. When you valorize their culture—that's a pet term, you know—then you get them to see the richness of their culture.

Despite these disciplinary influences, James disagreed with some practices that he was well aware were now common in composition classrooms. For example, although he provided extensive feedback on students' papers in the form of both sentence-level corrections and holistic written comments, James rarely required students to write multiple drafts, and he did not invite them to revise any of their assignments based on his feedback. Furthermore, James did not ask

students to engage in peer workshopping or any kind of collaborative learning beyond full-class discussions. He knew these practices put him out of step with many composition scholars—James repeatedly recounted debates with colleagues at other institutions about these pedagogical practices—but, as he said in one interview, “The whole notion of writing as a process occurred late enough in my career that I’ve just never accepted it.”

As I discuss at the outset of this chapter, James’s writing pedagogy had been shaped more by literary studies and theoretical linguistics than by scholarship in the field of composition. He was, for example, a firm believer in in-class grammar instruction and workbook exercises—something he also knew was controversial among compositionists—and he labeled his approach to teaching sentence-level “correctness” as “a modified transformational-generative approach.” James interwove disciplinary knowledge from theoretical linguistics with his understanding of the local context in distinctive ways. His description of his strategy for teaching sentence construction exemplifies this interweaving:

I want students to understand that the sentence is something they make. I’m constantly reminding them of the analogy that predication is like making a baby. You know, the subject is male, and the main verb is female, and the whole sentence forms around that. So you have modification, and subordination, and everything grows out of that part... Sometimes I’ll talk about grammar for adults. Sometimes I’ll say grammar is pretty sexy, you know, because that analogy is really central to Navajo thinking because the highest function is to procreate... It’s intrinsic to the culture... There’s something deep and cohesive about [Diné Baháné] that has to do with male-female harmony... Sometimes I say, all right, here’s a long sentence, and it’s like there’s a family coming out of a pickup, and there may be some grandparents sitting in the back, and some kids, but who

comes out? A man and a woman. A father and a mother...Because sentences really build around that noun-verb relationship. I mean, that's really the essence of transformational-generative theory. That's the universal in sentence-building.

While composition scholars and linguists might debate the merits of this approach, it does offer a memorable explanation of the components of a clause. It also offers a striking illustration of the intellectual dynamics of interweaving disciplinary and local knowledges: to the theory of transformational-generative grammar, James brought his familiarity with traditional Diné principles of gender harmony, his knowledge of contemporary Diné family life, and his understanding of the value of humor in the classroom. The result is an analogy that situates an abstract linguistic concept within the framework of students' lived experience.

As a creative writing specialist, Barb's disciplinary knowledge had come primarily through the practicum course that had prepared her to teach composition during her master's program. Although she did not find the scholarly literature she was assigned in this course particularly accessible or engaging—in her words, “the theory part did not appeal to me”—she believed the opportunity to talk with more experienced teachers about disciplinary concepts had been important to her pedagogical development. From her TA training, her conversations with graduate colleagues, and her engagement with disciplinarily-informed materials such as textbooks and online resources, Barb encountered several pedagogical principles that became central to her teaching. First, she firmly believed in the value of active learning. As she said, “If you're going to teach someone how to write, you have to give them the hands-on opportunities to write. You cannot just tell them, ‘This is how people write.’” Furthermore, like Lily, she felt it was important to create a supportive and collaborative learning community. She believed students learned best when they worked together to solve problems. Operating from these

principles, Barb structured most of her class sessions around small-group work, full-class discussions, and in-class writing. All of these activities were designed to keep students engaged and *doing*.

Barb's TA training had also instilled a commitment to the idea of teaching for transfer.

As she said,

They have to understand that this thing that they're learning is not exclusive to the study of English, but it has applications in their other classes, that it has applications in their everyday lives...I learned, in that practicum class, to tell these students every day that the thing that you're learning today is going to help you to be able to write to a judge or write to a company if you have a complaint. These skills are transferable and valuable.

The issue of learning transfer, which has become increasingly prominent in composition studies over the last decade (e.g. Downs and Wardle; Wardle; Devitt; Beaufort), was clearly a major theme in Barb's practicum course, and she took it up as a central objective in her own teaching. Through in-class discussions as well as many of the prompts she assigned for reflective journaling, Barb endeavored to help students become aware of the connections between the concepts they were learning in the classroom and "everyday life."

While Patrick had a strong background in academic argumentation from his coursework in philosophy, he had no formal training in rhetoric and composition. Indeed, during our interviews, he made a point of disavowing any specialized expertise in this area, repeatedly stating, "I'm not an English teacher." However, Patrick's pedagogical practices were indirectly influenced by disciplinary knowledge from rhetoric and composition, primarily through textbook materials and interactions with colleagues. As he described it, "I was mentored by one of the professors here who more or less guided me what to teach." Patrick adopted that instructor's

workshop model for his English 102 course. This approach placed a great deal of emphasis on writing as a process, and Patrick required students to take their essays through multiple rounds of revision based on his feedback: he gave them most of each class period to work on their papers, supplementing his weekly written comments with individual consultations both in class and during office hours. As I describe in Chapter Six, Patrick often framed this cyclical process of drafting and revising in terms of the four-step Diné Educational Philosophy.

Like James and Lily, Patrick also drew pedagogical insight from disciplines beyond rhetoric and composition. He frequently invoked a concept he alternately called “taught” or “learned helplessness.” This theory, first introduced by psychologists Martin Seligman and Steven Maier, describes how individuals can be conditioned to respond to adverse situations as though they are helpless, even when they have the capacity to change the situation for the better; it has been taken up widely in educational psychology. Patrick found this theory helpful for understanding the impact of rural reservation poverty on students’ sense of themselves as learners, and the necessity of countering taught helplessness became an important thread in his locally responsive pedagogy. As he said, “I think there's consequences if, as a college student, if you don't turn the paper in...Are we teaching them to be helpless?” This concern extended beyond the enforcement of due dates to his feedback on students’ papers. Patrick would point out passages or segments of a draft that had problems, but he would not “correct” those issues for students. Instead, he directed them to figure out the solution for themselves, encouraging them to make use of the many resources at their disposal—friends, family, the campus learning center, and his office hours. As he told his students in class:

There’s a psychology term, “learned helplessness.” When a teacher edits your paper, they’re teaching you to be helpless. And then you learn to be helpless. That’s a real

phenomenon. T'áá ni ánit'éego. [It's up to you.] Don't depend on others.

For Patrick, the academic concept of taught helplessness resonated with his understanding of Diné values of self-reliance and intersected with his political interest in Diné self-determination. On some level, unteaching taught helplessness in the writing classroom served the larger project of Diné nation-building.

The kind of transdisciplinarity I observed among these four instructors is not unusual for two-year college English faculty (Toth, Griffiths, and Thirolf). However, the nature of the disciplinary knowledge that Diné College instructors drew on was often related to particularities of the local context. Most obviously, both James and Lily integrated disciplinary knowledge from Native American and Diné Studies into the readings they assigned and the discussions they had in class. Furthermore, as I discuss in Chapter Six, the emphasis that James, Patrick, and Lily placed on writing process may have been heightened by the institutional requirement that faculty integrate DEP into their courses. Finally, Patrick's interest in countering taught helplessness seems to be a direct response to the psychological, social, and economic impact of the Navajo Nation's status within the US settler state. Thus, even transdisciplinarity can be locally responsive—in fact, local responsiveness might demand transdisciplinarity.

Other professional experiences. Faculty's locally responsive pedagogies were also informed by their professional experiences. For James and Barb, these experiences included teaching in other postsecondary settings. As I have discussed, James brought decades of teaching experience to Diné College, not only at the liberal arts college where he spent much of his career, but also as an adjunct instructor at a regional public university in New Mexico and in a graduate program in comparative mythology. In interviews, James often referred to experiences in these settings that influenced his pedagogical practices at Diné College. For example, his decades

working within the liberal arts college mission had contributed to his sense that the Freshman English sequence should transmit cultural heritage, as well as his belief in the importance of establishing “nurturing” relationships with students. On the other hand, his interpretation of the social and academic struggles he saw many Native students facing at the off-reservation regional university bolstered his belief that Diné students benefited from attending smaller institutions that provided a supportive educational experience grounded in traditional Diné knowledge and values. These experiences informed the course materials he selected, the ways he structured in-class discussions, and how he interacted with Diné College students outside of the classroom.

Barb’s pedagogy also drew on her prior teaching experiences, both at the bordertown university where she earned her master’s degree and in the various community colleges where she had taught. Her time at these institutions had made her particularly attentive to the challenges that first-generation college students face in understanding the structures, purposes, and expectations of postsecondary education. Through her teaching in these settings, she had come to believe it was important to provide students with scaffolded opportunities to a) develop their critical thinking abilities through a combination of writing assignments and collaborative learning; b) research and write about their academic and professional goals in order to clarify their reasons for being in college; and c) explicitly discuss the structures and expectations of higher education. In Fall 2012, she quickly perceived her Diné College students to be facing challenges akin to those of first-generation college students she had taught in other settings, and she integrated similar approaches into her teaching.

Both Barb and Lily also brought insights from their careers in professional writing to their composition pedagogy. Barb’s experiences in journalism and marketing communications gave her strong views about how writing works in the “real world,” a perspective that bolstered

her commitment to teaching for transfer. She believed it was important to be explicit with students about the expectations and purposes of academic writing while also helping them see how the kinds of critical thinking and writing they were doing in college connected to their lives and aspirations outside of school. Barb's previous careers had also fostered a keen sense of audience and an appreciation for the importance of meeting deadlines. She foregrounded these concerns in her composition courses, frequently reminding students to think about the needs of the reader and upholding a no late work policy. Lily, on the other hand, used her ongoing employment as an editor at the bordertown publishing house to identify Native-authored texts to assign in her classes. As I discuss below, she sometimes brought discussions of the publisher's editorial process into her writing classes. Her dedication to getting books by Native authors into print and her passion for helping Diné student writers voice their perspectives were interrelated expressions of her commitment to Diné and broader Native American activism.

Knowledge of the local context. Finally, the faculty in this study had diverse knowledges of and experiences in their local teaching context that influenced their pedagogical responses. Patrick and Lily, of course, had a lifetime of experience relating to the Navajo Nation—in this sense, their personal backgrounds and knowledge of the local context were deeply intertwined. Both had lived on the reservation for extended periods of time, and both had strong family ties and friendships on the Navajo Nation and across its diaspora. These experiences gave both instructors a nuanced understanding of their Diné College students' backgrounds. As Patrick said,

I think I understand where they're coming from...My familiarity with the issues, the conditions, the home problems...Some of these kids don't have access to a lot of things. That gets in the way of doing homework, for example...They may have neglected something in their school, which is now affecting them. It was like that for me, too. I

don't claim to know all their problems, but I get an idea of some of the issues they're facing.

While Patrick was quick to acknowledge the limits on his understanding of students' lives, he was cognizant that many of their struggles were socioeconomic, and that their difficulties in college were often related to instability at home and inadequate K-12 preparation. He had faced similar experiences in his own life, and he had seen these dynamics among family and friends.

All four faculty had also gained insight into the local context through reading and other kinds of research. Lily, whose family belonged to the Native American Church (NAC), initially learned much of what she knew about traditional Diné spirituality through reading (although she then spent several years participating in ceremonies to gain firsthand knowledge). She also followed current events on the Navajo Nation closely via online news sources and social media. James, as I have described, spent much of his academic career researching Diné oral poetry, and he was deeply read in the history and heritage knowledge of the Navajo Nation. And, at the outset of the semester, Barb's understanding of the local context came almost entirely from the preliminary reading she had done about the Navajo Nation and the needs of Native learners. This reading shaped Barb's impressions of her Diné College students and her initial pedagogical choices: for example, essays she found online about Native learning styles and interpersonal communication norms informed her decisions regarding classroom materials and her interpretations of students' responses to in-class activities and discussions. In short, instructors' understandings of their local context were constructed not only through their direct experiences, but also through their engagement with a variety of texts that offered historical and/or theoretical insight.

Instructors' understandings of the local context were also shaped by their ongoing

experiences at Diné College. Patrick had the most extensive background in this regard: in addition to his three decades as a teacher and administrator, he had researched and written about Diné College in his doctoral dissertation. This research gave him a deep understanding of the college's history and mission as well as its position within state articulation agreements and regional accreditation processes. James's institutional experience was also extensive: he had been teaching Diné College students at his branch campus for nearly two decades, and, by 2012, some of his students were the grandchildren of women he had taught during his first years at the college. Furthermore, Patrick and James had both been at the college in the 1990s, during the most intensive efforts to implement DEP across the curriculum (see Chapter Six). Patrick's administrative involvement with these efforts and James's appreciation for DEP's grounding in traditional Diné spiritual knowledge gave both men a deeper understanding of the purpose and conceptual underpinnings of the philosophy. This understanding may have made both men more invested in integrating this form of local knowledge into their classes.

In Chapters Five, Six, and Seven, I investigate how these four faculty responded pedagogically to three dimensions of the local context: the students, the institution, and the communities in which the institution is situated. As should by now be clear, the nature of those responses varied according to each instructor's personal background, disciplinary knowledges, and professional experiences, as well as his or her understandings of these dimensions of the local at Diné College. Because pedagogical theories and principles varied from instructor to instructor, the locally responsive practices that resulted from this interweaving also varied considerably. However, none of these local or theoretical variables is necessarily constant: each is subject to change over time. For this reason, locally responsive pedagogy is not a static set of practices. Rather, it is an on-going *process*.

### *Locally Responsive Pedagogy as Process*

Faculty who are new to Diné College, as Barb was in Fall 2012, may undergo a period of rapid pedagogical adaptation to the local context: Barb was certainly rethinking and adjusting her teaching practices more extensively than her three colleagues. Over the course of her first semester, Barb's teaching became increasingly locally responsive as she gained greater knowledge and experience in her new teaching context. In the classroom, this often meant attempting practices that she had reason to anticipate would be effective based on her pedagogical theories and principles. She then either *adopted*, *adjusted*, or *abandoned* those practices based on a variety of *perceived indicators of instructional effectiveness*. Such indicators included her assessment of students' engagement and interest levels; their performance on writing assignments and/or quizzes; the nature of the questions they asked both in and out of class; their feedback on informal reflections and mid-term course evaluations; their attendance, punctuality, and adherence to assignment due dates; and average course grades.<sup>42</sup> These indicators allowed her to decide which practices she believed were working and what types of adjustments she might need to make in the future.

Many of Barb's attempted pedagogical practices resulted in what she interpreted as positive indicators. For example, early in the semester, Barb attempted an in-class activity called "Frankensentence," in which she divided the class into two teams who competed to create the longest sentences using fill-in-the-blank parts of speech cards. Based on her academic training, her teaching experiences in other settings, and what she had read about Native learners, Barb hypothesized that her students would enjoy the chance to collaborate with one another through team-based competition, and that this would be an effective way to help them learn the meta-language she believed they needed in order to master the conventions of written English. And, at

least with this particular activity, her theories seemed to hold: the students responded by participating enthusiastically. Indeed, all of the students I interviewed from Barb's class specifically mentioned Frankensentence as one of their favorite activities. Based on this perceived success, Barb *adopted* Frankensentence as a practice she would continue to use in future Diné College writing classes.

Barb attempted other practices that she gauged to be less successful. For example, at the beginning of the semester, she created a detailed twelve-page syllabus for her English 100B course that listed all of the class policies and laid out assignment due dates for the entire semester. Barb created this syllabus on the theory that she was making the course expectations clear and explicit, and she assumed students would use it to keep track of due dates for the rest of the term. However, she quickly found that her students were not consulting the syllabus assignment schedule, despite repeated in-class reminders, and were surprised when she reiterated the policy—stated in the syllabus—that she did not accept late work. This problem persisted all term, and by our second interview, Barb was already making plans to *adjust* both the design of her syllabus and how she presented it to students in the coming semester:

A lot of students don't get [my syllabus] or they don't—they don't know how to read it. Even eight weeks into the semester, they're still struggling with two columns and so on...I would make a much more simplified syllabus...I think a syllabus that's just a bullet point list where the student has to rewrite in his or her own words what each bullet point means—and it could be boiled down that way...I think I would do that so that the student who has never been in college before has an opportunity not just to flip to the last page of the syllabus and say, "Okay, I think I sort of read it," but actually take it apart and figure out what the rules are, and how my rules might differ from somebody else's rules.

Barb interpreted students' difficulties with the syllabus as a lack of awareness of the norms and expectations of college. Thus, even as she was adjusting her pedagogical practices to the local context, she did so using her prior teaching experiences with first-generation college students to theorize the reasons why her approach was failing and to think through adaptations that might improve the next iteration.

Finally, there were some practices that Barb ultimately decided to *abandon* based on her experiences in her new context. By the end of the semester, for example, she had decided that she would no longer structure her English 100B courses around a textbook:

I designed [the course] based on the textbook...but I had no clue how to deal with these students as human beings. I was only dealing with them through the textbook. As the semester went on, I started recognizing that these students are sitting in this class. They're nodding their heads. They're doing the writings. They're talking to each other, or they're talking to me about whatever the lesson of the day was. They're involved, and so I need to relate to them as people rather than through the medium of a textbook. I think that kind of—if nothing else, it told me that relying on a textbook as a structure for a class is not a good thing...I would set fire to the textbook.

Barb's description of her disillusionment with the textbook suggests that she was in the process of moving away from a pedagogy that relied on decontextualized theories of what "developmental" writing instruction should be—as embodied, in this case, by a workbook-style Pearson textbook<sup>43</sup>—toward a more locally responsive pedagogy that took its indicators from the students themselves: their body language, their forms of participation and levels of engagement, and the actual writing they produced. Barb's accumulating local knowledge and experience

contributed to her ability to develop teaching practices that were adapted to the Diné College context.

As a new instructor, Barb was in the process of rapidly adapting her pedagogy to meet the needs of her students. However, even the faculty who had been teaching at Diné College for many years continued to attempt new practices and refine their pedagogy. In some cases, these changes resulted from new personal or professional experiences. In Fall 2012, for example, Lily had just spent the summer researching the genre conventions for romance novels in order to help the publishing house where she worked edit and publicize a Diné-authored historical romance.

As she told me, laughing:

I did not know about romance story...I said, “What do I look for? What is it?” I had to start researching. What’s the formula here? What is the organization? I discovered that it’s two characters who wanted each other all the time...But while they’re wanting each other, there’s always this conflict.

The novel was the publisher’s first foray into both the romance genre and the e-book format, and Lily played an important role in bringing the project to fruition. During the semester, she discussed the experience of creating the e-book to her students, including the extensive collaborative revision process that she undertook with its author. She shared this story to illustrate the reality that writing is a social act, that Diné people do, in fact, write and publish, and that everyone, even English teachers, must continuously learn new genres, literacy practices, and technologies.

In other cases, long-time Diné College faculty integrated new disciplinary knowledge into their pedagogical practices. In Fall 2012, for example, Patrick replaced his usual English 102 final paper assignment, a research-based argumentative essay about a global topic, with an

assignment he had never tried before: an argumentative essay drawing on alternative rhetorical appeals. Students had the option of developing a research-based argument appealing to either ethos or to pathos. As Patrick said, “That’s something new I wanted to try and see what would happen there.” Patrick attempted this assignment in order to highlight key rhetorical concepts, and also to encourage students to make more extensive use of the course textbook, *Everything’s an Argument*.<sup>44</sup> However, he found that most students, even those who had successfully completed the more conventional research essays earlier in the semester, struggled with this assignment. Patrick attributed their difficulties in part to the way he had set up the assignment—he later reflected that he should have done more to contextualize the appeals—but he ultimately decided to abandon this particular practice in future iterations of the course and go back to his previous assignment sequence. Patrick’s experience is not necessarily an indication that assignments focusing on rhetorical appeals do not work in the local context of Diné College; there may be other, more successful ways to frame such a project. However, it does demonstrate that even faculty who have been teaching in this context for many years attempt new pedagogical practices that they ultimately choose not to adopt as a regular part of their course.

Long-time faculty also adapted their pedagogical practices as the local context itself changed. Sometimes these changes were institutional. Patrick, for example, described shifting the emphasis of his English 102 course from literary analysis to research-based argumentation when the English department altered learning outcomes for the course to better align with Arizona’s state-wide articulation agreements. In other cases, the contextual changes related to the college’s student population. James observed that the demographics at his branch campus had been shifting from predominantly older women with children to younger students entering college shortly after high school. James perceived these students to be better prepared for college

reading and writing than those he had worked with in the past. Explaining his efforts to craft more challenging reading questions for his handouts, James said “I’m upping the ante on what I expect of them...I’m just not sure that there’s enough of a challenge overall in what I’ve been doing.” It is possible that participating in this study made James more aware of these recent shifts among his students, but the process of adjusting his course materials semester-to-semester was routine: as he said, “I’m constantly tinkering.”

Finally, some of the pedagogical adaptations faculty made related to broader changes taking place in the communities of varying scale in which the college is situated. Lily and Patrick, for example, often brought current events topics into their writing assignments, course readings, and/or class discussions. These topics included the proposed ski resort on the sacred mountain Dook’o’osliid (San Francisco Peaks), the Navajo Nation’s erupting water-rights conflicts with neighboring states, and the 2012 political season, which involved Navajo Nation as well as county, state, and national elections. Because locales themselves are always changing, locally responsive pedagogy cannot be static: it is always in process.

### *Looking Ahead*

This analysis of the dynamics of locally responsive pedagogy suggests several implications to bear in mind through the following chapters. First, locally responsive pedagogy is complex and on-going intellectual work. It is not a set of prescriptions or a simple formula, but rather a continual process of interweaving multiple forms of knowledge and experience. While there is certainly room to critique the theories and principles that faculty bring (or fail to bring) to this process, composition scholars should recognize that disciplinary knowledge alone is not enough: the local knowledge that instructors interweave with academic theories is essential for

developing pedagogies that respond to the needs and desires of students, the institution, and the community.

Second, cultivating this local knowledge requires time in place. Reading about the local context can be helpful, but the process of developing locally responsive pedagogy requires situated trial-and-error. Again, this is not to say that disciplinary theories do not matter. Instructors' explanations for why certain practices work and others do not are informed by their pedagogical theories and principles, as are their ideas about how to adjust less successful practices to make them more effective in the local context. Some theoretical orientations might foster local responsiveness better than others. Likewise, opportunities to share and collaboratively theorize successful practices within departments or institutions might also expedite the process: both Lily and Patrick described borrowing successful practices from departmental colleagues. However, disciplinary theories or professional development sessions alone are no substitute for local classroom experience or time spent in the community.

Finally, as James Berlin might have anticipated, this analysis suggests that locally responsive pedagogies are always already political. In some cases, instructors' personal backgrounds led them to foreground political concerns related to gender, social or economic problems on the Navajo Nation, or broader issues facing Native or Indigenous communities. In other cases, the politics of their pedagogies were less overt. For instance, James's desire to bolster Diné identities grounded in traditional knowledge is, in fact, a political stance: the role of traditionalism in contemporary tribal nationalisms is hotly debated in Native academic, civic, and activist communities (see Lyons, *X-Marks*). As I discuss in Chapter Six, there are also political implications to instructors' choices about how (and whether) to make use of DEP in the writing classroom. All rhetorics are ideological, but given the fraught history in many Native contexts

surrounding schooling, language, and the “heretofore compromised technology of writing” (Lyons, “Rhetorical Sovereignty” 447), TCU composition pedagogies are often responding to locally-specific political considerations.

This chapter has focused on the four Diné College faculty in this study and the process by which they developed an array of locally responsive pedagogies. In the following chapters, I examine how these faculty responded in their varying ways to three key dimensions of the local: their students, the institution, and the communities in which it is situated. First, however, it is worth spending some time getting to know Diné College students themselves, who are, I argue, much more diverse than the scholarly literature on Native learners has tended to suggest.

## Chapter Four

### “My Dream that Is Unfolding before Me”: Actually Existing Diné College Students

*Hello I am writing this letter to introduce myself and tell about part of my life. My name is [David] and I am a member of the Great Dine (Navajo) Nation. I am a “Bitter Water clan” and born for the “Red House clan”, my maternal grandparents’ clans are “One Who Walks Around You clan”, and my paternal grandparents’ clans is “Yucca Fruit Strung In A Line clan”.*

*My educational goals are to refine my artistic abilities, as well as to redefine my outlook on the world and how I can create a change to benefit all. My career goals are set in motion with every year of development in college that helps me realize what degrees I must pursue to that would put me closer to achieving a change on a major level, not only for my family, but also my community, and the Navajo Nation. An example is to combine my Fine Arts degree with Social and Behavioral Science degree that will give me a voice and a critical ability to get a message across to the mass. I can see myself as an Art Teacher at a local school on My Navajo Reservation, or I can take these two degrees so I can have the proper tools to enact a re-teaching and rebuilding of a Nation if I were to take a political stance. But to begin such a movement to change the world my education will need help to flourish, so that every possibility is opened up for me to become a creativity leader with knowledge, wisdom, words and a strong vision to be a voice among Native American Communities. Not just for me but also to the many souls who I will encounter to help teach, to help grow and help secure their dreams so that we all can envision a new united community establishing growth at every level. My faith, my enthusiasm and interest*

can only carrying me so far. That is why I have come before you for help so that this deep and far impacting development does not wither away and fall greatly short of the goals I seek. I have come to realize that deep within me is a slumbering, great intellectual being that is awakening with each new continued learning experience that is taking place despite all the odds that have been stacked against me. I hunger for knowledge and I will not stop until I have left a better future to dream in for the next generation.

My biggest obstacle in life is that I am a wheelchair bound individual and all the care-taking associated with my condition. Despite this obstacle I have to endure every day for the rest of my life. I still have a much stronger determination to succeed so that I may contribute something greater with my life to achieve a betterment of all humankind and ensure a future for a millennia of generations to come after. I cannot stop what I have started even though the many hardships that I have encountered in my first year of college. Such as my physically aliments, this pain is a constant struggle and trying to manage my pain is a problem because pain medication leaves me with the inability to think hindered in a cloudy haze. If I don't take my pain medication I am left unable to think because of the amount of pain I am in, much less perform any activities being bed ridden with pain. Even getting my college instructors to understand that my daily needs from being in a wheelchair prevents me from performing at the same level as my peers. It always came down to only one option, which is my instructors informing me to just drop the course that I was having difficulty in. No matter what anyone said, I reluctantly stayed to finish each of my courses at the level I was expected to perform, even if it met risking to burn myself out. It is a humongous task just to keep up with my daily self-care. Also the lack of wheelchair accessibility at my college, such as automated doors not properly working, restrooms that lack required adaptation. I needed a place to stay, but at last, I could not stay in the

*dormitory. What dormitory was available, lacked safe wheelchair accessibility, safe shower access, proper restroom facilities, a safe bed and most of all, maintenance of sidewalks during the winter. These little things which might seem like insignificant things to others actually affected me in a very big financial way because I have to drive 100 miles around trip to my only accessible local community college on the vast beautiful deserts of the great Navajo Nation. Nevertheless this is an important development for me at my Community College. Where many curriculums are based on my Navajo culture and traditional teachings in college setting is my first steps in preparations so that I may have a much more successful outcome at a University level educational environment. My financial situation is in constant shambles as I need funds for lodging, food, gas, and supplies that my college bookstore cannot provide is a great burden to me.*

*This scholarship will help ease apart of my expenses for college, so that I can concentrate on schoolwork instead of wondering how I will get through every month until my semesters' end. Financial stress takes its' toll on any individual and makes it almost impossible to be fully focused to ensure that you are working at your full potential in a college. I would love to make the best of my choice in returning to college. So that I may eventually receive my degrees, as well as, a much needed experience. All I ask is a chance for my burdens to be eased up even if it is just a little bit. So that I can apply myself hold-heartedly and push myself even harder to achieve my dream that is unfolding before me.<sup>45</sup>*

David wrote this scholarship application essay a few months after completing his first year of college at the age of 33. In the essay, David leads with his Diné identity. He introduces himself and his four clans, a move that signals his knowledge of and appreciation for traditional

Diné rhetorical practices, as well as the central importance of his membership in the “Great Dine (Navajo) Nation.” The quotation marks David places around his clan names acknowledge the looseness of the English translation; as a fully bilingual speaker of both English and Diné bizaad, David is aware that these approximations do not entirely capture the meaning the clan names carry. The value David attaches to a college education “based on my Navajo culture and traditional teachings”—and his strong desire to help build a positive future for the Navajo Nation—are important touchstones that he returns to throughout the essay. In short, the text enacts David’s Diné identity and knowledge in ways that are likely be favorably received by the audience at the American Indian College Fund: this enactment is, among other things, a rhetorical choice.

As the essay reveals, however, David’s interests, motivations, and challenges are also shaped by a variety of other identities and experiences. He is a talented visual artist and an aspiring teacher, and he seeks to become a political leader. He has an urgent drive to use his education to claim a “voice”: to hone his rhetorical abilities in order to improve conditions “among Native American Communities” and contribute to the “betterment of all humankind.” This expansive, even cosmopolitan vision exists alongside his more immediate desire to make life easier for his family and achieve his own potential: to feed his “hunger for knowledge.” Indeed, as an older student returning to college after an extended break in schooling, David brings a palpable intensity and sense of purpose to his education. As he writes, “I have come to realize that deep within me is a slumbering, great intellectual being that is awakening with each new continued learning experience that is taking place despite all the odds that have been stacked against me.”

And the odds stacked against David are daunting. There are the many challenges presented by his disability, which saps his energies and ability to focus on schoolwork, restricts his mobility on a campus with limited wheelchair accessibility, and increases the already burdensome costs of attending college by forcing him to travel long distances across the highly rural Navajo Nation. Indeed, his “financial situation is in constant shambles,” a function of his disability and his family’s socioeconomic status, both of which are exacerbated by the logistical difficulties of rural reservation poverty. Although he does not offer the back story in this short essay, David’s financial situation, his disability, and the timing of his enrollment at Diné College are all directly related to his locations within the structures of settler colonialism, which shape the constraints and opportunities David encounters as he strives, in his words, to “achieve my dream that is unfolding before me.”

David grew up on the reservation in an extended family that faced continual financial hardship; his father spent more than two decades working in uranium mines to help support the household. Shortly after David graduated from high school, his father was diagnosed with cancer, probably caused by his occupational exposure to uranium. Rather than continuing his own education, David stayed home to help his father through treatment, but because of his caretaking responsibilities and the scarcity of jobs on the reservation, David was unable to maintain steady employment. So, during one of his father’s intermittent periods of remission, David left the Navajo Nation to train as a machinist in urban Utah. While living there, he was attacked by a group of white men and left for dead, a racially-motivated hate crime that put him in intensive care for months and, he describes in his essay, left him permanently wheelchair-bound and in chronic pain. It took David years to recover enough, both physically and psychologically, to consider returning to school, and it was not until a vocational rehabilitation counselor helped him

secure a vehicle with hand controls that he was able to attend Diné College. Both David and his father have borne the violence of settler colonialism with their *bodies*: his father through the “slow violence” (Nixon) of the exploitation of Native lands and labor, and David through the racist brutality of attempted murder. For both men, this violence resulted in even greater socioeconomic difficulties for themselves and their family, thus reinforcing the structural conditions that facilitate Native marginalization and dispossession.

This is not a story I recount lightly, and I do so only with David’s permission. I tell it because it makes the determination and resilience expressed in David’s essay that much more powerful, and because it demonstrates the painful reality that Diné College students’ lives and experiences are profoundly shaped by their locations within the structures of *ongoing* settler colonialism, an experience that readers might otherwise be inclined to consign to the past. I believe this point is particularly important because, to date, much of the education and composition literature has focused on Native cultural differences and how they should be attended to in the classroom and the curriculum. However, my research and my teaching with Diné College students has led me to conclude that these differences are, in fact, much less monolithic and clear-cut than much of the literature has portrayed. Indeed, I want to suggest that the scholarly emphasis on Native students’ cultural difference actually reflects—and, in some cases, unwittingly enacts—an “inordinate focus on Native difference and cultural identity” while ignoring the political dimensions of Native experiences (Konkle 7). To be clear, I am in no way disputing the importance of affirming students’ Diné identities in the composition classroom, the value of providing them with opportunities to learn about their heritage, or the desirability of integrating Diné knowledge into the curriculum. As I detail in Chapter One, however, I have come to believe that what the diverse students in this study indisputably shared was not some

fundamental cultural difference, but rather the social, economic, and political complexities of being Diné in the twenty-first century. These realities contributed to their diversity, informed their motivations and goals, and presented common challenges to their efforts to complete their coursework, stay in college, and achieve the dreams unfolding before them.

I begin this chapter by reviewing the ways in which Native learners have been characterized in the education and the composition literature, critiquing these representations in light of my own observations as a researcher and teacher at Diné College. I then turn to a discussion of the students who participated in this study, examining eight dimensions of their diversity that speak directly to the discourses of cultural difference. I conclude by discussing how these observations might inform theorizations of pedagogical responsiveness, particularly in Native-serving composition classrooms.

### *Native Learners in the Literature*

Prior to the 1960s, researchers and educators tended to explain the “achievement gap” between Native and middle-class Anglo students in terms of racialized biological disparities or cultural deficits (Castagno and Brayboy; Lomawaima). However, the civil rights and American Indian self-determination movements reshaped academic conversations about race and schooling. Education researchers began recasting the challenges faced by students from minoritized ethnic backgrounds as matters of cultural *difference* rather than deficit. These differences, researchers argued, should be understood, respected, and used as resources to support student learning, rather than pathologized or treated as barriers that must be overcome or eradicated (see Banks; Gay; Paris; Paris and Alim). As part of this broader multicultural education movement, researchers began working to identify the cultural features that made Native students distinct from other learners (Castagno and Brayboy; Lomawaima).

Given the explicitly assimilationist agenda that had often dominated federally-funded education for Native people,<sup>46</sup> the movement to understand students' tribal identities and communities was in many ways a positive development. On the Navajo Nation, for example, calls for education tailored to the culturally-specific needs of Diné students bolstered political arguments for tribally-controlled education and helped attract much-needed funding to found community schools, develop bilingual curricula and course materials, and train Diné teachers (McCarty; McLaughlin; Stein). However, the frameworks that emerged from these movements have emphasized Native cultural difference to a degree that sometimes shades into essentialism, strategic or otherwise. These discourses of cultural difference tend to obscure the long-standing diversity *within* what Lyons calls "actually existing Indian nations" ("Actually Existing" 297).

The starker examples of such essentialisms are the assertions about Native students' "learning styles" that characterized the Native education literature during the 1980s and early 1990s.<sup>47</sup> These theories often presented simplistic binaries—such as "global" versus "analytic" thinking or a preference for "hands-on" versus "abstract" learning—that placed Native students on one side and non-Native students on the other (Castagno and Brayboy 954): such schemas flirt with cultural or even biological determinism. The notion of distinctive Native learning styles has been treated with increasing skepticism by education researchers in recent decades (e.g. Lomawaima and McCarty; Cleary and Peacock; Castagno and Brayboy), who argue that the concept is not well supported by empirical research (Kleinfeld and Nelson) and promotes stereotypes and overgeneralization across groups (Deyhle and Swisher).<sup>48</sup> However, the idea of Native learning styles is still in circulation amongst both Native and non-Native practitioners at many Native-serving institutions, including Diné College. This concept is predicated on the assumption that Native students, particularly in tribally-specific contexts, have had similar

childhood environments and experiences that shape their cognition. However, the diversity of Diné College students' ages, language backgrounds, literacy practices, geographical experiences, and prior schooling would seem to cast further doubt on the notion of distinctive Native learning styles, particularly at the postsecondary level.

Other studies have focused on how interpersonal communication norms in Native students' home communities shape their classroom interactions and preferences. Common themes in this research include the varying meanings of silence or apparent passivity in the classroom; differing norms related to eye contact, body language, and physical proximity; differing expectations about the pace of speech and turn-taking behaviors in conversation; a preference for indirect rather than direct commands; the value of interpersonal warmth and humor for establishing trusting relationships; aversion to individual competition and an enthusiasm for teamwork; a preference for learning through observation rather than direct instruction; a desire to master a new skill or ability privately before demonstrating it publically; and a discomfort with making the kinds of assertive or agonistic rhetorical moves expected in academic discussion and argumentative writing (Castagno and Brayboy; Deyhle and Swisher; Swisher and Deyhle; Klug and Whitfield; Lomawaima). While some of these assertions may be true to some degree for some Native students in some communities, particularly at younger ages, they, too, are predicated on the assumption that Native students have had fairly homogenous socialization experiences. This assumption does not hold for the Diné College students in this study.

Since the 1990s, the education literature about Native learners has developed a more critical orientation. Researchers have asserted that scholarship about Native learners "is too easily reduced to essentializations, meaningless generalizations, or trivial anecdotes" (Castagno

and Brayboy 942), and the prominence of tribal nationalist perspectives and the influence of Critical Race Theory have fostered increased attention to issues of sovereignty and the role of racism and (to a lesser extent) socioeconomic status in Native students' educational experiences (Lomawaima; Brayboy; Castagno and Brayboy; Deyhle, "Navajo Youth"; Deyhle, "From Break Dancing"; *Reflections in Place*; McCarty and T. S. Lee). However, there is still a tendency to concentrate on the purported *cultural* characteristics of Native students or their communities—now often talked about in terms of epistemologies and values (Brayboy; Castagno and Brayboy)—generally in contrast to other groups. Of course, schooling can and increasingly does play an important role in *sustaining* and *revitalizing* Native heritage knowledge and practices (see McCarty and T. S. Lee; Paris and Alim; Paris, as well as Chapters Five and Six of this dissertation). However, the literature's overriding focus on cultural difference functions to obscure other dimensions of Native students' experiences, particularly the intersecting identities and forms of oppression that give them common cause with people from other groups, as well as the inevitable diversity and dissensus that are a reality of life in all modern societies, including twenty-first century Indigenous nations. Perhaps most troublingly, discussions of colonialism in relation to Native education tend to focus almost exclusively on issues of cultural assimilation, rather than on the social geographies—the spatialized structures of social and economic inequality—that shape students' lived experiences, their opportunities, and many of their challenges with schooling.<sup>49</sup>

Compared to the wealth of scholarship in education, the composition literature relating to Native students is small. However, it suffers from similar shortcomings. While composition scholars are often careful to warn that instructors should avoid making assumptions about or romanticizing students' tribal identities, they also tend to focus almost exclusively on cultural

differences that they believe affect students' experiences in the writing classroom. Some of these claims echo assertions in the education literature, such as the insistence that Native students often have distinct interpersonal communication norms and ways of demonstrating engagement in class (Zolbrod, "Teaching on the Margin"; Glau; Gray-Rosendale, Bird, and Bullock). As both LaVonne Ruoff and Aretha Matt note, however, the oft-mentioned "silence" of Native students frequently disappears in majority-Native classrooms and courses taught by Native instructors, suggesting that these behaviors may be more a response to the experience of being minoritized than a cultural trait. Laura Gray-Rosendale and colleagues and Paul Zolbrod ("Teaching on the Margin") discuss the value of cultivating caring relationships with students, and several scholars describe Native students' preferences for hands-on or collaborative learning and a disinclination toward individual competition (Ruoff; Glau; Gray-Rosendale, Bird, and Bullock). However, composition researchers have long made similar observations about basic writing and first-generation college students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, so there is little reason to view these as distinctively Native characteristics: they might just as easily be related to academic preparation and/or socioeconomic class.

Some compositionists describe cultural differences that bear on the nature of the texts Native students produce. Jay Barwell, Barbara Monroe, and Gray-Rosendale, et al, assert that rhetorical traditions in students' home communities may be different from those valued in the academy, and that these differences manifest in the organizational decisions students make as well as the kinds of rhetorical strategies they use. Some scholars also comment on Native students' distinctive needs with regard to assignment topics. Sometimes they focus on the relevance or intrinsic interest of a topic to Native students, given their life experiences, values, and goals (Barwell; Matt). In other cases, compositionists note, certain topics—such as those

related to ceremonial knowledge or practices, to animals with spiritual significance, or to “taboo” subjects like death (Thurston 32)—can be culturally sensitive for Native students (Thurston; Ruoff; Gray-Rosendale, Bird, and Bullock). These observations may be true in some cases: I have witnessed such phenomena as both a researcher and a teacher at Diné College. However, Diné students’ familiarity with locally-valued rhetorical practices, as well as the topics they were either particularly motivated to write about or particularly averse to discussing, varied widely from student to student. I did not observe any universally ingrained rhetorical practices or inviolable taboos, and rhetorical resources as well as favored or disfavored topics often derived from students’ Christian practices, their engagements with popular culture, or their wide-ranging political interests and activities rather than traditional Diné knowledge or identities alone.

Several composition scholars also discuss linguistic differences that influence Native students’ writing. In communities where Indigenous languages are still widely spoken, including the Navajo Nation, some students are second-language English speakers, and their writing has features that reflect this linguistic background (Matt; Thurston; Zolbrod, “Teaching on the Margin”). For many other Native students, language-level issues are more related to the differences between Edited American English (EAE) and the various English varieties spoken in reservation communities (Thurston; Lyons, “Fencing”). These observations about language diversity align with what I have observed at Diné College (see below). However, other scholars make sociolinguistic assertions that enact troubling binaries, chief among them the claim that students’ language-level writing issues reflect their membership in an “oral culture” (Hill; Zolbrod, “On the Reservation”). Scholars in composition and literacy studies have spent decades deconstructing binaristic theories of orality and literacy, in part because of how these theories play into racist and colonialist progress narratives (see Daniell, “Against the Great Leap”;

“Narratives of Literacy”). Like Lyons (“Fencing”), I reject characterizations of twenty-first century Native societies as essentially oral. Rather, I share his sense that some Native students have grown up in homes where reading may not be valued or practiced to the same extent that it is in many middle-class households (“A Captivity Narrative”). Furthermore, as I discuss below, Diné College students’ literacy practices are much more widespread, varied, and central to their lives and identities than compositionists writing about Native students have acknowledged.

Some composition scholars have drawn explicit attention to the economic issues many Native students face, pointing out, for example, that students may be struggling financially or working long hours in addition to their studies, sometimes to help support their families (Barwell; Zolbrod, “Reading and Writing”; Thurston; Matt; Gray-Rosendale, Bird, and Bullock). Likewise, many students have family obligations that occasionally take priority over school (Thurston; Gray-Rosendale, Bird, and Bullock; Matt). While some scholars understand these obligations as culturally-specific—and, in certain cases, such as the need to attend a ceremony, they might be—such demands may be similar to those faced by many low-income and working class students who sometimes have to deprioritize school in order to attend to the needs of family members. As I discuss below, Diné College students’ socioeconomic status and obligations to family are deeply intertwined, and rushing to romanticize “Native family values” ignores the class issues involved.<sup>50</sup> Unfortunately, very few scholars discussing Native student writers have devoted sustained attention to issues of racism or made more than passing mention of colonialism, settler or otherwise.

In contrast to the discourses of cultural difference that pervade much of the education and composition literature, Lyons portrays Native students as bringing a range of geographical, socioeconomic, linguistic, and spiritual experiences to their college writing classes. Rather than

being monolithic, he argues, Native students' identities and goals are diverse and often in conflict. Describing the students in his all-Native composition section at the University of North Dakota, Lyons writes:

To my mixedblood mind, the stories of Indian students are clearly *heteroglossic*—produced against, within, and in tandem with the grand narratives of contemporary life and culture: race and racism, intelligence and learning, literacy and orality, success and failure, us and them. (“A Captivity Narrative” 89)

Although they all identified as Diné, the Native students I know had similarly heteroglossic stories. They were more diverse, along many dimensions, than the narratives in the education and composition literature—and the counterhegemonic discourses of the college itself (House)—might lead readers to believe.

Like Lyons, I am “interested in dealing with what *is*, in an actually existing sort of way, without the discourses of assimilation or authenticity attempting to discredit it” (“Actually Existing” 303). That is because who these students actually are is complex, compelling, and often moving: the dreams unfolding before them are important. I refuse to “discredit” their lives and goals, which means moving beyond strategic essentialisms and the discourses of cultural difference to acknowledge the “irreducible modernity and diversity that inheres in every Native community” (Lyons, “Actually Existing” 297). Ultimately, I believe this shift not only offers a more accurate understanding of “actually existing” Diné College students but also provides a better foundation from which to develop composition pedagogies that equip these students to respond to the many rhetorical exigencies they face, both within and beyond the Navajo Nation.

*Actually Existing Diné College Students*

In this section, I examine eight dimensions of diversity among the sixteen Diné College students that I interviewed throughout the Fall 2012 semester. Each of these dimensions complicates the discourses of cultural difference that have characterized the education and composition literature and demonstrates the range of locally-specific student identities and experiences to which composition instructors can and often do respond. These dimensions, which emerged through my analysis of student interviews and course observations, include students' intersecting identities, geographical experiences, social networks, languages, literacies, prior experiences with schooling, goals and motivations, and challenges. In Table 12, I present a demographic overview of the sixteen students who participated in the interview portion of the study. Thirteen student participants selected their own pseudonyms, and three asked me to choose names for them, which they later approved. The students are listed by age in order to demonstrate how their language backgrounds reflected larger patterns of intergenerational language shift on the Navajo Nation (see "Languages" section, below).

Table 12: Demographic Overview of Student Participants

<b>Student</b>	<b>Instructor (Course #)</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Children</b>	<b>Growing-Up Location(s)</b>	<b>Language(s)</b>
William	James (101)	Male	43	Yes	On-reservation	L1 Diné bizaad Bilingual/biliterate
Johnny	James (101)	Male	35	Yes	On- and off- reservation (urban)	L1 Diné bizaad & English Bilingual
David	Lily (100B)	Male	32	No	On-reservation	L1 Diné bizaad Bilingual
Morning Star	Patrick (102)	Female	32	Yes	On-reservation	L1 Diné bizaad Bilingual
Sherry	James (101)	Female	25	Yes	On- and off- reservation (urban)	English-primary Understands Diné bizaad
Kurt	Barb (100B)	Male	21	No	On-reservation	English-primary Understands Diné bizaad
Madison Lane	Barb (100B)	Female	20	Yes	Off-reservation (bordertown)	English-primary Understands Diné bizaad
Johona	Barb (100B)	Female	20	No	On- and off- reservation (urban/military)	English-primary Understands Diné bizaad
Jeffrey	Patrick (102)	Male	20	No	On- and off- reservation (bordertown)	English-primary Understands Diné bizaad
Cloud	Lily (100B)	Male	19	No	On- and off- reservation (bordertown)	English-primary Understands Diné bizaad
Eden	Lily (100B)	Female	19	No	Off-reservation (bordertown)	English only
Cookie	Lily (100B)	Female	19	No	On-reservation	English-primary Understands Diné bizaad and Hopi
Judy	James (101)	Female	19	No	On-reservation	English-primary Understands Diné bizaad
Dezba	Patrick (102)	Female	19	No	Off-reservation (bordertown/ military)	English-primary Understands Diné bizaad
Nicholene	Patrick (102)	Female	19	No	On-reservation	English-primary Understands Diné bizaad and Hopi
Anastasia	Barb (100B)	Female	18	No	On-reservation	English only

Intersecting identities. As Table 12 shows, the students in this study varied along several intersecting identity categories (see Collins), including gender and age. Even in terms of tribal and racial identities, the students were diverse: while all sixteen were Diné, two also identified as Hopi and/or Zuni, and one as African American. (Dis)ability was another intersecting identity among these students—David described himself as a “wheelchair-bound individual.” This politicized identity had been forged in part through the necessity of advocating for his own accessibility needs, both on and off the Navajo Nation: David indicated that these challenges were often greater on the reservation because of “lack of development.” In both interviews and in writing, David repeatedly expressed his desire to show other people, Diné or otherwise, what could be accomplished even with a “disadvantage.” As he said, “I don’t really want to be in this situation, but that’s where I’m put, so I might as well take that as an opportunity to show other people that you can overcome an adversity.” David had a keen awareness of his rhetoric as *embodied*, and he sought to use the particular ethos that his successes as a wheelchair-bound individual gave him as a resource to make positive change in and beyond the Navajo Nation.

Students were also diverse in terms of their LGBT-related identities. Nineteen-year-old Cloud self-identified as gay within the first ten minutes of our initial interview—this identity was clearly central to his self-presentation and his understanding of his own life history. Cloud’s story reveals some of the complexities of being an openly gay Diné man of his generation: popular culture and broader national social movements play an important role in shaping young people’s emerging LGBT identities, even as Diné politicians and activists invoke competing interpretations of “tradition” to argue both for and against marriage equality on the Navajo Nation.<sup>51</sup> Cloud described coming out to his friends and family the summer before his freshman year of high school:

It was a scary thing. It was the most scariest thing I've ever done. I brought my mom up to my room, and I told her, and I cried. I remember she was standing right in front of me, and I cried, because people say, like, if you're gay then your family won't love you. That was the most scariest thing, that I didn't—I didn't want that to happen. I told my mom, and she was like, "Oh, honey, I already knew." She just laughed about it. I was like, "How?" And then she said, "Britney Spears." [laughs] Because I grew up listening to Britney ever since *Baby One More Time*. I would always tell my mom, "Mom! Britney, Britney, Britney!"...When I came out to my friends, everyone was like, "Oh, it's okay."...I have a lot of family that's okay with it because my family is wild, I guess. They all have understanding of everything. Yeah, we all come from an understanding place, and we all love each other, and they all know that I love them.

While Cloud's "wild" family and friends were accepting of his gay identity, he faced greater challenges in his reservation high school, where he was bullied to the point of becoming suicidal. This situation led him to switch schools multiple times, including a yearlong period during which he home-schooled online with his younger brother. He ultimately found academic success and social acceptance at a bordertown residential school his senior year. Despite the difficulties of his teenage years, Cloud spoke positively about his future as a gay Diné man, including his prospects for starting his own family some day. He did not perceive his gay identity to be incompatible with his emerging Diné identity.

While the students in this study enacted a wide range of complex, overlapping, and occasionally conflicting identities, I want to devote particular attention to Diné College students' religious and spiritual identities, which were much more diverse and dynamic than the literature, with its overwhelming focus on traditional worldviews and epistemologies, has tended to suggest.

Although I did not ask directly about students' religious activities, many discussed practices that signaled myriad identifications, including traditional Diné spirituality, the Native American Church (NAC), and various versions of Christianity, including multiple evangelical denominations and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS). William, 43, spoke often about the importance of his Christian identity. His description of his own spiritual journey reveals the diversity of religious identities available on the Navajo Nation, even within individual families, as they can play out over time:

I grew up in a home that was pretty much, I guess, a mixed thing, where my brothers were more into Native American Church. My aunts and my only uncle, they were really solid traditional people. Of course my mom, ever since I remember, has been a church person...I really looked up to my brothers on how they were, the way they talk with lots of wisdom and everything, so I figured, "Man, I'm going to follow these guys," so I went into the traditional parts of my beliefs, and also into the NAC part of it. In all those times that I was in those ceremonies, I felt out-of-placed. It was like I didn't belong...To make a long story short, I found that that wasn't for me. Once I got into church, it took off to the point where I'm a licensed minister now. I have a license. I can do marriages. I can do funerals. I can do everything. On this side [the traditional and NAC side], you know, I really, honestly, I really try to learn these songs and all these prayers that they have. I couldn't do it ...Now, when I go in behind the pulpit, it takes off. Things come to me like this [*sends his fingers*]...I told my family, like my wife, I told her—she was really into NAC, but I told her that, "It's up to you. If you want to go with that, that's fine, but this is my thing here." Now my whole family's in there [at our independent Christian church].

William's journey from feeling "out-of-placed" to finding a spiritual home is part of the long tradition of Christian conversion narratives,<sup>52</sup> although it also reveals a remarkably pluralistic ethos. William did not experience his Diné and Christian identities as being in conflict, although he did note that part of the appeal of Christianity for him was its openness to people of all races and cultures. Above all, William's descriptions of his own Christian path and practices were consistently *agentive*: his was not a story of forcible conversion or assimilation, but rather a narrative of personal spiritual development and entry into an independent religious community that did not, in fact, seem to have any bilagáana players worth mentioning.

For other students in the study, the boundaries between traditional Diné practices, NAC, and Christianity were even more porous. Morning Star and her family were very involved with a version of NAC that drew heavily on traditional Diné practices. Likewise, Sherry, whose family was LDS, also participated in traditional Diné ceremonies. The wide array of spiritual practices and identities available within Diné families and communities seemed to bring questions of spirituality and identity to the fore in many Diné College students' intellectual lives. Nineteen-year-old Cookie, for example, described her mother's recent Christian revival and her older sister's involvement with traditional Diné practices as part of her own growing interest in questions of spirituality.<sup>53</sup> As she said:

Right now, as a young adult, you start to question your religious beliefs and stuff like that—what you believe in. I'm just like, as a Native American, I should be into Native American Church or peyote or that. I'm open to learning that stuff because it is my heritage. Like I said, I'm just open to all religions. I'm not against, like, Christianity or Buddhism and voodoo or hoodoo or anything. I'm not going to support it, but I'm not against it, either.

Cookie's spiritual explorations intersected with her emerging sense of Native identity, which was evolving as she learned more about traditional Diné knowledge and Native history through her Diné College coursework. Like many of the students in the study, however, she expressed a fairly open attitude toward the array of spiritual practices in her family and community, as well as her sense of the wider range of religions in the world. The undeniable diversity and complexity of spiritual options on the Navajo Nation—a phenomenon that is, at this point, several generations in the making—complicates generalizations about Diné College students' identities and epistemological orientations.

Geographical experiences. Some readers might assume that Diné students have spent their lives entirely within small and relatively homogenous communities in rural reservation settings. The students in this study, however, had remarkably diverse geographical experiences: only Anastasia and Kurt had lived in one community their entire lives (see Table 12). The students came from many different parts of the 27,000-square-mile Navajo Nation, including the western and central areas in Arizona as well as the New Mexico side east of the Chuska Mountains (see Appendix B), and there are unique histories, identities, and linguistic features associated with each of these areas.<sup>54</sup> Excluding relocation to attend Diné College, eight students had lived in multiple communities *within* the Navajo Nation, some of which were hundreds of miles apart. Three students had lived within the borders of the Navajo Nation their entire lives, and one grew up moving back and forth between the Navajo and Hopi reservations. Seven students had spent much of their childhood on the Navajo Nation but left to pursue educational opportunities not otherwise available on the reservation: three of them moved as teenagers to bordertowns or cities in order to attend residential high schools, and four left as young adults to

attend vocational programs or community colleges in urban areas. All of the students who moved off-reservation remained in the Southwest.

Employment opportunities also had a major influence on students' geographical mobility. Johnny grew up moving back and forth between urban and reservation communities as his mother completed her college education and began her career at a federal agency. After graduating from a Navajo Nation high school, Johnny moved to Las Vegas, Nevada, and spent the next decade as a union carpenter, helping to build many of the large casinos that went up during the boom years in the 2000s. Then the market collapsed in 2008. As Johnny described it:

Recession hit Vegas pretty hard, because it's a tourist town...A lot of bankers and everything, owners and stuff like that dropped out of new buildings that were supposed to be built. Some buildings that were started already only got to maybe the fourth level and they stopped. A lot of jobs stopped, and they were all pretty much—I pretty much had no place to go. I had to pay off a lot of stuff, so I had no money. I just came home [to the reservation]. I was looking for work around here for probably a couple years [before enrolling at Diné College].

As Johnny's story demonstrates, students' geographical experiences were often shaped by the economic forces of wage labor, which drew them off the reservation for employment when times were good but sent them back to their family networks to regroup or retool when the jobs dried up.<sup>55</sup> Johona's family, for example, relocated between urban areas and the Navajo Nation several times during her childhood, as her father was alternately employed and laid off. During the post-2008 recession, they moved back in with extended family on the reservation. Johona's older sister joined the military but grew so homesick on her first tour of duty that Johona spent a year of high school in Florida, keeping her sister company and waiting tables at a nearby restaurant.

We might understand such movements as a function of the social geographies of the Southwest: employment opportunities on the reservation are scarce, even as extractive industries fuel growth in the region's urban areas and services and retail infrastructure prosper in the bordertowns. These social geographies shaped students' lives, their expectations, and their motivations for attending Diné College. Madison Lane and Eden had grown up in bordertowns where their parents were employed or in school, and both experienced Diné College's rural setting as a hardship. As Madison Lane said,

My mom was like, 'Why don't you go to Diné College?' I was skeptical at first...I didn't listen to her because I didn't want to get out in the middle of nowhere type of thing, since I'd been living in [Bordertown] for so long.

Both Madison Lane and Eden missed the conveniences of urban living, and Eden ultimately decided to transfer to a branch campus closer to the border after her first semester. Dezba, on the other hand, had made a very deliberate choice to return to the Navajo Nation. She had lived in bordertowns until her mother had married a man who was in the Army, and then spent her high school years in Colorado. She decided to attend Diné College because she wanted the experience of living on the reservation, where she could spend more time with her grandparents and other extended family.

In sum, Diné College students' geographical experiences were diverse, as were their motivations for living on the reservation at this particular point in their lives. Some, like Cookie and Nichole, felt a strong desire to use their education to get out and "travel the world" before returning to the Navajo Nation. Others, like Madison Lane, Eden, and Jeffrey<sup>56</sup>, were more interested in moving to bordertowns after they finished college, hoping that the degrees they were earning would give them career options in places that offered greater convenience and

economic opportunity. Most of the students in the study, however, were not looking to “get the hell out” (Lyons “Captivity Narrative” 97). Rather, they were pursuing postsecondary education because they hoped it would enable them to build more secure, stable lives for themselves and their families on the Navajo Nation. As Johnny said,

I want to be around home, close to home. I want to just be around my horses more often, and maybe if I have a family, I want to be at home at night...I just want to build my place up, man. I want a job close to where I'm from and build my cabin and stuff for my horses. Then I'll be happy.<sup>57</sup>

Johnny’s perspective reflected exhaustion with the vicissitudes of the labor market, which had battered his personal finances and self-esteem in recent years. As his story reveals, the diversity of students’ geographical experiences resulted, in part, from their engagement with the spatialized economic structures in and around the Navajo Nation. Although students encountered these structures in a variety of ways—from David’s difficulties acquiring school supplies to Eden’s unhappiness living “pretty much far from everything” during her first semester—they shaped students’ lived experiences, perspectives, and goals.

Social networks. Characterizations of the role of family and community in Native students’ academic achievement often fall into one of two categories. The first trots out some version of the dehumanizing “crabs in a bucket” metaphor, asserting that Native students who try to climb out of poverty are often pulled back down by dysfunctional relatives or jealous community members.<sup>58</sup> The other narrative invokes counterhegemonic discourses about the importance of Indigenous kinship systems, often idealizing tribal family values in order to critique Anglo culture and/or capitalism. Neither of these characterizations does justice to the complex realities of students’ social networks, particularly as these networks relate to their

educational experiences. My conversations with Diné College students suggest that family and friends play an essential role in helping them succeed in college, despite the many challenges presented by rural reservation poverty. However, many students also feel strong obligations to the people in these networks—people they love, who often are also struggling with income-related logistical, social, and health difficulties—and those obligations sometimes take priority over school. Although these networks are profoundly meaningful, and are sometimes discussed at the college in terms of *k’é*—a powerful Diné sense of kinship and clan—they are not romantic or ideal. They are made up of real human beings, flaws and all, doing what they can to help one another get by as they grapple with their own goals, challenges, and periodic crises, many of which are bound up in socioeconomic difficulties.

Family was indisputably important to the students in this study: eleven were living with family members at the beginning of the Fall 2012 semester, and two of the five students living in the college dorms traveled back to their family’s homes every weekend. All of the students mentioned family members frequently during our interviews. Many came from relatively large families—with the exception of Nicholene and Dezba, all had multiple siblings—and, as in every family, the dynamics were complex. Four students had biological parents who were still together, and three described close relationships with stepparents.<sup>59</sup> Eight students had grown up in single-parent households, and five indicated that they had been raised by grandparents for significant portions of their childhood. Several also described aunts, often their mothers’ sisters, who also played an important role in their upbringing, and many had close relationships with cousins.<sup>60</sup> In addition to their roles as children, grandchildren, siblings, nieces or nephews, and cousins, five of the students were parents themselves. Morning Star, Sherry, and Madison Lane were single mothers raising their children with help from parents and siblings; both Morning Star and Sherry

had recently left abusive relationships, and part of their motivation for returning to school was their pressing need to provide for their children.

As at many two-year colleges, the majority of students in the study were first-generation college students.<sup>61</sup> However, they described a remarkable amount of college knowledge and experience within their extended social networks: many had siblings, aunts, cousins, or grandmothers who had attended college and served as role models and sources of college-related social and cultural capital (see Bourdieu). And five students' parents *had* completed some form of postsecondary education: Kurt's mother and both of Jeffrey's parents had attended Diné College, and Dezba and Madison Lane's mothers held or were working toward master's degrees.<sup>62</sup> Despite assertions in the literature about ambivalence toward education in Diné communities (Thurston; Zolbrod, "Reading and Writing"; "On the Reservation"), all but one of the students described their families as being supportive of their schoolwork and educational goals. In many cases, family had played an important role in encouraging these students to attend college in the first place.

Contrary to the crabs-in-a-bucket narrative, most students indicated that family was crucial to helping them succeed in college. Eight said their parents or other family members regularly encouraged them to do well in school, and Dezba and Cookie both described parents or grandparents providing much-needed emotional support during personal situations that threatened to negatively affect their school performance. Indeed, some encouraged students to prioritize school despite challenges that the family was facing: both Eden and Cloud expressed frustration that family members were downplaying illness or other problems in order to avoid distracting them from schoolwork. As Cloud said, "My mom's so quiet with things. Then when I go home, she tells me. I'm like, 'Why didn't you tell me this?' She's like, 'Because you have

school.’’’ In addition to encouragement and emotional support, several students’ families were also providing crucial material support for their education. In many cases, this included housing, money, or food, as well as the always-pressing issue of transportation: Dezba’s grandparents lent her a car, Kurt’s family gave him gas money, and Sherry, Morning Star, Eden, and Madison Lane often relied on family members to give them rides to and from campus or public transit stops. Family members also helped provide access to technology. Sherry, for example, regularly borrowed her sister’s computer so that she could complete assignments without needing to travel to campus, and Morning Star’s parents helped her purchase a laptop, which quickly became an informational resource for the entire family.

Finally, a majority of the students described ways in which their families provided various kinds of academic support, particularly when it came to writing. Five students indicated that they gave their papers to parents, siblings, or cousins for help with proofreading and editing; William sought feedback on his essays from his daughters and wife. Other students reported discussing the ideas they were developing in their papers with family members. Morning Star’s narrative of revising her final research paper on her new laptop demonstrates how instrumental her family was to her academic success:

I sat there up to almost midnight...I was all like, “How do you get into the Word document program?”...I can’t really understand how to work it, but I had to call [my sister-in-law] back in New York, and she had to go step-by-step with me in setting up that Word document program...I needed help here and there. That’s when my mom came in. She was sitting up with me that long of the night. She telling me, “I’m just trying to sit through here with you, [Morning Star].” She put up a pot of coffee, and she’s all like, “Just do the best you can.”...I started kind of reading the paragraph over and over,

organizing it...I read it out loud so that she can hear. I said, "Mom, you got to tell me which word I say over and over again."

Morning Star drew on the expertise of her social network, which extended across the country, in order to complete her assignment: her sister-in-law provided technical assistance, and her mother, who speaks English but cannot read or write it, provided both emotional and editing support. Thus, even family members with relatively little formal education could be important resources for students as they took on the challenges of college coursework.

The corollary of this level of support was that many students felt a strong sense of responsibility to be there when family when needed them. As Cloud's frustration with his mother's caginess suggests, putting family first was an important value for many Diné College students. Sometimes these obligations were routine: Anastasia, for example, went home every weekend to help her mother take care of her younger siblings, and William made a point of carving out time to spend with his children and wife. Family emergencies, however, could be more disruptive. For those who participated in traditional Diné spiritual practices, the presence of the entire family was sometimes required for healing ceremonies. Emergencies could also strain financial resources, disrupt access to vehicles, or require students to step up and help provide childcare or other forms of assistance for relatives. As Judy said, "When something happens at home, then I really have to set time aside for that and take time away from school. A lot of that has been happening this semester. It's really hard to keep up."

Not all of the students were equally comfortable with this sense of family obligation. Cookie, in particular, seemed to chafe at her family's desire to keep her close. From our first interview, she insisted, "I don't get homesick." Rather, she experienced living in the dorms as a welcome reprieve from the responsibilities with which she'd grown up:

I think I like being independent, I guess you'd say. I mean not fully, but like being on my own and taking care of myself because usually I'm the one taking care of everybody else. I'm taking care of people's children. I'm taking care of my little brothers and sisters. I cook and clean up the house. I think I like it better, like, being away from home for a while.

During the Fall 2012 semester, which was her first at Diné College, Cookie was often in conflict with her mother about whether or not she would come home over the weekend; with a combination of exasperation and tenderness, she described how her family had driven the hour and a half to campus to pick her up after she had just told them not to come. Cookie suspected her mother was afraid she would one day abandon the family:

My mom always said I was that child who would, like, go off the reservation and never come back because her aunt's like that. A lot of people say I'm like my aunt. I'm smart and I just look at the bigger picture, I guess you would say. She lives in Seattle, and she hasn't come home...She just left and she never came back. My mom says that's going to be me.

Although Cookie was eager to leave the Navajo Nation to complete her education, she was insistent that she would eventually return to "help the reservation." What I hear in Cookie's mother's fear is the knowledge that, given economic conditions on the reservation, her daughter would not only have to leave the Navajo Nation to pursue educational opportunities, but might stay away because of the relative dearth of jobs for educated professionals.

Although the literature on Native learners tends to focus on family relationships, it is worth noting that, as with many college-age students, friends also provided an important source of academic as well as emotional support for the students in this study. Eight students, most of

whom lived in the dorms, described talking about paper ideas or exchanging drafts with peers at Diné College, even when it was not required for class. Other students also sought help and encouragement from friends who were not at Diné College. Johnny, for example, had many college-educated friends who shared their own stories to help him put his experiences in perspective. Judy and Nicholene described sending their writing to friends who were attending other institutions, and Cookie used email to give feedback to a friend from high school who was taking a composition course at an off-reservation community college. Communication technologies like texting, email, Facebook, and other social media enabled Diné College students to make extensive use of their social networks—both family and friends—to reach out for emotional support, discuss ideas for papers, ask questions about research assignments, and get feedback on drafts. As I discuss below, these technologies were an important part of many students' literacy practices.

Languages. The Navajo Nation is indisputably a very distinctive linguistic context. Rather than a binary English-Diné bizaad split, however, this setting is characterized by a complex linguistic diversity resulting from the on-going process of language shift. Although Diné bizaad is considered the healthiest Indigenous language in North America, the percentage of children who speak it fluently has been on the decline for decades. Language activists and educational policymakers on the Navajo Nation have devoted a great deal of energy to language maintenance efforts across the reservation (McCarty, Romero-Little, and Zepeda; House; Spolsky).<sup>63</sup> The language backgrounds of the students in this study reflect these broad patterns of intergenerational language transmission. All sixteen students spoke English fluently, and the four students who identified themselves as first-language speakers of Diné bizaad—William, Johnny, David, and Morning Star—were all over the age of 30. Two of the youngest students in the study,

Anastasia and Eden, indicated that they neither spoke nor understood Diné bizaad.<sup>64</sup> However, the majority of students described themselves as being able to understand the language, even though they could not speak it fluently.<sup>65</sup>

To further complicate this picture, most of the students, whether bilingual or not, spoke some version of Navajo English, which “differs on phonological, morphological, syntactic, discourse, and lexical grounds” from the “ideologically-privileged abstraction called Standard English” (Webster, “‘Still’” 79). Their familiarity with English varieties similar to EAE varied depending on their geographical experiences, prior schooling, and the nature of their literacy practices and media consumption. In short, although Diné College students are often described as “ESL” writers—something that was undoubtedly true when the college first opened its doors in the late 1960s (F. Clark)—most of the younger students might now be better understood as occupying a highly variable linguistic space that shares much with both “Generation 1.5” students—that is, the children of immigrants who have grown up in multilingual environments (see Harklau, Losey, and Siegal)—and speakers of other Englishes. A variety of language ideologies circulate in this ever-shifting linguistic context: the valorization and identification with Diné bizaad encouraged by language maintenance efforts; a keen sense of the value of the economic, social, and political value of English proficiency; largely unquestioned “Standard English” ideologies in which features of Navajo English are understood as “bad” or “broken”; and, for some students, a sense of guilt or shame about their lack of proficiency in Diné bizaad and/or the English they speak and write.

These varying language backgrounds and ideologies were reflected in the diversity of students’ beliefs and attitudes about Diné bizaad. All four fluent speakers valued their proficiency highly, and none saw their knowledge of Diné bizaad as coming at the expense of

their English speaking or writing ability.<sup>66</sup> For Johnny, the language was central to his Diné identity: “It’s just who I am, I guess. I’m Navajo, so I’m just glad I know how to speak it because not a lot of these kids nowadays even learn how to speak it.” For David, knowing the language was also important because it gave him greater access to Diné elders and the knowledge they held. As he said,

I'm fortunate enough to know more of this stuff. I see a lot of these kids, they talk about how they want to know a lot of stuff, but they don't know how to talk to their grandparents because they don't know the Navajo language.

Morning Star, on the other hand, valued her bilingualism primarily because it enabled her to translate spoken and written English for her parents, neither of whom could read or write in either language. Thus, all four bilingual students viewed Diné bizaad as a resource rather than an impediment to their learning in academic settings. They considered themselves fortunate to have access to both languages, which enabled them to draw on multiple sources of knowledge.

Among the students who were not fluent speakers, attitudes toward the language were more mixed. Five of the students who understood Diné bizaad but could not speak it expressed a desire to improve their proficiency—indeed, the opportunity to improve their ability to speak the language was something several valued about attending Diné College. As Cloud said, “It’s a really beautiful language. One day I want to be an old man and speak Navajo. That’s my top goal in life, to be old and speak Navajo.” Becoming a fluent speaker of Diné bizaad was central to Cloud’s sense of what it would mean to achieve full maturity as a Diné man. For Cookie, on the other hand, Diné bizaad was just one of many languages she wanted to learn:

I want to be, not bilingual, but I want to know a whole bunch of different languages. But I think before I do that, I think I should work on my Navajo first. I should be able to speak my Navajo language before I go on to learning a different language.

Thus, although she did not believe her Diné identity restricted her to one or even two languages, Cookie felt a responsibility to prioritize learning Diné bizaad. This sense of obligation—often expressed in terms of a desire to be able to communicate with their grandparents and to pass the language on to their own children—was common among those students who were most invested in improving their ability to speak Diné bizaad.

The other seven students in the study, however, did not attach a strong value to improving their language proficiency, at least at this point in their lives. As Madison Lane said,

I hardly speak it, but I can understand anything that's in Navajo... My mom and my grandma and my stepdad, all of them are [fluent speakers], but I just choose not to speak it because I think I sound funny... I just don't think it's necessary...Everybody speaks English that I know, so it just seems like I don't need to be speaking Navajo. My family encourages it for us to speak Navajo, but I'd just rather not speak Navajo. I'm just content with just understanding what they're saying.<sup>67</sup>

Several students' attitudes toward learning Diné bizaad were similarly pragmatic: they could understand both languages and make themselves understood by speaking English, so they saw little reason to invest time and energy on language learning that could be spent in other areas of study with more immediate academic and economic benefit.

However, even among the students who did not place a high value on Diné bizaad proficiency, only Judy saw the language as having a negative impact on her writing abilities. As she said,

Well, being that my family is fluent in Navajo and that I hear it all the time, I guess it's kind of hard with my writing in English because their first language is all Navajo, and they kind of speak broken English. Kind of, a little bit of that rubbed off onto me, and yeah. I find myself not really using the correct words for sentences, but like using broken English sometimes.

Judy's repeated use of the phrase "broken English" signals the influence of Standard English ideologies on her understanding of her own primary language. Other students in the study, however, either viewed their multilingual backgrounds as unrelated to their academic writing in English or saw Diné bizaad as a resource that enhanced their writing. Cookie, for example, believed that Diné bizaad provided her with unique insights and figurative language, and Nicholene found that "the words in Navajo that mean so much" contributed important concepts to her thinking. Johona succinctly captured the additional perspectives offered by Diné bizaad when she said, "I guess it's another window to look through. It's not just one way to look at things."

In sum, Diné College students' linguistic context was complex and shifting, and students often experienced it differently based on their age, spiritual identities, social networks, and geographical locations. This complexity yielded unique linguistic resources, but it also meant students were acquiring academic literacies within a sea of powerful and sometimes conflicting language ideologies relating to both Diné bizaad and English. As I discuss in Chapter Five, these ideologies often framed English as singular and monolithic: while students and faculty sometimes talked about how everyday spoken Diné bizaad increasingly incorporates English words, phrases, and syntax—Webster calls this Navlish (*Explorations*; "Intimate Grammars")—

they rarely acknowledged the existence of a distinctive English language variety that was, at this historical moment, most Diné College students' primary language.

Literacies. Despite persistent characterizations of Diné College students as inhabiting an "oral culture" (Zolbrod, "On the Reservation"), the students in this study were, in fact, engaged in a wide range of literacy practices.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, their literate activity was more extensive than even their instructors were likely aware. While some of this activity was closely tied to schooling, in other cases it was variations of what Anne Ruggles Gere calls the "extracurriculum" of composition ("Kitchen Tables" 79). Within the discourses of cultural difference in the education and composition literature, which typically focus on the aspects of students' lives that are marked as distinctively Native, the "largely invisible and inaudible" dimensions of Native students' literate lives that take place "outside classroom walls" (Gere, "Kitchen Tables" 78) have rarely been discussed.

The extent and nature of students' out-of-school print reading practices varied widely. Both Johnny and Johona explicitly stated that they did not enjoy reading. At the age of 35, however, Johnny was pushing himself to read more: his list included the novels of Louis L'Amour and Tony Hillerman, as well as nonfiction titles like Hampton Sides' *Blood and Thunder*, a history of the Mexican-American War and Diné people's forced removal and military incarceration. Other students had long been active readers. Seven said they regularly read books for their own enjoyment, and their tastes were quite diverse. Judy, for example, was a self-described admirer of Walt Whitman, while Cloud loved reading ghost stories. Cookie had been a particularly voracious reader in high school, when she worked her way through most of the young adult novels in her library:

I was reading Hilari Bell. I was reading Avi. I was reading Lauren Kate. I was reading Stephanie Myers, of course. Tamora Pierce. I was reading a whole lot of books...I was reading like every day. I'd check out a book, and then the next morning I'd turn in a book and then I'd check out another book, or I'd just go in and get like five books for the entire week. Then come back the next week and check out five more books.

Although many students at Diné College may have grown up in households with relatively few books, most had at least intermittent library access, and some read recreationally across a wide range of genres.

Many students also described *writing* for their own enjoyment. David and Nicholene wrote poetry, and Cloud, whose knowledge of pop music was almost encyclopedic, said he had written lyrics for “over 400 songs” since his sophomore year of high school. Cookie was perhaps the most prolific creative writer: as a high school student, she wrote several screenplays. One, a “teen flick” set in an urban area, had an intricate plot involving a gay love triangle, unplanned pregnancy, and murder. Another, which Cookie planned out during her long bus rides to and from her school on the Hopi reservation, was a supernatural romance featuring a “trickster/goddess of chaos” and a “shape-shifter werewolf”: the story was set in both New York City and on the Navajo Nation. Cookie also attempted to write a young adult novel with a strong female protagonist set in medieval times. This writing was embedded in Cookie’s social life:

I was writing a book, and my friend [Brittany], we were both writing books, and we’d, like, give our books to each other, and...she’d give me suggestions...I guess you would say she was like my editor or my publisher or whatever.

These literacy activities—often shared with friends—were an arena in which Cookie explored issues of class and gender, examined questions of good and evil, and took up themes of death,

resurrection, and justice, all while experimenting with various elements of genres she encountered through her reading and media consumption. These stories were set both on and off the reservation and involved Native as well as non-Native characters; Cookie even said she considered having her medieval character speak Diné bizaad, but she planned to publish this story—she envisioned it as a bestseller—and she worried, “Should I expose the Navajo language to the entire world? Would I need some kind of approval?” Thus, Cookie’s creative writing drew on local landscapes, language, and stories, as well as her knowledge of popular literature, film, and television. It was, as Lyons might say, “hybrid to the hilt” (“Fencing” 84)

Several students also engaged in forms of personal writing to express their feelings and record their experiences. Sherry, for example, first began keeping a diary in middle school as part of a language arts class, and had continued to keep up the practice into adulthood. As she said, “I’m still keeping a diary...I wanted to make a book of myself when I was young...so that I can give it to my daughters when I’m done.” Likewise, Madison Lane kept an “agenda” throughout her pregnancy that tracked both academic and non-academic aspects of her life:

I used to write down the things I would eat, how I was feeling. I would write down all of my assignments in there because I was going to school...The only reason why I did that was because so that maybe with later on in life, my daughter wants to know how things were. I wrote appointments in there, I would write down when she first kicked, nights I couldn’t sleep. I would write just little notes in there like that, so she knows what I went through.

Like Sherry, Madison Lane saw her journaling as a form of intergenerational communication, with her daughter as the intended audience. Literacy was a way for both women to preserve and

pass along the story of their struggles from mother to daughter, a bond that is often particularly strong in matrilineal Diné families.

The students in this study were nearly all engaged in digital literacy practices. Judy, for example, kept a blog on Tumblr, which she used to share humorous observations about her daily life with friends, many of whom were going to college off-reservation. More than half the students were active on Facebook, and many regularly read sports coverage and other news online. Jeffrey, who was majoring in computer science and could program in several different coding languages, had been designing websites since he was in middle school. Indeed, with the exception of Morning Star, who had relatively little experience with computers, all of the students regularly engaged with online content, much of it text-based. Likewise, nearly every student I met at Diné College—including Morning Star—was an avid text-messenger.<sup>69</sup>

Technology also intersected with students' other out-of-school literacies. William, for example, was highly engaged in a variety of literacy practices through his church, where he frequently delivered bilingual sermons of his own composition.<sup>70</sup> When writing these sermons, William used multiple translations of the Bible and online research:

When all my family goes to bed I sit at the table, and pretty soon I have my iPad here [*points to a space in front of him*]. I got my laptop here [*points to another space in front of him*], typing my sermons. Then doing a couple of different versions [of the Bible]. This strategy of moving between his various Bibles, textual research on his iPad, and the sermon he was composing on his laptop was one that William transferred directly to his English coursework. When James asked the class to interpret Shakespeare's "Sonnet XV," William approached the task in same way he did his sermon writing:

I couldn't really put it together, even though he was explaining it. Like, "Huh?" I went to my iPad, and I looked it up. "Shakespeare Sonnet 15 in basic English." I looked it up, and "Oh okay." That's what I do. That's how I—basically all my sermons come out of the King James...That's the one I use a lot...I don't know if you've ever looked into one of those. They use a lot of old English, thee, thou, all these different [words].

Clearly, the mutually informative print and digital literacy practices that William had developed through his church-related activities provided an important resource for his school-based reading and writing, helping him interpret a challenging text written in early modern English.<sup>71</sup>

It is important to note, however, that spirituality-related literacy practices were not restricted to those students who identified as Christian. In fact, Johnny, David, and Dezba all described reading books about traditional Diné spirituality and philosophy.<sup>72</sup> They often did this reading alongside their efforts to learn more about traditional Diné knowledge through their college coursework and conversations with grandparents or other elders. This tendency to draw on *both* oral and written sources is evident, for example, in David's description of his efforts to learn more about Sa'ah Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón, the traditional spiritual principles underlying the Diné Educational Philosophy:

I don't really know what it means, but as far as I've been asking different elders, it seems to be to complete the journey, to make everything whole, and then not only making it whole, but also in harmony and in tune with everything else...I've been buying books about our own tradition and reading different things.

In practice, then, the notion of a fundamental oral/literate (i.e. Native/non-Native) binary does not reflect the actual intellectual activities of the Diné College students in this study. This phenomenon may be generational, but that also means it is probably ascendant. The younger,

English-primary students in this study had not grown up in a strictly “oral culture”: rather, they had been engaged with print and, increasingly, digital literacies their entire lives, and many turned to print sources as one way to learn more about their heritage. David saw this practice of “using a lot of different sources” as reflecting a long-standing Diné inclination to learn in ways that “brought together seeing, hearing, and doing.”

Those students who had held jobs prior to enrolling at Diné College had also engaged in a variety of employment-related literacy practices, such as data-entry and report writing. William, who worked full-time as a vocational rehabilitation counselor, described the most extensive workplace writing:

I do a lot of narrative reports. When a consumer comes in, or—we call them consumers—they come in, we do an intake of all this information, then we do a narrative of their history. Then I do what we call Individualized Plan for Employment, I do those. I do eligibility certificates. I do memos to different programs or letters to different programs.

Over the years, William had also written successful grant applications. In fact, his sense of the importance of writing in his workplace was part of what had led him to return to school: “I kind of noticed myself needing some more help, so that’s why also I signed up...with the school here.”

Students’ self-employment also involved a range of rhetorical choices and literate activities. Morning Star had long supplemented her family’s income by making and selling jewelry and other artwork to tourists at the Canyon de Chelly overlook<sup>73</sup> near her home. Selling her artwork to strangers from around the world required sophisticated rhetorical awareness:

Something that I learned, too, as I was looking at how you have to sell something, you just cannot sit there all quiet. When a person comes up, you just cannot sit there... You

have to be like, “Hello. How was your hike? How was your day? This is what I make here.” You got to tell them about it...I would have a lot of things to talk about to somebody, and that would kind of bring them in a little bit. The more I’d talk about like certain things that I make, like natural juniper seeds, like those are the necklaces that are supposed to protect you...If you don’t tell them, how are they going to buy from you? They don’t know about it. They’ll just keep walking. If they know what it is for and what you’re trying to do there, too, they’ll buy it from you eventually.

Morning Star had discerned that tourists could be persuaded to purchase her products when she helped them make meaning from the symbols and materials she used. Those meanings—the stories attached to the objects (and, perhaps, the conversation with an “Indian”)—were part of what people were buying from her.

Morning Star channeled this insight into the literacy practices surrounding her artwork.<sup>74</sup> She began providing written explanations to accompany the small rock slabs she painted, which integrated symbols from petroglyphs on the walls of the canyon:

I got little like paper explanation that I had to put together for my painting...Trying to just include our Navajo culture was what I try to do, and I try to tell people about it...Even the paintings that I do—I’ve been doing paintings a lot lately on sandstone that I pick up from the local area, and every symbol has a different story or like a different definition. The way I draw the whole piece of sandstone is like a little story about what I think about. I had them in little handouts. I just gave it out to people that bought it, and they can share it with their families at home.

Not only was Morning Star composing stories through the technology of petroglyphs on sandstone, but she was also creating written narratives in English to translate those compositions

to an international audience. Of all the students in the study, Morning Star may have been experiencing the most pressing financial, emotional, and academic challenges in Fall 2012. She also had some of the strongest grounding in Diné language and traditional knowledge and the least direct experience beyond the reservation. And yet, she understood the literacies surrounding her artwork in almost ambassadorial terms: she felt a responsibility to teach tourists about the importance of the place she was from, one of the most sacred locations in Diné Bikéyah, and she imagined her rock painting stories being read by people around the world.

The diversity and richness of Diné students' extracurricular literacy practices was a finding that initially surprised me, precisely because it stands in such stark contrast to the image of Native students presented by much of the education and composition literature. While scholars have been quick to acknowledge the rhetorical resources that Native students bring from their home communities—perhaps because rhetoric is closely associated with orality, and therefore compatible with discourses of cultural difference that emphasize an oral/literate binary—there has been relatively little discussion of these students' robust literacy practices.<sup>75</sup> I suspect this is at least partly a manifestation of the impulse to consign Native people to the past or to define Native cultural practices in narrow, salvage-ethnographic terms. *Twilight*, Tumblr, grant writing, and HTML coding do not fit comfortably into romantic conceptions of Diné society as a separate world. Such romanticism, however, might result in missed pedagogical opportunities: there is a great deal of literate activity among Diné College students that composition instructors can build on if they know it is there.

Prior experiences with schooling. Although the literature on Native learners often assumes that students come to college with similar schooling experiences, the students in this study had remarkably varied educational histories. Of the sixteen, six had completed their entire

K-12 education in Navajo Nation schools. Another three had done all of their K-12 schooling at Native-serving institutions: Nicholene and Cookie both completed parts of their education at schools on the Hopi reservation, and Jeffrey had gone to a bordertown college-preparatory high school specifically for Diné students. Five students had attended K-12 schools both on- and off-reservation—in two cases, the off-reservation institutions were residential schools with large Native populations—while two had *never* attended school on the Navajo Nation before coming to Diné College. Dezba went to bordertown public schools through junior high, at which point her stepfather was stationed in Colorado and she enrolled at a high school for military dependents. Eden grew up attending bordertown public schools but graduated from a BIA residential school in Oklahoma. In short, it would be inaccurate to assume that Diné College students complete all of their K-12 schooling in rural Navajo Nation schools—most in this study had more complicated educational pathways.

For a variety of reasons, many of which were related to spatialized socioeconomics, several of the students had switched schools frequently. In Johona’s case, this relocation was the result of her father’s cycles of unemployment. Sherry and Eden, on the other hand, had to change schools after being expelled for behavioral issues, and both Sherry and Morning Star completed their high school educations at alternative schools after they became mothers. Cookie transferred back and forth between high schools on the Navajo and Hopi reservations on multiple occasions in order to spend time with her Hopi relatives. And, as I describe above, Cloud switched schools several times after he was bullied for coming out to his classmates. For some of these students, this kind of relocation may have disrupted their academic preparation. Such mobility also makes it difficult to anticipate the literacy curricula that incoming Diné College students have experienced: the writing that students reported doing in high school ranged from almost none to

a wide variety of creative and expressive genres, personal narratives, and, in some cases, five-paragraph or modes-based essays. Only Jeffrey, Dezba, and Nicholene had encountered an explicitly college-preparatory curriculum in high school.

To further complicate the educational picture, half of the students in the study were not newcomers to postsecondary education in Fall 2012. Five had previously been enrolled in vocational programs: William had studied electronics at two Native-serving technical institutions, Sherry had trained to be a veterinary technician at Navajo Technical College (now Navajo Technical University), David attended an off-reservation trade school with the goal of becoming a machinist, Nicholene spent a year in culinary school, and, during high school, Dezba had completed dual enrollment courses in fire science at her local community college. Both Madison Lane and Judy had initially started their postsecondary education by taking classes at off-reservation community colleges, but quickly dropped out—Madison Lane because she had difficulties with financial aid, and Judy because she found herself uncomfortable with the instructional environment. As Judy said,

It was a really big, big school, really diverse, and the classes were really too big for me. It was like fifty kids in one class, and I could barely even talk to the instructor...I didn't feel like I belonged there, I guess. It was weird seeing like a lot of different ethnicities, I guess. I just feel a lot more comfortable here with a lot of Navajo people, people of my kind.

Jeffrey encountered similar difficulties at the large bordertown university where he started his postsecondary education: he eventually ended up on academic probation and came back to the reservation to retake courses and pull up his grades. Judy and Jeffrey had been successful students at their Diné-serving high schools, but both struggled at large, diverse institutions where

they suddenly found themselves to be minorities and had little personal communication with their instructors.<sup>76</sup>

Furthermore, several of the students had attended Diné College in the past—indeed, Morning Star was coming back to the college after an eight-year break in her schooling. Like many two-year colleges, Diné College was a second-, third-, and even fourth-chance educational option for some students. The students were far from blank slates: they had experienced a variety of different kinds of literacy instruction, both vocational and academic, and many commented on how the concepts, strategies, and assignments they were encountering in their Diné College composition courses aligned with or differed from their prior instructional experiences. Not all of those experiences had been positive: some students carried particularly distasteful memories of high school English classes focused almost exclusively on grammar and mechanics. And although many students had enjoyed and even excelled in their prior English courses, not all had adequate preparation for college writing, at least as measured by the ACCUPLACER placement assessment software used by the college.<sup>77</sup> Of the sixteen students in the study, only two had placed directly into English 101, the gateway course in Diné College’s college-level composition sequence. The rest were required to complete either one or two developmental writing courses, and, in many cases, developmental reading, as well.

Goals and motivations. Like the University of North Dakota students that Lyons describes (“A Captivity Narrative”—like most undergraduates, Native or otherwise—the students in this study brought a range of motivations and goals to their studies at Diné College. When I selected these students from the pool of volunteers, I sought to include a range of degree and career aspirations. However, from our first interviews, it became clear that the degrees, majors, and desired occupations students listed on the recruitment questionnaire were, in many

cases, very loose plans. By December, eleven of the sixteen had changed their career goals; like many first-year college students, their interests and ambitions were in flux as they gained a better understanding of the structures and expectations of higher education.<sup>78</sup> These students' career interests ranged across many areas: education; healthcare; law enforcement; the military; social work/counseling; environmental or animal sciences; fine arts; business; computer science; and Diné/Native American studies. Those who wanted to go on to a four-year institution were considering a range of possible transfer destinations, but most planned to attend a public college or university in the Southwest.<sup>79</sup>

All but Madison Lane, Jeffrey, and Eden eventually wanted to make their careers on the Navajo Nation. The students' career goals reflected their geographical preferences: those who wanted to stay on the Navajo Nation were pursuing their particular fields based on a combination of personal interest, a desire for greater financial stability, and a sense that there were jobs in that field available on or near the reservation. The social geographies of the region often force Diné people, particularly men working in the trades, to leave their families for weeks or months at a time to pursue off-reservation employment (see McCloskey; Deyhle *Reflections in Place*). Students like Johnny hoped that their education would enable them to pursue locally available jobs that would provide some measure of economic security while allowing them to stay close to home and family.

Contributing to their families' economic well-being was one of students' primary reasons for attending college. For some of the younger students, this included a pressing desire to help care for parents and grandparents who were struggling. As Eden said, "I do want better things for my family and me." All three of the mothers in the study spoke movingly about their desire to

provide a more stable life for their children. Sherry considered her young daughters her greatest motivation:

I always look at my kids every morning when I get up...I always look at them and always want them to have a better life than what I have. They motivate me really good. It just takes that one look from their face...When I do my homework they—it's just cute. They get out their pencils and their coloring pens and crayons and they think they're doing homework, too.

As Sherry's comments suggest, many of the students in this study were well aware that they were role models for the younger people in their lives: siblings, cousins, and nieces and nephews, as well as their own children. Six students expressed sentiments similar to Cloud's: "I want to show them you can be anything. You just have to work hard for it." Those who benefited from the expertise and encouragement of college-educated people in their social networks were often eager to become a similar resource for other family members.

Several students also said they wanted to use their education to improve conditions on the Navajo Nation. Many expressed a desire to find work that would enable them to "help my people." This theme, which is prominent in David's scholarship essay, came up often in our interviews. As he said:

If we learn something a better way, why keep it for yourself when you can teach so many other people the same thing, and would bring so many people—so many more people up and not just yourself?...We're trying to rebuild a tribe, our culture, everything. Why just be the only one that stands out when you can bring along everybody with you?...After we get all our degrees, wherever we're going to be at, and who knows, we might actually be where we need to be.

David understood the educational experience that he and his peers were undertaking as a nation-building project. Together, they were equipping themselves to be the next generation of Navajo Nation leaders, and they had a responsibility to help one another learn, as well as to share the fruits of their education with other Diné people.<sup>80</sup> David's sense that tribally-supported education should in some way serve the collective well-being of the Navajo Nation was not universal—many students were more focused on their immediate personal and family needs—but Nicholene, Cookie, Cloud, and Kurt expressed a similar desire to “help the reservation,” a motivation that their educational experiences at Diné College seemed to strengthen over time.

Finally, many of the students were also motivated by the promise of personal transformation. Cloud, David, Nicholene, and Morning Star all spoke about how the literacy activities they were engaged with at Diné College were changing them in ways that they valued. For Morning Star, her English 102 course made important contributions to her broader goal of self-improvement:

That's what really motivated me this whole time, as not only becoming a better writer and completing the class work, but becoming a better person and becoming a better mom to my kids. Actually just me, myself, being a better person as a person. That's something that I really needed right at this time of my life...I wanted to improve myself.

Some students spoke of their education as a form of spiritual growth—Morning Star, in fact, once referred to Patrick as a “spiritual guide.” The concept of personal development lies at the heart of traditional Diné spiritual practices (Jim; Aronilth; Farella) and is a value that Diné College foregrounds in its educational philosophy (see Chapter Six). Whether or not they framed this goal in terms of traditional Diné values, many students saw education and literacy learning to be central to their project of self-betterment. As David's scholarship essay suggests, these

students understood Diné College to offer academic and spiritual support for becoming the kind of people they wanted to be.

Challenges. My conversations with Diné College students suggested that the greatest barriers to their academic success related not to some kind of across-the-board cultural difference, but rather to the challenges of widespread rural reservation poverty and resulting social problems.<sup>81</sup> Many students had attended under-resourced K-12 schools, grew up in negative peer environments, and/or experienced disruptions to their education caused by geographical relocation or family difficulties that left them academically underprepared for college coursework. As a consequence, they were often required to complete developmental courses that consumed much of their financial aid and slowed their progress to degree completion. Likewise, students often relied heavily on their social networks for various kinds of support to attend college, but when these networks fell through, the consequences could be disastrous. Several students pointed to problems in romantic relationships, conflicts among family members, and concerns about the quality of childcare provided by extended family that either distracted them from their schoolwork or made it difficult for them to attend class.

Transportation issues presented an enormous logistical challenge for many of the students in this study. Five, including David, were commuting to campus from homes that were more than twenty-five miles away—for the first half of the Fall 2012 semester, Madison Lane was riding the transit bus more than an hour and a half *each way*, four to five days a week. Those who had working cars or trucks worried about making payments, filling the gas tank, and/or keeping their vehicles running; as the fall turned to winter, commuter students also became increasingly concerned about road conditions: many lived on unpaved or poorly maintained roads. The main Diné College campus is at an elevation of over 7100 feet: there are frequent snowstorms, and the

roads are often dangerously icy in the winter, particularly for those with aging tires. Unfenced livestock and people driving under the influence can make traveling after dark particularly hazardous. For those without their own vehicles—or who could not immediately afford to fix vehicles that broke down—getting to campus could be even more harrowing. These students relied either on rides or borrowed vehicles, usually from family members. However, students who borrowed cars might be sharing access to the vehicle with several other people, and they still needed gas money to cover their commute. Both Sherry and Morning Star reported hitchhiking from their homes to campus when other transportation was not available.<sup>82</sup>

Housing was also an on-going issue for several of the students in the study. For those living with extended family in relatively small homes, having a quiet place to study was a challenge, particularly if they had difficulty getting to campus to work in the library or computer labs. For others, crises or conflicts within the family could make a seemingly secure housing situation suddenly untenable; one student, for example, missed a week of school when she and her sister were evicted. For yet other students, the utilities infrastructure in their communities presented challenges. Lack of running water in some homes created the added logistical burden of hauling water, which cost time, money, and physical effort and further taxed aging vehicles. The need to haul and chop firewood in preparation for winter—both for students' own households and for aging relatives—presented another competing demand on their time. One student had no electricity in her home, so she read and studied by lamplight.

Technology access was also a challenge for some students. Several experienced periods during which they lacked a mobile phone—family members often shared phones based on who had the greatest immediate need—which compounded other logistical difficulties, such as arranging rides to and from campus. Reliable computer and internet access also presented

difficulties for some students: a few borrowed laptops from family members, which could lead to lost files or computer viruses transmitted via flash drive. Those students who did not have laptop access sometimes found that campus computer labs were overcrowded or not open late enough for them to complete their work. And, for students like Morning Star, familiarity with technology was also a challenge. She had not had many opportunities to learn basic computer skills like sending email attachments and formatting Microsoft Word documents.

Of course, at the root of nearly all of these challenges is a lack of financial resources. For the single mothers in the study, the cost of diapers and other supplies for rapidly growing children was a constant pressure. Despite the fact that Diné College is one of the least expensive postsecondary institutions in the country, tuition was still a problem for some: one student who is just three courses short of completing a degree has been unable to reenroll at Diné College for a year and a half because of an outstanding bill for a few hundred dollars. Other students indicated that various crises had led them to give family members financial aid or scholarship money that was supposed to cover their college living expenses for the semester. And two students had work schedules that sometimes conflicted with their classes. William had sufficient flexibility at his place of employment to pass his writing class, although he was forced to miss several meetings because of work obligations. However, the younger student was new to her job and did not feel that she could request a more flexible schedule. That much-needed source of income to priority over making it to class, and frequent work-related absences at the end of the semester contributed to her ultimate failure to pass her English course.

Finally, as David's essay illustrates, health-related issues also presented challenges to some students' academic success. As enrolled tribal members, all of the students in the study qualified for medical care through the Indian Health Service. However, accessing these services

sometimes required extensive travel or long hours in the waiting room. For the mothers in the study, their children's illnesses or injuries sometime made it difficult to get to class or complete coursework: Madison Lane, for example, described writing a paper while sitting next to her young daughter's hospital bed after she developed a frighteningly high fever. Other students missed class to care for family members with disabilities or chronic illnesses, often of the sort associated with poor diet, substance abuse, working in physically demanding jobs, or exposure to air and water pollution from mining and power plants. These are the physical effects of living in what Chris Hedges and Joe Sacco call capitalism's "sacrifice zones" (xi).<sup>83</sup> The economic structures that exploit Native land and labor can disable people like David's father, which presents time-consuming logistical difficulties for caretakers. In some situations, this creates further challenges for Diné College students' academic success and ultimately reinforces cycles of reservation poverty.

### *The Settler Colonial Bait-and-Switch*

As I hope this chapter has shown, Diné College students are more diverse along many dimensions than the education and composition literature has generally portrayed. I believe the scholars who produce that literature have the best of intentions: to move away from the unquestioned privileging of white, middle-class norms in educational settings; to make spaces in the classroom and curriculum for a wider range of perspectives, values, and rhetorical practices; and to develop teaching approaches that will enable Native students to be more academically successful. However, by focusing almost exclusively on Native cultural difference and eliding the diversity of Native communities, this literature may inadvertently fall for the settler colonial bait-and-switch. It obscures the reality that many of the challenges these students face are

socioeconomic and political in nature, and ultimately derive from the racialized, spatialized structures of ongoing settler colonialism.

To be sure, maintaining tribal identity is an important part of preserving the “settler colonial relation”—that is, Native nations’ distinctive legal status within the settler state, which protects at least some measure of self-determination and sovereignty (Veracini, “Introducing” 7). That is part of what motivates the counterhegemonic discourses of cultural difference that emanate from Native communities. Such strategic essentialisms can shore up tribal identities in order to accomplish the political work of nation-building: I have certainly heard Diné College students and faculty marshal these discourses when it suits their rhetorical purposes. And for several of the students in this study, learning more about their unique tribal heritage was part of their motivation for attending Diné College and critical to the Diné/Native/Indigenous identity formation they were undertaking as part of their college experience. Providing these students with opportunities to engage Diné heritage knowledge is, I believe, vitally important.

It is worth keeping in mind, however, that at this moment in history, the settler state is more than happy to concede (and even fund) *culture*. What the state is not willing to concede is *land*. Nor, it seems, is it particularly eager to address the spatialized socioeconomic structures that gave David’s father cancer, that have made it impossible for Johnny to find work on the reservation, and that fuel Cookie’s mother’s anxiety that her daughter will leave the Navajo Nation and never come back. As Diné College’s founders well knew (Stein; F. Clark), restructuring conditions on the Navajo Nation and asserting the fullest possible measure of Diné self-determination requires additional kinds of knowledge—legal, economic, technical, and rhetorical—much of which is accessed through the academic literacies that students first begin to engage in their Diné College composition courses.

Strategic essentialisms may have their place in the Indigenous rhetorical repertoire, but they should not be mistaken as descriptions of fact. This is particularly true for those working with actually existing Native students in the composition classroom, which has such an important role to play in preparing to students to access academic and material resources that will help them make positive changes in their communities. The concept of “culturally responsive pedagogy,” even in its most critical iterations, risks homogenizing Native students in ways that undermine effective writing instruction. *Locally* responsive pedagogy, however, frames the notion of pedagogical responsiveness in terms of locale. And, as my conversations with Diné College students demonstrate, a locale can encompass a great deal of diversity.

## Chapter Five

### “Start Where They Are”: Responding to Student Locations

*Barb stands in front of the whiteboard, waiting for her six students to finish writing down the week’s vocabulary words. This class, a late-added section of English 100B, has always been small, and at this point in the term, a Monday in mid-October, attendance is getting spotty. The room has been recently renovated: the seats are plastic wheeled chair-desk combos that Barb refers to as “hovercraft.” The unoccupied hovercraft have been pushed to the walls like empty bumper-cars. I sit at the edge of this pileup, taking notes on my laptop; the students are arranged in a rough U around the large empty space in the center of the room.*

*“Okay,” Barb says. “We’ve talked about the cause and effect paragraph, about definition and compare-contrast. Today we’re going to talk about the argument paragraph. All of the paragraphs we have discussed so far can be used to make an argument. Not as in an I’ll-throw-the-dishes-you-kick-the-dog kind of argument—I used to live with that man, bless his soul.” She smiles wryly, and several students laugh.*

*“When we write an argument in academic contexts, we’re trying to persuade someone to agree with our view or perspective. In academia, that is referred to as an argument. As such, it uses stronger language because it’s trying to persuade than an essay that is written to inform or entertain.” Barb glances at the students’ faces, then writes on the whiteboard:*

**argumentative paragraph/essay**

*“It also uses a claim,” she says, “which is also called the thesis.” She adds this to the board.*

**claim- thesis → purpose and point of the written work**

*"In previous discussions, we've talked about the importance of topic sentences, how they identify the theme or purpose of a paragraph. In an argumentative essay, the thesis is kind of like a topic sentence. The thesis explains the purpose and point of the entire essay. An argument paragraph uses data or evidence to support the claim or thesis. An argument essay also has a warrant, which is an explanation that tells why the evidence supports the claim or the thesis. In an argument essay, you as the writer need to present not only the purpose and point, not only do you need to provide evidence, but you also need to provide an explanation of why evidence you're presenting supports your argument. The audience might not be sharpest tool in the box or shed."*

*Barb pauses, looking from face to face. After a long moment of consideration, she seems to make a decision. She walks across the room toward the whiteboard on the opposite wall, clearing a path through the empty hovercraft as she goes, then gestures for the students to wheel themselves closer. The group immediately feels smaller, more intimate.*

*"For example," Barb continues, "to come up with a very simple argument idea, let's say you have to write a paragraph about needing new tires for the car. That's the general topic here." She writes on the fresh whiteboard:*

**needing new tires for the car**

*"Who's ever needed new tires for their car?" she asks. Nearly all of the students raise their hands. Barb nods. "The theme of your essay is you need new tires for the car. If you're going to put that in a thesis form, it's probably going to be presented in persuasive language. You're not only going to state the reason, you're going to try to persuade someone why this is the most important thing. When does it start snowing here?"*

*"In the middle of November," Johona offers.*

*Barb writes on the board:*

*-shows mid-November*

*“And what is the condition of the tires right now?” she asks.*

*“They’re bald,” says Leandra. Barb nods and writes.*

*-bald— steel reinforcement stuff is visible*

*“What other reason do you need new tires?” she asks.*

*“To drive to school,” Steve offers.*

*“How far is it to school?”*

*“Forty miles,” he says.*

*Barb nods again and writes:*

*-40-mile drive every day uphill both ways*

*A few students laugh.*

*“What about the baby?” Barb asks. “Is the baby with you?”*

*“Always!” Madison Lane exclaims, and everyone laughs.*

*“The baby’s safety!” Barb cries in mock alarm. She adds to the growing list:*

*-baby’s safety*

*“What about the money?” she asks. “Money is a big thing with this argument.” Several students nod, and Barb writes:*

*-have my money*

*“What about retreads?” she continues. “Does anyone have retreads?”*

*“What are those?” Madison Lane asks.*

*“They’re patched-up used tires,” Barb says. “The man I used to live with who kicked the dog used to buy them for \$15. Baby’s safety meant nothing.” She imitates the screeching sound of tires, and the students laugh. She writes:*

**-used tires no good**

Kurt offers, “You can save a lot of gas on new tires if they’re properly inflated.”

“I never heard of that,” says Johona.

Barb nods. “Next time you go to Wal-Mart and they say it has to be at 32 pounds, you tell them BS. They’ll say, ‘But, ma’am!’ Like, you’re a ‘ma’am,’ so you don’t know this. Yes, properly inflated tires will save you gas.” She adds on the board:

**-saves gas**

Barb gestures to the list they’ve generated. “But who are we talking to?” she asks. “Our parents? Grandparents? Let’s go with our parents. They might be able to kick in some money. If we’re going to write a thesis, we need to pick the most persuasive, influential reason we can think of.”

Leandra says, “Baby’s safety.”

Madison Lane counters, “I think it’s saving money, because with diapers and everything, money is important.”

Barb nods. “How would we state this as a statement, an argument?”

Madison Lane says, “Buying new tires will save you X amount of dollars that you can spend on other things.”

Barb shakes her head, “We’re not going to go with the other things. We’re focusing on tires.”

Steve grins. “We’ll spend it on rims!”

The students all laugh.

“You’re not spending your hard-earned money on rims,” Barb says. “That’s what they do in Texas, not here!”

“How many times a year do you need to buy tires?” Johona asks.

"They're rated by mileage," Barb says. "The more you spend, the longer they're supposed to last." She writes on the board:

**Thesis: Buying new tires for the car will save money while providing a safer ride for that darling grandbaby of yours.**

The students laugh again. Nick comments that it's nicely worded, and Johona says it sounds like a bribe.

"We're changing hearts and minds," Barb says. "This is the hearts"—she points to the words **darling grandbaby**—"and this is the minds." She points to **save money**. "The goal is to persuade someone. You're pushing it beyond a statement of fact into some kind of emotional level." She begins writing on the board again. "You could also say—"

**Buying new tires should be part of the family budget to ensure travel safety.**

"Again, you're trying to persuade someone," Barb says, looking from student to student. "You're trying to influence them to agree with you. In the second sentence, it's not as emotional, but you're making an argument. You're trying to connect with someone on more than just a demand. If you say, 'We'll all live longer,' it's a whole different matter. When you create a thesis in an argumentative essay, you want to identify the purpose and the point. Use stronger language and persuasive words."

She turns back to the whiteboard. "We've got all these ideas on the board. If we think about ranking them in terms of priority, which do you think is more important?"

The students begin discussing the relative importance of each of the points, and Barb tracks their ranking on the board:

**4 -shows mid-November**

**2 -bald- steel reinforcement stuff is visible**

3 -40-mile drive every day uphill both ways

1 -baby's safety

7 -have my money

5 -used tires no good

6 -saves gas

*“Anyone disagree with this ranking?” Barb asks, looking around the room. No one objects. “When you create an argument, you want to put the points supporting the thesis in an order.” She lists several possible ordering principles on the board:*

-degree of importance

-chronological order

-spatial order

-sometimes according to size, alphabetically, or numerically.

*“If you’re going to make an argument that buying new tires will save money while providing a safer ride for that darling grandbaby, that’s what you want to focus on,” Barb says. “Have we done that with the order here? I think we’re a little soft on the save money thing. We might want to change that.” She revises the thesis on the whiteboard:*

**Thesis: Buying new tires for the car will provide a safer ride for that darling grandbaby of yours while I drive back and forth to school.**

*“You might have to change the thesis based on the facts, the reasons you have.” Barb explains. “Did somebody write down all of this stuff? On Wednesday, we’ll keep discussing this, and come up with a structure of a paragraph for this argument.”*

Barb’s lesson on argumentative writing illustrates many of the dynamics of locally responsive pedagogy that I outline in Chapter Three. The conceptual vocabulary she uses to

discuss the qualities of effective argumentation—claim and thesis, evidence and warrant, purpose and audience—all reflect her exposure to disciplinary frameworks from rhetoric and composition. To show how these abstract concepts apply in real-world communication contexts, she draws on her own personal background with the transportation-related challenges of rural living, including her gendered experience of trying to meet those challenges as a young mother in a difficult marriage. Barb interweaves her disciplinary knowledge and personal experience with her emerging understanding of her students' lives through an iterative process: over the course of the brainstorming session, she observes student reactions and elicits information in order to ground the lesson in students' social, economic, and geographical realities. In doing so, she enacts pedagogical practices that are locally responsive. And her students appear to be highly engaged by this approach. They immediately grasp the topic at hand, they actively participate, and they work together to develop an argument that is meaningful in relation to their own experiences.

In Chapter One, I assert that *students* constitute one important dimension of “the local” to which Diné College instructors’ pedagogies respond. In this lesson, Barb is undoubtedly responding to the distinctive student population she is teaching: the statement “Buying new tires for the car will provide a safer ride for that darling grandbaby of yours while I drive back and forth to school” would not, for example, resonate with the experiences of most University of Michigan undergraduates. However, in light of my critiques of the framework of culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP), it is notable that Barb’s pedagogical responses do not focus in any specific way on Diné or Native “culture,” at least as it is typically defined in the education and composition literature. Rather, Barb is responding to other dimensions of her students’ identities and lived experiences. These experiences include attending college while caring for small

children, as well as the intergenerational social networks on which students often rely to meet the challenges of juggling school and parenting. While not all Diné College students are in this particular situation themselves, nearly all have family members, friends, and classmates who are. Barb also responds to the social geographies that shape students' lives: the long distances they often drive to attend college; the dangerous condition of many reservation roads, particularly in the winter; and the importance of bordertown big box retailers and service providers to local economic activity. Finally, Barb is responding to students' socioeconomic realities, particularly the difficulties many face as they attempt to balance the competing costs of transportation, family needs, and attending college. As her class's level of engagement suggests, responding to these dimensions of students' experiences in the composition classroom can increase their ability and motivation to participate in a discussion of rhetorical principles that might otherwise seem abstract or irrelevant.

In this chapter, I examine how Barb, Lily, James, and Patrick responded to "where" they understood their students to be. During one of our first conversations, James credited compositionist Joseph Trimmer with introducing him to the principle of "start[ing students] where they are," a tenet that became foundational to his teaching at Diné College. This principle is, of course, far from new. In the United States, the idea of beginning "where students are"—of grounding instruction in the materiality of students' lives—can be traced back to nineteenth-century educational reformers, most notably John Dewey (Mauk 373). Indeed, by 1971, Ann Berthoff was calling this phrase a "tired slogan" ("Problem" 240). Clichéd though it may be, the phrase's inherent spatiality gives it new theoretical resonance within the recent the spatial/local turn in writing studies.<sup>84</sup> But, as Berthoff warns, "[E]verything we plan...follows from what we

mean when we say *Begin with where they are*” (“From Problem-Solving” 638, emphasis in the original).

To date, the literature regarding Native learners has tended to focus almost exclusively on starting with *who* students are, as though cultural identity were monolithic, static, and all-encompassing. Based on what I have seen and heard at Diné College, I believe there is much to gain by instead turning our theoretical and pedagogical attention to Native students’ *locations*.

Peter Vandenberg, Sue Hum, and Jennifer Clary-Lemon assert that “[r]esponsible discourse...depends on self-conscious awareness of how one is located” (12). Likewise, I argue, responsible composition pedagogy depends on a self-conscious awareness of how one’s *students* are located: physically, socially, and politically. While this is likely true in any pedagogical scene, such an assertion takes on particular meaning at Diné College, whose students share a distinctive set of locations—as learners and as rhetors—within the spatialized social, economic, and political structures of US settler colonialism, which is fundamentally about the expropriation and/or exploitation of Native *land*.<sup>85</sup> Students inhabit these locations in varying ways, shaped in part by the range of relations and positions that result from their diverse identities and experiences (Vandenberg, Hum, and Clary-Lemon). Unlike the “empty signifier” of culture (Dobrin 17), a *locale* can encompass the internal diversity and the historically, politically, economically, and geographically situated experiences of the students who come together in the space of the Diné College composition classroom. *That*, I argue, is what we ought to mean when we say *begin with where they are*.

To be clear, I make this assertion based on what I observed in Diné College composition faculty’s classrooms and course materials, which sometimes aligned with how they described their own teaching practices during our interviews and sometimes revealed additional (and,

occasionally, contradictory) insights into their pedagogical approaches. None of the faculty in this study were overtly critical of the discourses of cultural difference in the way I came to be over the course of this research. Indeed, when I invited them to speak in general terms about Diné College students' writing-related strengths and challenges, all four faculty mentioned issues that seemed to echo—or, perhaps, reproduce—themes found in the literature: specifically, assertions about distinctive Native or Diné interpersonal communication norms, learning styles, and epistemological orientations. However, such commonplaces were in wide circulation across the college, and it was sometimes difficult to tell whether faculty were making statements based on their own classroom experiences or rehearsing discourses that were in the academic and institutional ether. When talking about the *actual* students they were teaching in Fall 2012, faculty were often hesitant to generalize. They were quick to point out the diverse abilities and experiences of the students within course sections and tended to describe each individual section they were teaching as having its own dynamic. In practice, all four instructors accommodated a great deal of variation in their students' individual needs and interests.

What did hold constant in my conversations with faculty was the sense that prior schooling experiences, a lack of understanding of the expectations of college-level writing and work habits, and life challenges related to socioeconomic status often presented barriers to Diné College students' academic success. All four faculty saw these as challenges faced by many first-generation college students, Native or otherwise. As Patrick said:

I don't think we're unique. Because when I attend [state articulation agreement] meetings, like with all the other community colleges, we talk about the same problems...Some of the typical things like procrastination, trying to do everything at the last minute...Maybe we're a little worse off in terms of preparedness of the students we get...Our students are

very sheltered in many ways, too. I think largely that has to do with them living in a rural community.

The key challenges that Patrick identifies—academic preparedness, study habits, and a rural frame of reference—are products of the socioeconomic structures and social geographies that Diné College students inhabit rather than matters of essential Native cultural difference.

With these complexities in mind, this chapter is organized around two discussions, each of which is informed by conceptual categories that emerged from my analysis of instructor interviews, fieldnotes from class observations, and course documents. First, I examine how Diné College composition faculty responded pedagogically to dimensions of their students' lives and experience that are often framed in the literature as "cultural": Diné identities, gender, and family roles; language; and purported interpersonal communication norms, learning styles, and epistemologies. These dimensions of responsiveness are, I suggest, often as much about the *institutional* mission to validate and promote Diné knowledge as they are about responding to what students actually know, believe, or have experienced when they enter Diné College. In the second discussion, I examine other aspects of students' lives and experiences to which faculty responded: their personal interests and experiences, academic preparedness, socioeconomic-related challenges, and motivations. I follow these discussions with an examination of students' perceptions of pedagogical practices that respond to who and where they are. Taken together, these analyses suggest that local pedagogical responsiveness can, does, and in my view *should* account not only for students' cultural identities but also for their locations within spatialized structures of social and economic inequality. These locations shape their experiences, motivations, and learning needs, as well as the rhetorical exigencies they and their communities face.

### *Responding to “Culture”*

Foregrounding “Diné language, history, and culture” (*2012-2013 Catalog* 10) has been a central institutional objective at Diné College since its inception. From its earliest years, the college has sought to cultivate positive Diné identities among its students by providing an educational experience that celebrates Diné knowledge and promotes its transmission to future generations (F. Clark; Stein). This objective aligns well with what educational researchers Teresa McCarty and Tiffany Lee have called “culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy” (103), which recognizes that schooling now plays an important role in imparting valued heritage knowledge that students might not otherwise have opportunities to learn. As a consequence, affirming students’ Diné identities by acknowledging and including their distinctive heritage across multiple dimensions of instruction was an important component of the locally responsive composition pedagogies developed by the Diné College faculty in this study.

Diné identities. In class discussions, James and Lily explicitly encouraged students to consider being Diné a source of strength and resilience, and Patrick and Lily both told stories from their childhoods and families that signaled the pride they took in their own Diné identities. Furthermore, James, Lily, and Patrick also sought to *teach* students about Diné history, heritage knowledge, and values, which students had not necessarily learned within their families or communities growing up. James in particular often integrated stories from Diné Baháné, episodes from Diné history, and references to traditional ceremonies into his reading assignments and class discussions, with the goal of upholding a heritage that he feared students were in danger of losing.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, all four faculty made at least some mention of the Diné Educational Philosophy (DEP), a process-based pedagogical framework derived from traditional Diné spiritual principles: James and Patrick in particular integrated DEP into many of their

course materials and writing assignments throughout the semester (see Chapter Six). These responses to students’ “Dinéness” were often about affirming identity and promoting heritage knowledge rather than responding to intrinsic or monolithic cultural differences that Diné students brought with them to the classroom.

A similar dynamic was evident in the ways faculty discussed clanship in their classes.<sup>87</sup> At the beginning of the semester, both Patrick and Lily introduced themselves to students using formal clan introductions. Lily, for example, told her students,

Some of us may be related. We may have an existing relationship. This is the beauty of being a Navajo person. By saying my name and clan, we have a connection and a relationship. I’m not just that strange lady teaching English.

With this introduction, Lily was inviting students to identify possible “existing relationships” that connected them as Diné people. However, she was also signaling to her students that this kind of traditionally-grounded identity marker was valued at Diné College,<sup>88</sup> as well as educating those who were not as familiar with this rhetorical practice about the reasons for formal clan introductions, which are still expected in many public speaking contexts on the Navajo Nation.

Patrick took this kind of rhetorical instruction one step further in English 102. For their first assignment, he asked students to write a persuasive letter about a pressing issue facing their local community. This letter was to be addressed to an audience internal to the Navajo Nation, such as the Diné College president, the editor of the *Navajo Times*, or elected chapter officials. In the class discussion of this assignment, Patrick encouraged students to open their letters with a version of the clan introduction. As he told them:

In the Navajo way, when you ask someone for something, what do you do first? Use that in the introduction. You introduce yourself. And what else do you say about yourself?

[*Student responds: Your clan?*] Yeah, your clan. I'm so and so, and my clans are whatever. That's the protocol for Navajos before you chew their ears. So think about that in your introduction to your letter.

Through this discussion, students learned about the rhetorical function of the clan introduction in Diné contexts and how this practice is being adapted to written performances in Navajo Nation public spheres. The conversation taught students about locally valued rhetorical strategies and also contributed to their understanding of how arguments can be shaped for different audiences. It is worth noting that, while some students in the class were clearly familiar with the “protocol” for clan introductions, Patrick (like Lily) did not *assume* that students were already knowledgeable about this rhetorical practice.<sup>89</sup>

Faculty also responded to Diné gender roles, both traditional and contemporary, which are informed by the matrilineal clan system and continue to shape students’ family structures and experiences (see McCloskey; Deyhle, *Reflections in Place*). James frequently brought up the importance of women in Diné society during class discussions, drawing on traditional stories about Asdzáá Nádleehé (Changing Woman) as well as the work of contemporary Diné writers like Luci Tapahonso, to assert that “Navajo women are strong.”<sup>90</sup> These responses were often identity-affirming. Particularly at James’s branch campus, many of the students were women returning to school after a break their education, and James sought to help them see their own perseverance as part of a long tradition of resilient Diné women. Faculty also responded to the reality that, in the twenty-first century, Diné women are often heading households and leading extended families and communities (McCloskey). In interviews, James stated that he relied on older women to be leaders and role models in his classroom. For the two women faculty, responses to students’ gendered experiences were more personal. In class discussion, Lily often

made references to her relationships with the other women in her family, and she described gender-specific experiences (e.g. receiving gifts of jewelry to honor her college graduation) that might resonate with students' own lives. As Barb's offhand comments in class about her experiences as a young wife and mother suggest, some experiences at the intersections of class and gender are shared by Diné and non-Diné women alike. Barb invoked these experiences to establish a point of commonality and ground her examples in situations to which she believed her students could relate.

Languages. In Chapter Four, I discuss the complexity of Diné College students' linguistic backgrounds in the context of on-going language shift: maintaining Diné bizaad is one of the college's primary educational objectives. James, Lily, and Patrick all valued the language, and they responded to Diné College's mission and their sense of students' linguistic resources by welcoming the use of Diné bizaad in the classroom. This was an affirmation of students' Diné identities and a signal that English literacy instruction did not have to come at the expense of maintaining Indigenous languages. James often used words or phrases in Diné bizaad in class, usually when telling stories from Diné Baháné. He also assigned readings by Diné authors who integrate Diné bizaad into their English-language poetry and essays. Both Lily and Patrick sometimes spoke Diné bizaad in class, often using the language as an instructional resource. Patrick did this most often when he was working individually with bilingual students, switching between languages in order to explain difficult or complex concepts. These conversations, which were typically in Navlish, covered everything from MLA citation format to defining the term "rhetoric" itself, which Patrick described as the use of nizhoni ("beautiful") language to persuade.

Lily also used Diné bizaad—both the language itself and the conceptual knowledge it contains—to draw analogies and discuss writing-related principles. Often, the terms she was

using in Diné bizaad had deep local meaning, both conceptually and affectively: she described drawing on these resources as a “rhetorical choice.” In one interview, for example, she described how she made comparisons between English and Diné histories of language in the classroom:

Where did this English language come from? I talk about our Navajo language. Where does the Navajo language come from? And people will say, “From our Holy People.”

...Somewhere the Holy People, they have spoken that sacred language. It went through many generations. The same thing with the English language. I do like a timeline...I talk about the printing press. I talk about before, English was never written before. It was just like us, oral, and they're amazed! They're so amazed about that story. We talk about that, and then we talk about words. They have history like people, Navajo people. We identify ourselves with clan. Words are like that too. They have etymology. They have characteristics. That's why they have noun or they're a verb. They do certain things.<sup>91</sup>

In this way, Lily validated Diné knowledge—teaching those students who were not familiar with traditional stories about the provenance of Diné bizaad in the process—while using it as a point of comparison to historicize English-language literacy. However, even as they drew on students' multilingual backgrounds to further their academic writing abilities in English, faculty were also aware that many of their younger students did not have a strong command of Diné bizaad. On those occasions when Lily switched over to Diné bizaad during class discussion, she was always careful to follow up with a translation or recap in English.

Diné College's English course descriptions, the constructs measured by its writing placement assessment, and its English 102 exit portfolio evaluation criteria all demonstrate that the institution places a high value on proficiency in Edited American English (EAE), not least because students will need it to be successful at off-reservation colleges and universities.

Although in class discussions James sometimes made a point of distinguishing between what he called “Standard Written English” and spoken English, none of the faculty in this study directly acknowledged that the majority of their students’ first language was a variety of English that had distinct lexical and morphological features from more privileged varieties of spoken English or EAE.<sup>92</sup> Instead, they spoke about Diné students’ difficulties with “correctness” as being either an “ESL” or “orality” issue. All four instructors provided direct grammar instruction at various points in the semester, both to address issues of “error” and to equip students with a meta-language for talking about grammatical and mechanical issues in their writing. When it came to assessment, all four made extensive marks related to error and usage on students’ papers: Lily and James made direct corrections, Patrick highlighted problem areas for students to correct on their own, and Barb used a numerical coding system with a key so that students could identify and correct patterns of error. Over the course of the Fall 2012 semester, all four faculty repeatedly expressed frustration regarding their students’ persistent difficulties with the conventions of EAE. This suggests that these issues were an aspect of students’ language backgrounds for which none of the instructors had developed a fully satisfactory pedagogical response.

Communication norms, learning styles, and epistemology. Faculty also responded to some of the categories of “cultural difference” often discussed in the literature on Native learners: namely, interpersonal communication norms, learning styles, and epistemologies. Their responses to perceived communication norms were most evident in their in-class activities. All four instructors used humor in the classroom to keep students engaged, and James, Lily, and Barb reported consciously waiting longer than they might in other institutional settings for responses to questions they posed in class discussions.<sup>93</sup> Faculty also generally avoided creating

individual competition in their classes. Indeed, Lily and Barb structured a great deal of in-class collaborative learning, often asking students to tackle questions or tasks in teams and then present their ideas to the group. Both facilitated frequent peer workshopping of students' writing-in-progress. Finally, several faculty sought to address what they saw as students' discomfort with revealing confusion or incomprehension: in class discussions, James and Lily repeatedly emphasized that asking questions was an important and expected part of the learning process in college, and Patrick required students who were struggling on papers to come meet with him during office hours, rather than relying on them to seek out feedback on their own.

Although these practices align with CRP theorists' recommendations for working with Native learners, and faculty often explained their effectiveness in terms of Diné-specific cultural traits, it should be noted that these pedagogical practices have long been considered beneficial for *most* college students, particularly those who are first-generation and/or enrolled in developmental courses. The perceived effectiveness of these approaches for Diné College students may thus be at least in part a function of socioeconomic background or academic preparation, rather than specifically Diné interpersonal norms. As Gloria Ladson-Billings says of her framework for culturally relevant pedagogy, it may be that these practices are "just good teaching" ("Good Teaching" 159), but good teaching is particularly important for students who have been systematically disadvantaged by racialized structures of socioeconomic inequality. The fact that a disproportionate number of Native American students struggle at mainstream postsecondary institutions may reflect some university faculty's *lack* of attention to "good teaching," which disadvantages all but the most well-prepared students.

Although the concept has been widely questioned in the education literature (Lomawaima and McCarty; Cleary and Peacock; Castagno and Brayboy; Kleinfeld and Nelson; Deyhle and

Swisher), faculty also responded to what they described as the distinctive “learning styles” of their Diné College students. By far the most common statement faculty made was that Diné students were “visual learners.” Faculty described themselves responding to this visually-oriented learning style in a variety of ways: doing color-coded grammar exercises and sentence diagramming activities in class; providing graphic organizers to generate essay ideas and structure research; having students make posters to illustrate key course concepts; asking students to create visually engaging PowerPoint presentations documenting their writing process; providing rubrics that laid out evaluation criteria schematically; and providing sample essays that students could use as models for their assignments. Again, however, many of these practices—multimodal composing, making assignment expectations explicit through rubrics, inviting students to analyze models to deduce genre expectations—are widely regarded as beneficial for *most* students, Native or otherwise (e.g. Wysocki; Shipka; Anson and Dannels; Bawarshi).

Finally, faculty responded to what they understood to be their students’ distinctively Diné, Native, or Indigenous ways of knowing. James, for example, described his efforts to be explicit about how the kinds of analysis expected in academic writing differed from Diné epistemological orientations, which he understood to be more holistic and synthetic:

I make a big deal out of the difference between synthesis and analysis. Because tribal cultures are generally synthesizing. You know, you take something like weaving. You start with the wool from the sheep and you synthesize a rug and, you know, the sand painting, and things like that.

As James’s emphasis on traditional Diné artistic practices suggests, it was often difficult to determine whether faculty understood the epistemologies they were discussing to be how the Diné students in their classes actually thought, or whether they were teaching these knowledges

and perspectives specifically *because* many students were unfamiliar with those aspects of their heritage.<sup>94</sup> In one class discussion, for example, Lily described “Navajo” or “Native thinking” as “circular” rather than “linear.” When I asked her about this statement during a follow-up conversation in Spring 2014, she clarified that she did not believe her Diné College students were “circular thinkers.” She described their thinking as “linear” and explained that she had been trying to make them aware of how traditional epistemological orientations differed.

James’s thinking on this issue remains ambiguous to me, perhaps because he has not fully resolved these questions for himself. The tensions inherent in timeless assertions about Diné epistemology are evident in his description of how he presented DEP. As he said, “One of the things I tell [Navajo students], in case they don’t know, is that this is a Navajo way of thinking.”<sup>95</sup> In this statement, it is unclear whether James is using the term “Navajo way of thinking” as a reference to Diné intellectual traditions, as a description of the thought processes of contemporary Diné people, or, perhaps, as a prescriptive statement about how “authentic” Diné people *should* think. The last two interpretations seem problematic, given that three of the four students I interviewed from James’s English 101 class were unfamiliar with DEP or the spiritual principles undergirding it when they arrived at Diné College (see Chapter Six). While I share James’s view that there is an important place for Diné heritage knowledge in the composition classroom, I worry that there is something essentializing about presenting *any* ways of thinking as fundamentally “Navajo” without contextualizing those assertions historically or acknowledging the modernity and diversity of twenty-first century Diné thought.

Whether they were “responding” to Diné culture or “sustaining/revitalizing” it (McCarty and T. S. Lee), James, Lily, and Patrick all expressed the view that students grounded in Diné traditions tended to be more successful in the classroom. James viewed this as a matter of

identity—those students who were knowledgeable about Diné history and spiritual traditions had a stronger foundation for learning, and for weathering the (often racialized) challenges they were likely to face when they transferred to off-reservation institutions. For Lily, Diné heritage values offered students a powerful communitarian ethic that fueled their motivation to pursue educational goals that would improve conditions on the Navajo Nation: in her view, fostering these values was important for Diné nation-building. Meanwhile, Patrick understood students' traditionalism largely as an indicator of home stability:

I think kids that have stable, traditional background—parents—are taught lots of values about their culture, their language. They will be more successful than kids who have busted families. I think that's true anywhere. It's across the board. It's not unique to Diné College, is what I'm saying.

In other words, in a context where poverty-related social problems created upheaval in many families, with predictably negative effects on students' academic preparedness and support structures, a traditional background signaled—and perhaps contributed to—a relatively stable childhood and strong social network that supported students' school success.

The three veteran Diné College English faculty believed that fostering students' Diné identities was an important part of the educational experience offered at a tribally-controlled college. While Barb expressed respect for these identities, she was less inclined to view cultivating them to be her role as an English instructor. As she wrote in a mid-term teaching reflection, “I do not need to teach the students how to be Indians. They know how to be Indians.” Her statement reveals much of the complexity surrounding notions of culture and identity in Diné College composition classrooms, and her initial reaction to this complexity suggests an implicit binary. On the one hand, if “being Indian” is culturally descriptive rather than

prescriptive—if Diné is as Diné does, with all the diversity that implies—then Barb is right: Diné students do not need to be taught “how to be Indians.” As “Indians,” they are already doing it. This interpretation leaves it rather unclear how composition faculty ought to respond to Diné identities in the classroom. If, on the other hand, “being Indian” means embodying a predetermined set of epistemological, linguistic, and rhetorical traits derived from “tradition,” it would seem that many Diné College students do *not* know how to be Diné. In this view, teaching students “how to be Indians” might require faculty to act as what Scott Lyons calls “culture cops” (*X-Marks* 76), enforcing some static and idealized notion of essential Dinéness. This role seems rather untenable in the Diné College composition classroom, where English literacy instruction is always an inherently hybridized undertaking (see Lyons, “Fencing”).

However, we might choose instead to understand “being Indian” as a *rhetorical* position,<sup>96</sup> one located within a complex matrix of social, economic, and political structures, including settler colonialism and global capitalism. This would mean that, as Lyons suggests, “developing [tribal college] literacy pedagogy…requires paying close attention not so much to ‘cultural difference’ as to *politics*” (“Fencing” 86). Within this framework, being Diné is (among other things) a political identity, and where there are politics, there are rhetorical exigencies. From this vantage point, composition faculty would seem to have something very important indeed to teach Diné students about “being Indian.” I return to this theme in Chapter Seven.

In the following section, I examine how faculty responded to the dimensions of Diné College students’ lives that went beyond “cultural difference.” These dimensions included students’ personal interests and experiences, their academic preparation, their socioeconomic situations, and their motivations, nearly all of which were linked to students’ locations within regional social geographies of settler colonialism. The ways in which faculty engaged with these

locations in the classroom demonstrate that locally responsive pedagogies inevitably respond, directly or indirectly, to the broader social, economic, and political forces that shape students' lived experiences.

*Responding to "Location"*

Personal interests and experiences. Even as faculty appealed to students' Diné identities and heritage, they also made room for the many other identities and interests that students brought to the composition classroom. Lily, for example, went to great lengths to keep up with popular culture and current events so that she could build on her students' interests in these areas. As she said,

We talk about music. We talk about reality shows, Kardashians...I'm updated. I go on my CNN. I go on my TMZ. I go on Huffington Post. I go on the local channel. I'm all over. I go to the *New York Times*. In the *New York Times*, they have some really great educational lesson plans that I stole from there. The *New York Post*, the *Christian Monitor*. I of course go to the *Navajo Times*.

These sites provided many of the readings Lily assigned to her students, and she frequently made reference to sports teams, popular music, television, and social media during class: for Lily, making literacy relevant meant tapping into popular and youth culture as well as their Diné heritage. Faculty also accommodated students' wide-ranging interests by assigning relatively open essay topics. Students often chose to write about Diné-specific topics,<sup>97</sup> but many used these assignments as opportunities to pursue other interests. A sampling of the topics students in the study wrote about over the course of the semester gives a sense of this range: thrash metal music, responsible gun ownership, pizza, recycling, vintage eye makeup, zombies, training for football, Britney Spears, caring for horses, marriage equality, drag performance, climate change,

and salary caps in professional athletics. In short, students brought an array of interests beyond their Diné identities to their writing courses, and that reality was part of the local context to which faculty responded.

James, Lily, and Barb also gave students opportunities to write about and critically examine their personal and family histories, often in relation to course readings or their broader learning experiences in college. All three described these assignments as part of a process of helping students understand their own personal development and situate their experiences within a broader context. James described the arc of his English 101 assignment sequence as a movement from students' own lives and family experiences to a wider historical perspective:

The groundwork for their writing initially is within themselves, their own experience, the significance of it...There's a real strong shift here from what I call "primary experience": who you are, where you're from...Early assignments are things like, "Write an essay on how to get to your house. Who are you? What's your clan identity?"...And somewhere in here [*points to the midpoint in the schedule laid out in the syllabus*] we shift to what I call "secondary experience," where the students are now dealing with the experiences of others. I read passages from Ruth Underhill, that early Navajo history where she applies the conventional historians' rules, and we're going to start shifting over to Peter Iverson. When he writes Navajo history, he uses oral history and their own traditions. So, and here, you see where you're talking about using the past, and now that they're dealing with secondary experience, they have to learn to do what we loosely call "critical reading," interpretation, analysis.

James designed this assignment sequence to cultivate students' critical reading and writing abilities while enabling them to see their own lives and experiences in relation to broader

historical forces. Tribal identity was clearly a key part of their historical locations, but students often wrote about personal and family experiences that reflected other identities and engagements, such as Christian conversions, experiences with domestic violence, and books and films that had been important to their own personal development.

Faculty also responded to students' geographical locations. Although the students in this study had diverse geographical experiences, all had spent the majority of their lives within the desert ecologies and social geographies of the Southwestern United States. When providing examples or posing questions in class, faculty frequently referred to local communities and geological landmarks, bordertowns, and regional cities with which students would likely be familiar. Likewise, they often assigned readings that resonated with students' place-based experiences: some were set on the Navajo Nation or elsewhere in the Southwest, and others dealt with landscapes and social geographies that resonated with the places students knew, such as rural communities in England or scenes of urban homelessness similar to what students had seen (and, in some cases, experienced) in the bordertowns. Finally, James, Lily, and Barb all asked students to write about places that were familiar or personally meaningful to them. James, for example, had students read Luci Tapahonso's poem "It Was a Special Treat," which describes a childhood trip to a laundromat in the bordertown of Farmington. He then asked students to write a short essay about their own experiences traveling to a large town or city. Such place-based assignments responded to students' interrelated physical and economic locations within the social geographies of the Southwest.

Academic preparation. In addition to their students' personal interests, personal and family histories, and geographical experiences, faculty also responded to students' academic preparation. As I discuss in Chapter Four, Diné College students' prior schooling experiences

were quite diverse, ranging from rigorous and engaging to unchallenging, uninteresting, or disrupted. All four faculty described a similar pattern in their Diné College composition classes: a small group of students pulled ahead quickly and were ready for more demanding writing assignments, while others fell behind and either dropped the course or struggled for the remainder of the term. Faculty responded to this spread in students' preparation in a variety of ways. Lily made a conscious effort to put the better-prepared students in groups with less-prepared students, with the idea that the strongest students would support the others' learning. James described adjusting the nature of his feedback from student to student in order to challenge those who were better prepared. And Patrick worked extensively with several individual students who were having difficulties, requiring them to bring their laptops to his office hours so that they could work together to address persistent issues in their writing. Thus, instructors' pedagogical responsiveness often operated at the level of individual students' needs and circumstances.

Although they had high-performing students in all of their classes, faculty indicated that many of their Diné College students lacked a clear understanding of the expectations of higher education, and they sought to address these issues in their teaching. Barb was particularly focused on helping students understand the relationship between the structures of postsecondary education and the demands of the work world, which she both discussed in class and asked students to write about in their journals. All four faculty also made a point of explicitly discussing the nuts and bolts of day-to-day college life with students: on the first day of class, for example, they each explained the purpose of a course syllabus, encouraged students to make use of office hours, and listed the specific school supplies that students should purchase to be prepared for their courses; Lily and Barb also told students how to organize their binders to keep

track of their notes and assignments. James, Lily, and Barb all discussed the kinds of behaviors that were expected in class, such as asking questions, actively participating in conversations, and refraining from text messaging while class was in session. At other points in the semester, I observed both Barb and Lily speaking with students individually about classroom behaviors—such as text-messaging and turning in crumpled assignment sheets—that did not meet college expectations.

Faculty also noted that their Diné College students often lacked key study skills that they would need to succeed in more advanced coursework, and all four sought to help students build those skills. The most pressing issue was time management: faculty repeatedly reminded students of how much time they were expected to spend on their assignments outside of class, and they frequently reiterated the importance of planning ahead, avoiding procrastination, and meeting deadlines. To varying degrees, all four scaffolded assignments in order to give students practice approaching writing as a process, and James made a point of emphasizing that students should persevere when work was challenging or frustrating. Patrick and Barb were particularly concerned with fostering students' self-sufficiency and sense of personal responsibility for their own education; both had strict course policies regarding due dates and essay formatting. Finally, the faculty frequently encouraged students to be proactive about using the learning resources available to them at Diné College, including the Learning Center, the library, and various online tools, as well as instructor office hours and peer feedback.

All four faculty expressed concern that many Diné College students were not prepared for the kinds of critical thinking and reading expected of them in postsecondary settings, and they saw the writing classroom as a particularly important space for cultivating these habits of mind. Barb, for example, explicitly emphasized critical thinking from the first week of the

semester. Throughout the term, she structured collaborative classroom activities that created opportunities for students to analyze texts, come up with their own definitions and examples of key concepts, and construct arguments. Likewise, James repeatedly insisted in class discussions that there were no “right answers” to the kinds of questions he was posing about texts. He frequently reiterated the value of students’ own ideas and insights, and he praised them both during class and in written feedback on their essays for putting forward their own interpretations. James, Lily, and Barb all believed that Diné College students’ prior schooling experiences had often contributed to negative attitudes toward literacy—namely, intimidation or a lack of interest. These instructors sought to foster more positive experiences by assigning readings that were relevant to students’ lives and interests, inviting students to connect with these readings through writing and discussion, and giving them opportunities to experience success grappling with challenging texts, which reduced their apprehension and doubts about their own reading abilities.

Finally, faculty sought to help Diné College students understand the expectations of college-level writing. Although faculty rarely used the term “genre,” much of their instruction was geared toward clarifying the genre and discourse expectations for the kinds of academic writing students would be expected to produce in college. For Barb, Lily, and James, this included a great deal of discussion about and practice with structuring and organizing paragraphs and developing effective thesis statements. Lily, Barb, and Patrick provided rubrics that explicitly stated the assessment criteria for each of their assignments, and many of those criteria focused on the presence and effectiveness of genre and discourse features. All four faculty noted the importance of providing students with lots of models and example papers because, in many cases, their students had never seen the kinds of texts they were being asked to produce. Likewise, few students had experience with library-based research. Both Barb and Patrick

included library tours and discussions of source evaluation in their courses, and they and Lily devoted significant class time to examining and practicing MLA citation style, something many students found particularly intimidating. Indeed, Barb found that many of her students did not have a clear sense of what constituted plagiarism, and she repeatedly addressed this issue in class, explaining to students why such activities were considered academic dishonesty and the seriousness of the consequences. Finally, James, Barb, and Lily believed that their Diné College students often lacked confidence in themselves as writers. They sought to help students develop greater self-assurance by making expectations explicit, providing affirming feedback, and—particularly in Lily and Barb's courses—creating supportive classroom communities that offered a safe environment in which to take risks and grow.

Socioeconomics. Diné College faculty's concerns about their students' academic preparedness and the nature of their pedagogical responses will sound familiar to many compositionists, particular those who work in community college settings or who specialize in basic writing. That is because these challenges were largely tied to Diné College students' socioeconomic status, which was shaped in large part by their locations in the social geographies of the Southwest. These locations had dictated the quality of many Diné College students' K-12 schools, shaped their prior encounters with postsecondary education, and contributed to the negative peer environments, family problems, and geographical upheaval that had disrupted schooling for so many. Similar spatialized socioeconomic difficulties continued to work against many students' success at Diné College. In addition, challenges related to transportation, housing, access to technology, and caring for children or other family members interfered with some students' abilities to make it to class, study, and complete assignments on time (see Chapter Four). This reality was a defining feature of the local context, and faculty responded to their

students' socioeconomic challenges across multiple dimensions of instruction. These pedagogical responses were informed by the theories and principles faculty derived from their disciplinary training, their prior professional experiences, and especially their own personal backgrounds, which they interwove with their evolving understanding of Diné College students' lives and circumstances.

All four of the faculty in the study included socioeconomic-related issues—particularly rural reservation poverty and the social problems it creates—in class discussions, readings, and writing assignments. Most commonly, instructors acknowledged periods of economic struggle in their own personal and family histories: Patrick and James had both experienced intermittent childhood poverty, Lily had attended college as a single parent, and Barb had stayed in an abusive marriage for years because she could not support herself and her children on her own. As Barb's class discussion of the economics of tire replacement illustrates, faculty often made casual mention of times in their lives when they had faced financial difficulties. In doing so, they modeled resilience in the face of hardship and communicated respect for the ingenuity people exhibit when resources are scarce. By sharing these experiences with students, faculty showed they were "on the same side"—that they understood and were endeavoring to help Diné College students change their circumstances. Faculty also assigned readings that touched on poverty-related themes or experiences, sometimes specifically rural or Native, sometimes not. For James, Lily, and Barb, these readings included literature with poverty-related themes: stories by Sherman Alexie set in the context of reservation poverty, for example, or nonfiction essays about issues like homelessness and substance abuse. Such readings showed students that poverty was an important topic for literary and scholarly discussion and helped them put their own experiences in structural context. Furthermore, through their own stories and those of writers like

Alexie, faculty demonstrated to students that education could be a pathway for moving out of poverty.

All four instructors also assigned writing topics that were open to examinations of poverty-related experiences. James and Lily's personal narrative assignments often elicited descriptions of the challenges of single parenting, difficulties with transportation or housing, or domestic violence situations that were hard to escape because of financial constraints.

Furthermore, as I discuss in Chapter Seven, both Lily and Patrick assigned essay topics that specifically invited students to research or reflect on social problems on the reservation that are at least partially attributable to socioeconomic conditions. In his persuasive letter assignment, for example, Patrick asked students to write about pressing issues in their communities, a prompt that elicited letters about unemployment and the importance of economic development on the reservation, about infrastructural needs like access to running water and better roads, and about police response time, particularly in cases of domestic disputes or other substance-related violence.

All four instructors also accommodated the logistical difficulties that many students faced as a result of rural poverty conditions. The most common forms of accommodation related to course policies. James accepted late work with no penalty up through the end of the semester—he had decided long ago that it was too difficult to keep track of his grading if he insisted on docking points for late work—and he was also relaxed about the starting time for class, expecting many students to arrive at his commuter campus late. Barb, on the other hand, presented herself as a hardliner regarding due dates. However, she also granted extensions in at least two instances: the first when a student faced eviction and the second when a student unexpectedly lost a parent in a substance abuse-related accident. Patrick also had an official

policy of not accepting late work, but when the occasion warranted, he accommodated students' income-related challenges with a remarkable degree of flexibility. Morning Star was hitchhiking thirty miles each way to get to Patrick's evening class on the main Diné College campus because the English 102 section Patrick was teaching at the branch campus five miles from her home had filled before she could enroll. Six weeks into the semester, after Patrick became aware of her dangerous and unsustainable transportation situation, he unofficially transferred her to his branch campus section, allowing her to attend class and complete the coursework closer to home. He also connected Morning Star with a tutor at the branch campus to help her get caught up on the work she had missed early in the semester. This flexibility enabled Morning Star to pass English 102, a course she had dropped on her two previous attempts.<sup>98</sup>

In addition to accommodating students' income-related challenges, several faculty took measures to help alleviate the financial burdens of attending college. These measures often related to course materials: James, for example, chose his textbook with the goal of keeping book costs for the entire composition sequence at his branch campus below \$25. Likewise, Patrick required students to submit all of their drafts electronically, which saved on printing costs as well as trips to campus to turn in papers. In other instances, alleviation meant easing the logistical challenges that many students faced. For example, James emphasized to students that children were welcome in his office—indeed, he kept a bag of lollipops in his desk for just such occasions—which made it easier for those with young kids to seek additional help when they needed it. Likewise, Barb often brought fruit and other snacks to class, in part because she knew students might be going without meals. Some faculty also used their roles as literacy educators to help students secure financial resources for their education. Both James and Patrick provided feedback on students' scholarship essays and wrote letters of recommendation for internships

and job applications, all with the goal of helping to ease some of the financial difficulties students faced.

Finally, some faculty responded to Diné College students' socioeconomic situations by imparting problem-solving strategies. Morning Star understood her experience in Patrick's class to have helped her tackle poverty-challenges in her life, both in and out of school. During one of our interviews, she narrated her experience meeting with Patrick after she had missed several classes. He asked her, "What is your problem?" When she described her transportation issues, he asked, "How are you going to solve it?" Together, they thought through her options and arrived at a workable solution—her unofficial transfer to the section he was teaching at the branch campus. In our interviews throughout the remainder of the semester, Morning Star returned to this conversation with Patrick several times, noting that now, when she encountered a barrier, she thought of his question, "What is your problem?" She then tried to identify the sources of the problem and think through a solution.<sup>99</sup> This conversation by no means provided a miracle remedy for the many challenges Morning Star continued to face, which were persistent and structural. However, the encounter did seem to offer her a renewed sense of self-efficacy regarding her ability to achieve her educational goals.

Motivations. Given the socioeconomic challenges many students faced, it was particularly important for faculty to motivate them to stay in college and put in the effort to acquire new literacies (see Ginsberg and Wlodkowski). Through class discussions, Lily and Barb made a point of helping their students understand the importance of education for achieving the goals that had brought them back to school: to better their own lives, provide for their families, and improve conditions in their communities. Furthermore, all four faculty created opportunities for students to write about their goals and motivations. In Patrick's class, for instance, students

often chose research topics related to their career interests. Jeffrey, who wanted to open a sports bar, researched and wrote about problems with the Navajo Nation's dry laws, and Nicholene, who wanted to go into public health, wrote about the rise of methamphetamine addiction across the United States.

Faculty also actively encouraged students to believe that it was possible to achieve their goals, affirmation that the many first-generation college students in their courses often needed. Lily saw such belief as vitally important to students' persistence and long-term success. As she said,

You have students that talk about their goals and desire, of going somewhere. Having a dream of leaving this world of poverty, the world of not successful idea that surrounds them, but through education, through college, there's hope.

For Lily, education had provided the path that enabled her to build a secure life for her daughter and forge a rewarding career in which she was contributing to the larger project of Diné nation-building. She continuously told students, both directly and through stories of her own struggles and achievements, that their dreams for themselves, their families, and their people were achievable.

#### *Student Responses to Faculty Responsiveness*

Although they did not use academic terminology like "pedagogical responsiveness," the Diné College students in this study were generally appreciative their instructors' efforts to respond to the local student population. Some of the practices they valued most had to do with use of class time and interpersonal communication. Barb and Lily's students were nearly all enthusiastic about collaborative learning and peer workshopping, and James's students particularly enjoyed the energetic and interactive full-class discussions. Likewise, most of

Patrick's students spoke positively about his workshop format, not least because it gave them plenty of opportunities to ask for additional feedback on their writing-in-progress. Indeed, the importance of individualized feedback and one-on-one interaction with faculty came up often in student interviews. Some of the younger students—including Judy, Eden, Cookie, and Jeffrey—admitted they were sometimes nervous about approaching their instructors for help. They appreciated it when faculty encouraged them to ask questions, and they liked it when instructors required conferences or office hour sessions. Some of the older students, like David and Morning Star, expressed particular gratitude for faculty who took the time to understand each student's background and learning needs and tailored their approaches accordingly. In short, Diné College students valued instructors who made the effort to respond to them as individuals, who made a connection and helped them feel a sense of belonging at the institution.

In general, students also valued pedagogical approaches that responded to their Diné identities, although the nature of their appreciation varied depending on their personal background and level of familiarity with Diné heritage knowledge. David, for example, reacted positively to Lily's clan introduction on the first day of class, saying, "I know who she is. Clan-wise, I'm her grandfather, so that she's my granddaughter—but already right there, you're supposed to show some type of respect, and if I start messing up, she can get after me [*laughs*]."  
For David, who had a strong sense of clan identity, these connections supported his sense of belonging at the outset of his first semester in college. Other students were motivated by the opportunity to learn *more* about their Diné heritage. For example, Johnny and Sherry valued the experience of reading and discussing parts of Diné Baháné in James's class precisely because they had *not* heard those stories while they were growing up.

Indeed, several students indicated that they believed it was important for faculty at Diné College, both Native and non-Native, to have what Madison Lane called “cultural competence.” Anastasia’s comments about her experiences in English 100B reveal both her appreciation for Barb’s openness to Diné students’ identities as well as her desire to see more Diné-specific content in the course:

She was really open-minded with the examples we gave her on certain stuff...Maybe [she could] tie in, I guess, maybe, like, the culture a little bit more and stuff the students can relate to. Because I know when [Barb] asks us a question for an example of a certain essay or something, like we would just be quiet because we couldn’t really remember. I think if it was maybe a topic—like if it was a certain topic she taught and maybe she tied it in with maybe the Navajo culture or something, we would remember. Because with the process essay I did makeup, and it was just, like, it’s something I was passionate about, and I knew about so I wouldn’t forget it.

Anastasia believed that it was helpful to learn course concepts by writing about topics that were familiar. While “Navajo culture” was one possible topic that she believed many Diné College students would “relate to,” she saw writing about her “passionate” interest in vintage eye makeup as serving a similar function.

However, a few students made a point of noting that Diné College faculty should *not* assume that students are knowledgeable about or, in some cases, all that interested in traditional Diné knowledge or lifeways. As William said:

Not everybody knows about traditional ways. I don’t really know. I just know enough to get by. I don’t really know the deep things of a lot of these things...Just because we’re Navajo doesn’t mean we know all of the Navajo religion, all the paths and a lot of these,

especially the young people. They've been raised in cities and they've been raised with a light switch. Turn on the faucet, turn on the TV, sit there. A lot of them don't know how to chop wood, they don't know how to carry in the water, haul water, and all these things. William, a committed Christian, resisted the assumption that being Native meant being involved with traditional spirituality. In pointing out the generational changes in Diné society—which are accompanied by changing technologies and experiences with rural living—William also challenged the anachronistic nature of these essentialisms. William was one of many students who expressed appreciation for relatively open essay topics that enabled them to write about their own interests, whether those interests were related to Diné traditions, contemporary Native issues, or one of the many other activist causes, career-related topics, or hobbies about which students felt they had something to say.

In our interviews, some students resisted the very idea that writing instruction at Diné College should differ from how writing is taught in other contexts. Cloud insisted that Diné students were too diverse to make sweeping generalizations about their learning needs:

We all come from different backgrounds. Teachers shouldn't be put on a pedestal to teach a specific way for students here at Diné College...Life isn't a comfort zone. You're going to have to get out of your comfort zone. Life isn't a happy box that you have to stay in. You're going to have to cross those lines. You're going to have to live outside that box.

Cloud saw pushing Diné students out of their “comfort zone” as one of the major functions of a college education. Dezba also thought Diné College faculty needed to challenge the comfort-zone mentality:

The Navajos are so focused on yourselves rather than the whole world. They're not focused, like, on different tribes, or what's going on in the world, or what natural disasters are happening, what's going on with the economy...They're mostly focused on, like, the chapter president...rather than focusing on other big topics.

In Dezba's frustration with the lack of attention to "big topics" like pan-Native political movements, economic issues, and global climate change, I hear an insistence that Diné College students need to gain a critical understanding of their own locations within larger social, economic, and political structures. I examine these issues further in Chapter Seven.

Many students deeply appreciated faculty's responses to the challenges presented by their locations. Morning Star, David, Kurt, Madison Lane, Sherry, Judy, and William all expressed gratitude for the flexibility their instructors showed when socioeconomic-related problems interfered with their ability to make it to class or turn in their coursework. Madison Lane was one of several students who suggested that Diné College faculty needed to understand the material realities of their students' lives:

Maybe understanding the lifestyle and where we have to come from to go to school.

[Some students have] no running water and no electricity and stuff like that. The college versus other colleges, I think is different because most of the students there are given the opportunities to go back to school, especially if their parents and the family housing is provided.<sup>100</sup>

Socioeconomic issues like housing and utilities infrastructure, transportation and road conditions, child and elder care, and the costs of college attendance came up in interviews with nearly every student in the study. Students like David wanted their instructors to understand the logistical challenges they faced; they were seeking accommodation, not lower standards:

We're all adults here in college... You definitely don't want to be holding their hand throughout the whole—through all their semester that they're here, because they definitely won't learn nothing but just to be more dependent on a lenient teacher.

In other words, understanding and responding to the challenges presented by students' locations does not mean fostering what Patrick called "taught helplessness." Rather, it means focusing on making it possible for students get from "where they are" to where they need to be.

### *Culture, Location, and Settler Colonialism*

Clearly, Diné College composition faculty enacted pedagogies that would be considered "culturally responsive" by education researchers who are invested in such frameworks: to varying degrees, they all affirmed Diné identity, made space for (and often imparted) Diné language and heritage knowledge, and adapted instruction to what they understood to be the communication norms and learning preferences in the community in which they were teaching. And, by and large, students valued those pedagogical practices, although some, like William and Madison Lane, resisted being pigeonholed by notions of Diné identity grounded solely in tradition. However, instructors also responded to additional dimensions of students' lives—their personal interests and experiences, academic preparation, socioeconomic challenges, and motivations—many of which were shaped by their locations within spatialized structures of social and economic inequality. Students also valued those pedagogical practices. The framework of *locally* responsive pedagogy is capable of accounting for all of these dimensions of pedagogical responsiveness in a way that the narrow and homogenizing construct of *culturally* responsive pedagogy cannot. And the term "locally responsive pedagogy" has the added advantage of foregrounding spatiality, and thus the social geographies and land-related politics of ongoing US settler colonialism.

In previous chapters, I refer to “inordinate focus on Native difference and cultural identity” (Konkle 7) as a settler colonial bait-and-switch, a way of deflecting attention from the political and socioeconomic dimensions of Native experiences. It is important to acknowledge, however, that the work Diné College is doing to maintain Diné bizaad, protect Diné knowledge, and provide opportunities for young Diné people to learn about their heritage are all means of resisting settler colonialism. The settler state wants Indigenous people to “go away” (Veracini “Introducing” 2). Within its structures, the existence of a vibrant Navajo Nation, one with a citizenry that knows its history and is able to draw on its heritage to assert self-determination, resists the settler colonial imperative to “extinguish indigenous alterities” (Veracini, “Introducing” 3). To my mind, however, the most important Indigenous alterity is *political*: it is sovereignty (or, at least, the fullest measure of sovereignty that Native nations are able to assert in the context of domestic dependent nationhood). I seek to theorize a locally responsive composition pedagogy that accounts for Diné College students’ experiences within settler colonialism and equips them to navigate its structures—for themselves and for the Navajo Nation—using *all* available means. These means include, *but are not limited to*, the perpetuation and political mobilization of Diné heritage knowledge. Both Diné College’s mission statement and the pedagogical practices of its composition faculty suggest that we have common cause.

In the following chapters, I examine instructors’ pedagogical responses to two additional dimensions of “the local”: the distinctive institutional context of Diné College, particularly its efforts to integrate Diné pedagogical knowledge across the curriculum (Chapter Six); and the communities within which the college is situated, from the local chapter to the global community in which the college is increasingly asserting Native presence (Chapter Seven).

## Chapter Six

### “Your Unique Diné Way”: Interweaving Local Knowledge

*It’s the first evening of class, and Patrick is seated at the end of a long rectangle of tables, going over the course syllabus. He has told the students about his office hours, reviewed his contact information, and suggested that they read over the course description on their own time.*

*“Jump to the college philosophy,” he says, referring to a section that takes up most of the first page of the document. “Some of you who have taken classes here are familiar with this. Who knows what it’s about? What’s our college philosophy? You’re looking right at it on the syllabus.”*

Figure 2: DEP in Patrick's Syllabus

**COURSE GOALS:** Students will use Nitsáhákees, Nahat'á, Iiná and Siihasin, in their writing, reading and discussion activities as guided by the instructor.

#### Nitsáhákees

1. Demonstrate successful time management and personal standards for academic work.
2. Apply critical thinking skills in selecting topics for argument papers.
3. Apply critical thinking skills in developing thesis statement.
4. Apply critical thinking skills in developing an introductory paragraph to include:
  - a. Problem statement.
  - b. Examples of problem statement.
  - c. Thesis statement in the form of opinion.
5. Submit complete writing assignments on time in accordance with deadline schedule. No exceptions.

#### Nahat'á

1. Demonstrate successful time management and personal standards for academic work.
2. Apply planning and research skills to develop annotated bibliography requirements for individual assignments.
3. Apply planning skills in preparation for argument papers:
  - a. Create outline.
  - b. Develop topic sentences supporting Thesis statement.
4. Submit complete writing assignments on time in accordance with deadline schedule. No exceptions.

#### Iiná

1. Demonstrate successful time management and personal standards for academic work.
2. Apply writing skills and complete drafts.
3. Understand writing is a process, writing three completed drafts, and submitting them on time in accordance with deadline schedule. No exceptions.
4. Use all resources to overcome classroom challenges (such as tutoring and library services, and other help sessions)

#### Siihasin

1. Demonstrate successful time management and personal standards for academic work.
2. Revise work after consultation with Instructor.
3. Review steps in each assignment.
4. Decide what worked and what didn't.
5. Implement necessary changes to become more successful in the future.

*“It’s nitsáhákees, nahat’á--” one student begins to list.*

*“It’s how we should be,” interjects a student who looks to be in his sixties; I later learn his named Lawrence. “How a person should better themselves.”*

*“As instructors,” Patrick says, “we’re required to tell you about it. In the writing program, we use the college philosophy. It’s based on the four directions.”*

*Two students enter the room tentatively, late but trying not to be disruptive. Patrick*

*hands them copies of the syllabus, and they squeeze through the narrow aisle between the students sitting around the tables and the computer stations lining the classroom walls.*

*“For our purpose,” Patrick continues, “the writing program wants us to use the college philosophy in our writing activities, our writing assignments. Use it. It’s no different than what you may have learned in high school—we just look at it differently.” Patrick glances around the crowded room.*

*“If you look under nitsáhákees, that’s thinking in general. It’s critical thinking, time management. Some of you are familiar with high school teachers saying do ‘brainstorming’ first. It’s the same thing. Developing topics for your papers. Coming up with a thesis statement.” He smiles. “By the time you leave this class, you’ll be so sick of that word!”*

*A few students laugh softly.*

*“Developing paragraphs,” Patrick continues. “In this class, you’re not writing papers that tell stories or narratives. You will be writing an opinion. All papers in this course will be arguments, persuasion. You’re taking what you learned in 101 up a notch. I’m more interested in your opinion as an individual, not what others say. There’s a real difference here. That’s what I mean in #4—a ‘problem statement.’ Your thesis has to be in the form of an opinion.”*

*Another late student ducks in and grabs a syllabus before weaving her way to the back.*

*“The next part of the process is nahat’á. Planning. That’s gathering sources behind the scenes. Don’t just jump into it unless you’re writing poetry or something. In this class, you’ll be doing research arguments. You’ll be gathering materials to support your opinion. Creating an outline, developing topic sentences, a thesis. This kind of stuff. Follow the schedule. Meet the deadline.”*

*Patrick moves down the list. “Next is iiná. Now, I’m explaining these steps because I’ll*

*want you to write about how you use the college philosophy in your process paper. You'll write about how it played a role in writing your research paper. In the college philosophy, we interpret iiná as 'life.' Here in 102, we've tweaked it to mean making it tangible, making it real, giving it life. Writing is like that. Putting ideas on paper, in print form, gives it life. You put your thoughts in tangible form. That's where writing the drafts comes in. Writing is a process. Don't write one draft and tell me you're done. You have to write a second draft and a final draft."*

*Patrick looks around the room. "Do you understand writing as a process and how our college philosophy fits in?"*

*Several students nod.*

*"Okay. Siihasin is reflection. You reflect on your work, look at what you've written. This is the editing process, consultation with your instructor, revision. That's siihasin, the final step."*

*Patrick leans back in his seat. "Each of these steps can be happening at the same time," he says. "They're interrelated. Don't get caught up in the situation, thinking, 'First I have to do this, and then this.' All these steps are interrelated. Look at writing process at Diné College as a cyclical process. If you take what you've learned elsewhere—in high school, at other colleges, with other instructors—it fits in with this paradigm. What's unique about this is it's yours: your unique Diné way."*

Patrick's discussion of the Diné Educational Philosophy (DEP) illustrates the complex dynamics involved in responding pedagogically to another key dimension of "the local": the *institution*, including its mission, which at Diné College involves integrating Diné values and epistemology across the curriculum. As Lawrence's comments hint, DEP draws on principles from traditional Diné spirituality regarding "how a person should better themselves": how to live

a balanced life and gain wisdom through experience in order to reach maturity. DEP is “local knowledge” in the sense that postcolonial and decolonial theorists use the term: it is Diné knowledge that historically has been excluded from school-based educational experiences. Through DEP, Diné College seeks to challenge what Patrick sometimes referred to as the “epistemologic privilege” granted to Euro-American ways of knowing in US educational settings. DEP might be thus understood as what semiotician Walter Mignolo calls a “decolonial project”—that is, a “desubalternization of local knowledge” (*Local Histories* 302) that attempts to “delink” knowledge-making (and, in this case, teaching and learning) from the logics of coloniality that Mignolo argues are inherent in Western modernity (*Darker Side 5*).<sup>101</sup> The institutional mobilization of local knowledge through DEP is therefore, amongst other things, a *political* project, one in which all Diné College composition instructors are required to participate.

Indeed, we might understand the college’s use of heritage knowledge to foster students’ development as academic writers as a form of what Lyons calls rhetorical sovereignty. Using its authority as a tribally-controlled college to establish self-determined curricular mandates, Diné College enacts “the inherent right and ability of *peoples* to determine their own communicative needs and desires” (Lyons “Rhetorical Sovereignty” 449, emphasis in the original) at the level of composition pedagogy. Native people have a troubled historical relationship with what Lyons calls the “heretofore compromised technology of writing” (“Rhetorical Sovereignty” 447):

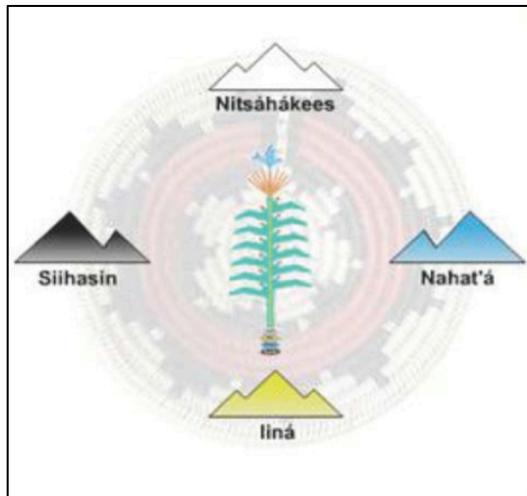
[T]he duplicitous interrelationships between writing, violence, and [settler] colonization developed during the nineteenth century—not only the boarding schools but at the signings of hundreds of treaties, most of which were dishonored by whites—would set

into motion a persistent distrust of the written word in English, one that resonates in homes and schools and courts of law still today. (“Rhetorical Sovereignty” 449)

Using DEP as a framework for teaching writing is one way for Diné College composition faculty to uncompromise that technology, offering students a process-oriented approach that works *with* their identities and treats their Diné intellectual heritage as an intellectual resource. As Patrick tells his students, “What’s unique about this is that it’s yours: your unique Diné way.”

DEP is also local knowledge in a spatial sense. It is profoundly *emplaced*, both geographically and cosmologically (see Figure 3, which appears on the Diné College website and course catalogs). When Patrick tells his students that DEP is “based on the four directions,” he is invoking a dense matrix of associations with the cardinal directions, each of which is linked to one of the four sacred mountains that bound Diné Bikéyah: Sisnaajiní (Blanca Peak), located near Alamosa, Colorado; Tsoodził (Mt. Taylor), near Grants, New Mexico; Dook’o’osliid (San Francisco Peak) near Flagstaff, Arizona; and Dibé Nitsaa (Mt. Hesperus) near Durango, Colorado. Symbolically, then, DEP is not simply a temporal model. Rather, it maps its cyclical four-step process onto the very specific geographies of the Diné homeland, where geological formations and other landmarks carry stories that contain a wealth of historical, ecological, and spiritual knowledge. To borrow a phrase from anthropologist Keith Basso, the wisdom of DEP “sits in places.” In the context of settler colonialism’s subversion of Native control over their lands, a pedagogical framework that grounds itself in the historical landbase of the Navajo Nation stakes an important political as well as epistemological claim.

Figure 3: DEP Graphic with Four Sacred Mountains



While the political—and, for many Diné College leaders, spiritual—motivations for advocating DEP are readily apparent, the actual mechanics of “desubalternizing” local knowledge in the English composition classroom may seem less straightforward. However, as Suresh Canagarajah asserts, “[c]elebrating local knowledge does not mean holding up a mythical form of classical knowledge as possessing the answers to all contemporary questions” (“Reconstructing” 12). Patrick tells his students that DEP is “no different from what you may have learned in high school” and that the writing program has “tweaked” the meaning of the steps in order to apply them to academic writing. Patrick does not view DEP as incompatible with “Western” theories and frameworks, nor is he portraying it as some pure form of spiritual knowledge untouched by the institutional and disciplinary contexts in which it is being repurposed. Rather, Patrick presents DEP as both congruent with and inclusive of insights from other pedagogical traditions. Canagarajah’s definition of local knowledge as a “process” of “interpret[ing] established knowledge for local needs and interests” while “reconstructing local knowledge for contemporary needs” (“Reconstructing” 14) is an apt description of Patrick’s use

of DEP as a framework for teaching writing process. The three veteran Diné College faculty in this study all engaged in a similar process of interpretation and reconstruction.

As may by now be obvious, Patrick's interpretation/reconstruction of DEP exemplifies the process of locally responsive pedagogy that I outline in Chapter Three. He interweaves his own conceptual understanding of DEP—a knowledge of the local context stemming largely from his experiences as an administrator and education researcher during the period when the philosophy was being implemented—with theories of writing process deriving from the field of composition. Patrick's explanation of the four steps also emphasizes the importance of taking responsibility for one's learning, a focus that reflects his desire to counter "taught helplessness" among his students. This pedagogical principle combines disciplinary knowledge from educational psychology with Patrick's personal goal of fostering Diné self-sufficiency, a nationalist political commitment dating back to his involvement with the Red Power movement. Indeed, by explicitly framing DEP to his students as an institutional and programmatic requirement, Patrick presents the philosophy as an expression of Diné educational self-determination, which he understands to include asserting a place in the curriculum for Diné knowledge. The locally responsive pedagogical practices that result from this interweaving manifest across multiple dimensions of instruction: in his syllabus, Patrick explicitly states that DEP applies to "writing, reading, and discussion activities," and his descriptions of the steps also touch on assessment and course policies.

As I discuss in Chapter Three, the varying backgrounds of the Diné College faculty in this study led them to develop diverse locally responsive pedagogies. This diversity extended to how they understood, valued, and implemented DEP as a way of teaching writing process. James, Patrick, Lily, and Barb each interwove distinct theories of language, literacy, and learning, as

well, in some cases, as their personal political commitments, with DEP's cyclical four-step framework. In this chapter, I examine instructors' varying interpretations and reconstructions of DEP. I begin with a history of DEP at Diné College, followed by a brief examination of the Diné epistemological and spiritual principles from which the philosophy derives. I then discuss how James, Patrick, Lily, and Barb understood and implemented DEP across multiple dimensions of instruction, followed by a discussion of their students' responses to these approaches. Ultimately, I argue that DEP offers an instructive case study of the challenges and possibilities of pedagogical projects that undertake the kind of epistemological work Mignolo advocates. Such projects may result in a proliferation of co-existing interpretations rather than any clear consensus about what it means to desubalternize local knowledge in the composition classroom.

### *The DEP Project*

From its inception in 1968, Diné College has had what long-time faculty member and administrator Paul Willetto calls a “dual mission”: a “higher education mission” and a “cultural mission” (“Leadership” 47). These missions have been intertwined from the start, but, as Willetto observes, “[o]ften times, the dual missions result in conflict...because each mission is characterized by two different sets of values, western and Navajo values. Western and Navajo values want to achieve differing outcomes” (“Leadership” 47–48). I would argue that these missions are not inherently at odds. Provided the college avoids acting as a “culture cop” (Lyons, *X-Marks* 76) enforcing a static notion of Dinéness that does not reflect the “irreducible modernity and diversity” of the Navajo Nation (Lyons, “Actually Existing” 297), these objectives need not be understood as incommensurable binaries. However, Willetto’s account of the college’s efforts to balance both parts of its mission suggests that unifying these goals has not been a simple intellectual or rhetorical undertaking (“Struggles”).<sup>102</sup>

Early in the college's history, the two components of this mission were essentially parallel tracks in the curriculum, with required courses in "Navajo and Indian Studies" offered alongside conventional transfer-oriented courses in the liberal arts and sciences (Willeto, "Struggles"). However, in the early 1980s, the college leadership began to look for ways to integrate Diné epistemology across the curriculum, both to help students forge connections between "Western" and Diné knowledge systems and to ground their educational experience in Diné values (McNeley; Willeto, "Struggles"). In 1982, under the leadership of President Dean Jackson, the college officially adopted Sa'ah Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón, often abbreviated as SNBH, as its core educational paradigm (I discuss the principles of SNBH in greater detail below). Over the last three decades, Diné College has experimented with a variety of models for integrating SNBH across the curriculum. In the early years, these included Jackson's Cornstalk and Cradleboard philosophies, followed in the late 1980s by instructor Herbert Benally's Navajo Philosophy of Learning, which attempted to reorganize the academic disciplines along the four Diné categories of knowledge (Willeto, "Struggles"; Benally; McNeley). However, the approach that gained traction in the mid-1990s, and which has remained the most visible and widely adopted in the two decades since, is the Diné Educational Philosophy, a four-step process model adapted from Benally's Navajo Philosophy of Learning framework.

The story of how parts of Benally's model, which he developed in his master's thesis, became *the* Diné Educational Philosophy reveals some of the intellectual challenges and opportunities of institution-based efforts to desubalternize local knowledge. As Willeto reports (and McNeley corroborates), Benally's Navajo Philosophy of Learning initially generated a great deal of excitement at the college because it offered "a pedagogical tool by which to teach Navajo and Western subject matters" ("Struggles"). However, even as several departments began to

reconfigure themselves along the categories of Benally's model, members of the faculty with expertise in traditional Diné spirituality began to question his framework. Some of their concerns hinged on matters of provenance and authenticity: the fact that Benally produced his model in the context of a master's program made it suspect for some traditionalists, who believed that the "the paradigm was conceived as a graduate thesis and thus was designed from a Western perspective for a Western audience and motivated by Western ideas" ("Struggles"). The model also prompted debate about the relationship between content and process, with some faculty critiquing Benally for stretching or "misrepresenting" traditional Diné categories of knowledge and their associated processes ("Struggles"). Thus, even among those Diné College faculty and administrators who agreed that "synthesiz[ing] Navajo and Western knowledge" ("Struggles") was a desirable goal—and, as Willeto makes clear, not everyone shared this view—there was no easy consensus about what such a synthesis should look like.

Debates around these issues stalled adoption of Benally's framework, and, eventually, a presidential task force turned the model over to a team of *hatałii* (medicine men), led by elder Nevy Jensen, who, as Willeto reports,

labored over questions raised by Benally's model, such as, 'What are traditional knowledge areas and their processes?' 'What traditional knowledge would be appropriate for teaching in an educational setting?' They also considered other, more administrative questions: 'Who would be responsible for delivering the paradigm to the students?' 'What kind of training would be necessary for those responsible for the delivery and eventually the integration?' ("Struggles")

The task force's questions suggest some of the major institutional challenges of this kind of project. First of all, Benally's efforts to codify knowledge that was primarily oral necessarily

stirred up debate among expert practitioners. Furthermore, the act of operationalizing such knowledge in a college setting raised concerns about what it meant to institutionalize something that many understood as sacred, powerful, and in need of protection. And, of course, this framework raised organizational questions about disciplinary responsibility and professional development, particularly given that many Diné College instructors were non-Native, and Diné faculty themselves sometimes had relatively little expertise in what is, in fact, a highly specialized body of knowledge. Deciding who would be responsible for knowing how much about what aspects of traditional Diné knowledge, and how they would go about teaching it across a variety of disciplinary contexts, would be a complex institutional undertaking, and these complexities slowed the task force's progress.

Ironically, it was external pressures from the regional accrediting body that finally pushed the issue of DEP implementation. During the accreditation self-study process in the early 1990s, the North Central Association “cited Diné College for not fulfilling its objective” and “implied Diné College needed to take its philosophy of learning from the realm of abstraction to practical application” (Willeto, “Struggles”). Willeto describes this push from accreditors as a “turning point” in the DEP development process (“Struggles”). Jensen’s team settled on a model that

exhibited some of the same ideas as Benally’s paradigm but with more traditional elder input...[First,] the task force redefined and dealt with what is traditional knowledge areas and their processes...Second, the task force put to rest which Navajo traditional knowledge is appropriate for education...Third, by having more traditional elders work on the model, the paradigm became more authentic, according to the new model’s

proponents. Fourth, the paradigm focused more on application than on abstraction. (Willeto, “Struggles”).

Willeto’s description demonstrates some of the key intellectual and rhetorical demands of this effort to institutionalize Indigenous knowledge: the importance of a pressing exigency (in this case, the requirements of the accreditors); the need to cultivate consensus about the specifics of the local knowledge being mobilized; the challenges of deciding which parts of that knowledge to integrate into the curriculum and which parts to protect by keeping them separate; the value of harnessing the ethos of respected experts in order to give new interpretations of local knowledge credibility; and the need to effectively translate abstractions into concrete applications in order to achieve an actionable purpose.

Once the principles of DEP were agreed upon, there was the broader challenge of implementing the philosophy across the curriculum. As Willeto describes, when DEP was first introduced, it met with resistance from both Diné and non-Diné faculty:

[T]he college established a Diné Educational Philosophy class to train all the faculty so they could deliver the Navajo philosophy. The faculty members, 70 percent of whom were non-Navajos, were not cooperative initially. During class sessions, many heated and emotional exchanges took place over everything from general confusion to definitions of words. Ironically, the Navajo faculty raised as many questions as the non-Navajo faculty. Some of the more experienced Diné College instructors were deeply concerned about integrating the Navajo philosophy of education with the Western style curriculum...Other issues included how the philosophy would impact academic freedom and transferability. (“Struggles”)

Clearly, top-down administrative efforts to operationalize Diné knowledge presented particular conflicts for faculty invested in disciplinary ways of knowing, especially given their acute sense of responsibility for preparing students to succeed at off-reservation universities after transfer. In 1995, faculty voted to approve the Dean of Instruction's plan to implement DEP, but "tak[ing] what they knew from their own Western training and process[ing] it through the paradigm" (Willeto, "Struggles") involved a great deal of skepticism, debate, and idiosyncratic interweaving of personal and disciplinary knowledge with evolving understandings of DEP.

As Willeto notes, the majority of faculty made good faith efforts to integrate the philosophy into their courses, but "some faculty had [more] positive experiences and made better progress than others" ("Struggles"), and many struggled to make more than surface gestures. Student reactions to DEP also varied. While many responded positively to the philosophy and believed it enhanced their learning, some objected to being taught concepts rooted in ceremonial knowledge by anyone other than hatalii, and particularly by non-Diné faculty. Likewise, those traditional Diné experts who were most invested in DEP criticized the implementation because it "greatly diluted the Sa'ah Naaghai Bik'eh Hozhoon principles" ("Struggles"). In sum, while this pedagogical project might be considered "decolonial" in Mignolo's sense of the term, it was not some easy restoration of timeless local knowledge that had been patiently awaiting desubalternization. Rather, it has been an on-going process of interpretation, negotiation, persuasion, and compromise, and, like all true compromises, its results have satisfied no one completely.

And the picture is still mixed. Institutional studies conducted in the late 1990s suggested that a strong majority of students and faculty saw value in DEP, with no significant differences between Native and non-Native faculty or by faculty members' level of participation in Diné

cultural activities (Willeto, “Struggles”). However, Willeto describes persistent challenges integrating DEP into the curriculum at the college’s smaller branch campuses, which rely heavily on adjunct faculty and often have particularly high instructor turnover rates (“Leadership”). In Fall 2012, the DEP framework was ubiquitous in institutional documents like the course catalog, the college website, and strategic planning reports, as well as on posters and murals displayed around the college campuses. Faculty were required to include a statement about the four steps in their course syllabi, and the students I interviewed described encountering DEP in courses ranging from mathematics to speech communications to silversmithing. In many ways, then, DEP was institutionally entrenched; it had even made its way into the mission statement of the Navajo Nation’s other tribally controlled postsecondary institution, Navajo Technical College (now Navajo Technical University).

During my fieldwork semester, I observed on-going efforts to educate faculty across the college about DEP. Professional development sessions focusing on the content and contemporary applications of traditional Diné knowledge—sessions generally referred to by faculty and staff as “DEP”—were offered at the main campus nearly every Friday morning and broadcast via ITV to the other campuses and sites. Attendance at these sessions was voluntary and varied widely: when I attended, non-Native faculty often seemed underrepresented. This may have been in part because some presenters tended to switch over to Diné bizaad when explaining concepts that were challenging to discuss in English; as Willeto’s description of early faculty training sessions suggests, the challenges of negotiating the relationships between language and epistemology are yet another complexity of this kind of project. As a new Anglo faculty member, Barb experienced these multilingual presentations as confusing and alienating. She stopped attending

DEP sessions after the first month because she found them hard to follow and did not see ready applications for teaching English.

I highlight the starts, stops, and persistent tensions in the story of DEP's implementation not as a critique of this on-going project, but rather to acknowledge the challenging intellectual, rhetorical, and institutional work that has gone into an effort to do something unprecedented. DEP is not a wholesale turning back to tradition: there would be no role for a twenty-first century college in such a turn. Instead, multiple constituencies holding a variety of different viewpoints have come together, again and again, to undertake the complex, often inefficient, and inevitably contentious project of drawing on the insights of traditional Diné knowledge to make something *new*, something intended to help Diné students navigate postsecondary education by using their heritage as a resource for learning. In the following section, I examine the specifics of the DEP framework that has emerged from this on-going process. I then turn to the diverse ways in which James, Patrick, Lily, and Barb took up DEP in their composition classrooms.

### *SNBH and the Diné Educational Philosophy*

At the heart of DEP are the principles of Sa'ah Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón, or SNBH. As Willetto's accounts and Barb's frustrations with DEP training suggest, it is difficult to define SNBH in a simple word or phrase, and scholars of Diné philosophy often observe that it is especially hard to do justice to the concept in English (e.g. F. Clark; Farella; Witherspoon).<sup>103</sup> SNBH is not simply a set of rules or guidelines, but rather, in former Diné College president Ferlin Clark's words, "a large, complex, all-encompassing worldview" (89): it is an ontology that undergirds traditional Diné epistemology, values, and ceremonial practices. Indeed, anthropologist John Farella calls SNBH "*the key concept in Navajo philosophy, the vital requisite for understanding the whole*" (Farella 153, emphasis in the original). Based on a

detailed explication of the term's root words and an examination of its symbolic function in Diné ceremonial practices, anthropologist Gary Witherspoon offers the following definition:

The goal of Navajo life in this world is to live to maturity in the condition described as *hózhó*, and to die of old age, the end result of which incorporates one into the universal beauty, harmony, and happiness of *Sq'ah Naagháii Bik'eh Hózhó*. Actually *Sq'ah Naagháii* and *Bik'eh Hózhó* are the central [male-female] animating powers of the universe, and, as such, they produce a world described as *hózhó*, the ideal environment of beauty, harmony, and happiness. (25)

The principles of SNBH thus offer a framework for living in *hózhóón*, or harmony with one's environment, and this condition of balance and completeness is fully realized in the maturity of old age.

Central to SNBH is the understanding that "how a person should better themselves"—i.e. *learning*—is a process. As Aretha Matt explains,

SNBH is the idea that one will walk (or exist) in beauty and harmony as they grow old (or continue through all phases of life)...This way of thinking promotes the value of living a long life and supports the idea that old age brings with it experiential knowledge, a sacred knowledge. (18-19)

Thus, in alignment with the four phases of the life cycle—childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and maturity—SNBH offers a four-step cyclical process for gaining wisdom through experience. This process model is the core of DEP. As Patrick explains to his students, the four steps of this process are *nitsáhákees* (thinking), *nahat'á* (planning), *iiná* (living, as in "bringing to life" or doing), and *siihasin* (variously translated in institutional documents as assuring, evaluating, assessing, or reflecting) (see Figure 3). Each step is associated with one of the four phases of the

day, the four seasons, four cardinal directions, and the four sacred mountains that bound Diné Bikéyah: nitsáhákees is sunrise, spring, and Sisnaajiní in the east; nahat'á is daytime, summer, and Tsoodził in the south; iiná is sunset, fall and Dook'o'oosliid in the west; and siihasin is nighttime, winter, and Dibé Nitsaa in the north.

DEP is thus, as I have noted, an emplaced pedagogical framework in which the cyclical learning process maps onto spiritually powerful geological features that demarcate the Diné homeland. In traditional Diné cosmology, these mountains and their directions are each adorned with important associations: four sacred minerals (white shell, turquoise, abalone shell, black jet), the four elements (air, water, earth, and fire), and sets of male and female deities, as well as specific mental and physical activities. Likewise, each direction is associated with one of the four original Diné clans—Kinyaa'áanii, Tódích'íi'nii, Honágháahnii, and Hashtl'ishnii—which possess distinct skills and strengths and perform vital roles in maintaining the collective well-being of Diné communities (Aronilth). Thus, DEP is local knowledge in both the spatial and postcolonial/decolonial senses of the term. However, as a framework for learning across the curriculum at Diné College, DEP is also being continuously reconstructed and reinterpreted by faculty who are interweaving it with disciplinary knowledge in their respective fields. In the English and Foundational Studies department, faculty have generally taken up DEP as a framework for teaching writing as a process.<sup>104</sup>

Readers in the field of composition might be quick to observe that the four steps of DEP align in compelling ways with disciplinary models of writing process. For example, the cyclical structure of the four-step process has the benefit of being inherently recursive, which compositionists like Nancy Sommers have pointed out is a feature of experienced writers' processes, and which, as Sandra Perl notes, early linear models of writing process often failed to

capture. Furthermore, DEP offers a framework for developing student metacognition around learning and writing: its four steps provide a meta-language for talking about process-based problem-solving across a range of domains, disciplines, and tasks, and the pronounced emphasis on reflection during the *siihasin* step resonates with ongoing scholarly conversations about the importance of reflective activities for facilitating learning transfer (e.g. Silver). Of course, I make these observations in light of my own disciplinary orientations, as well as my professional experiences teaching composition in other two- and four-year college settings and at Diné College. Like the faculty in this study, I have been engaged in a process of interweaving the knowledge and experiences I bring to this pedagogical scene with my evolving understanding of the local context. My interpretation of DEP as a framework for teaching writing process is just one among many possibilities.

At the main Diné College campus, the Humanities division<sup>105</sup> set some of the parameters for instructors' interpretations of DEP. Most notably, it institutionalized DEP as a framework for teaching writing process through the evaluation criteria in its Freshman English exit portfolio assessment. In order to successfully complete the composition sequence, students on the main campus were required to submit a portfolio of their written work from English 102, which was then evaluated by a team of faculty who were not their course instructors.<sup>106</sup> As part of that portfolio, students were required to include a reflective essay about how they had used the four steps of DEP in their writing; this is the "process essay" that Patrick describes on the first day of class. Furthermore, the English department offered standardized language for describing DEP in course syllabi, which adjunct faculty across the college system (like myself) were encouraged to use. However, among the nine English faculty whose syllabi I collected, the DEP statements varied a great deal. Each of these faculty interwove their own theories of writing process, shaped

by their disciplinary perspectives and other professional experiences, with their individual understandings of DEP. The locally responsive pedagogical practices that resulted were therefore quite variable. In the sections that follow, I examine how each of the four instructors in this study used DEP in their classrooms. I argue that the diversity of their approaches illustrates the complex intellectual work of developing pedagogies that respond to institutional requirements to integrate this kind of local knowledge into English composition courses.

#### *The Diné Educational Philosophy as Writing Process*

James. James was a fervent believer in DEP, both as a framework for teaching writing and as an approach that students could use in their lives beyond the classroom. As he said in one interview, “I make it clear that there are four phases in virtually *anything* they do.” James had a strong appreciation for the traditional knowledge undergirding the philosophy—his scholarly work on Diné oral poetry provided an important epistemological foundation for his understanding of its principles—and he had participated enthusiastically in the professional development courses offered when DEP was first implemented in the 1990s. James stood out among the instructors in the study for the consistency with which he used the language of DEP in the classroom: he invoked the philosophy during nearly every English 101 class meeting.

Figure 4: DEP in James's Syllabus

**III. Course Objectives:** By the end of this course, you should be able to master the following steps of the writing process:

1. Think about an idea--whether your own or something you have heard or read--until you are ready to write about it (*nitsáhákees*).
2. Frame that idea in a plan that includes a thesis statement and an outline for expressing it in a well constructed paragraph (*nahata'á*).
3. Execute the plan by composing a draft. (*Iiiná*).
4. Perfect that draft by strengthening its organization, revising sentences, and correcting errors (*siihasin*).

As I discuss in Chapter Three, James completed his graduate education in literary studies in the early 1960s, before the emergence of rhetoric and composition as a distinct academic discipline. His interpretation of DEP as a framework for teaching writing process, presented in his English 101 syllabus, reflects this disciplinary background (see Figure 4). Readers familiar with composition theory might question some of the assumptions about writing embedded in James's description of "the writing process." Although he uses the terminology of DEP, James's conception of the philosophy is essentially linear—the four steps are framed as discrete and sequential, with no suggestion of recursivity. He presents idea development as preceding the act of putting words on the page, rather than something that happens iteratively over the course of multiple rounds of planning, drafting, and revising. James also portrays writing as an individual, solitary endeavor, rather than a socially situated activity, and his translation of *siihasin* as "perfecting" seems to reflect a sense that writing strives toward a singular, idealized version of the text, with perfection defined primarily in terms of sentence-level style and mechanics. I make these observations not to single James out for critique—his implicit theories of writing are probably not uncommon among English literature faculty of his generation—but rather to point out that those theories profoundly shape his interpretation and application of DEP.

Because of his disciplinary training and academic trajectory, James's writing pedagogy was informed primarily by insights from mid-twentieth century theoretical linguistics. As James's assignment inviting students to respond to Luci Tapahonso's poem "Magic Words" shows (see Figure 5), this disciplinary knowledge led him to interpret DEP in terms of sentence-level composing, and he often focused specifically on the creation of subject-verb pairs, or predication. This emphasis derived from theories of transformational-generative grammar. In class discussions, James sometimes discussed the primacy of subject-verb pairing in terms of the procreative power of male-female duality, which is central to the gendered animating energies of the universe that constitute SNBH (Witherspoon).

Figure 5: Assignment Responding to Tapahonso's "Magic Words"

- B. Review the questions on "Magic Words," p. 5.
- C. Remember, writing is a process.
  - 1. Explore the four steps of essay writing, p. 1.
    - a. Nitsáhákees (thinking): what do you want to write about? What do you want to say about it? Think by predicating--matching a verb with a noun. The resulting sentence should express your main idea.
    - b. Nahata'á (or planning): convert your predication to a topic sentence by completing your noun and verb part and adding a complement, then determine which details to develop it with.
    - c. Jiná (or executing): build sentences around all developing details, and organize them with the help of logic and transitions.
    - d. Sihasin (or perfecting): revise carefully. Make sure all noun and verb endings match; make sure sentences hang together correctly; make sure all words are accurate and effective, etc.

Remarkably, DEP seems to have played an important role in orienting James *toward* more process-oriented pedagogical practices in his writing classes. As he asserted in one interview, "The whole notion of writing as a process occurred late enough in my career that I've

just never accepted it.” Despite this disavowal, in class discussions and in course documents like the one in Figure 5, James *did* present writing as a process, and he almost always did so using the language and four-step framework of DEP. The philosophy equipped James with a conceptual vocabulary for thinking and talking about writing as a process, something that his disciplinary and professional training had not provided. As he said,

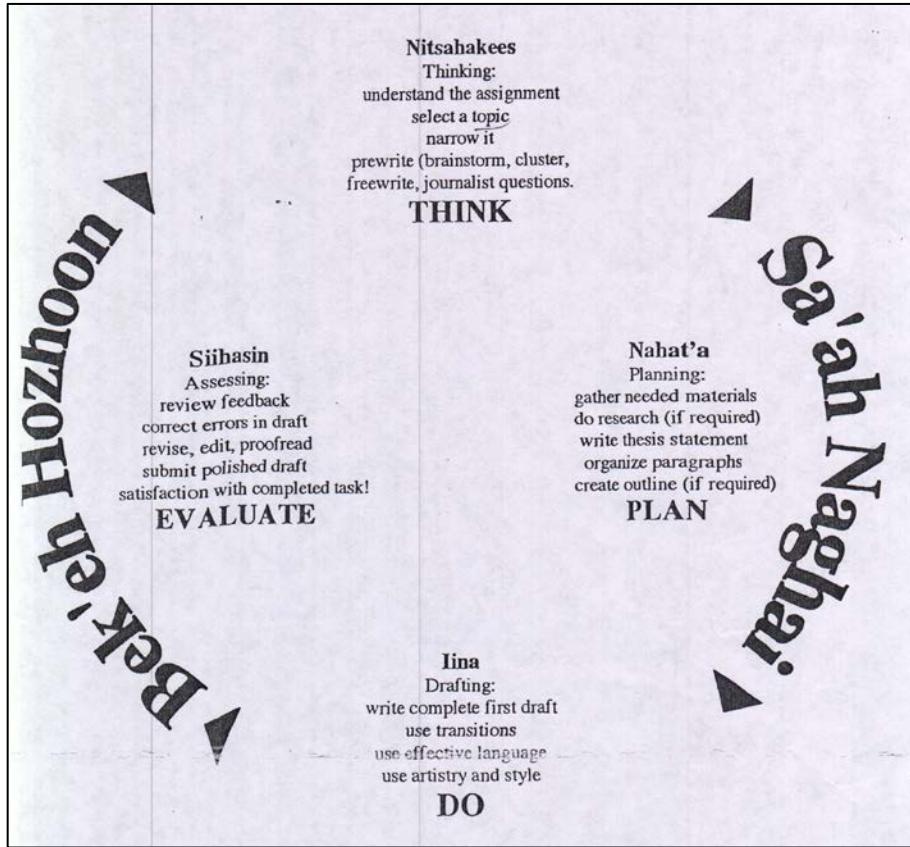
I like to tell [students] that if I had known about Sa’ah Naaghái Bik’eh Hózhóón—about, you know, nitsáhákees, nahat’á, iiná, siihasin—if I had known that at the very start, I would have done a better job...I’ve learned so much about teaching composition from teaching on the reservation.

James’s experiences suggest that DEP has the ability to foster a process orientation, even among faculty who have not adopted such a perspective through engagement with the discipline of composition. There is thus a dialogic element to English faculty’s interweaving of disciplinary knowledge, professional experiences, and DEP: not only do faculty bring their own knowledge and expertise to the DEP framework, but the philosophy also has the potential to change their pedagogy at the conceptual level. Based on my own disciplinary perspective, I agree with James’s assessment that the conceptual changes DEP introduced to his composition pedagogy were for the better.

Patrick. Although he did not invoke DEP as regularly as James, Patrick also returned to the philosophy often throughout the semester. His definition of the four steps, presented at the opening of this chapter (Figure 2), shares many similarities with James’s: nitsáhákees is equated with coming up with ideas, nahat’á with strategies such as outlining and developing topic sentences and a thesis statement, iiná with generating a draft, and siihasin with revision. However, Patrick offers a much more elaborated explanation of the steps than James, and there

are several key conceptual differences in these explanations that reflect Patrick's own disciplinary influences, his personal political commitments, and his understanding of the principles of DEP. Patrick's application of DEP seems to have been shaped to a greater extent than James's by composition theory, albeit indirectly: he had adopted much of his approach from a mentor in the English department who had some background in writing studies. This influence was particularly evident in the way Patrick emphasized taking drafts through multiple rounds of revision based on instructor feedback.

Unlike James, Patrick also foregrounded the recursive nature of writing. A handout that Patrick gave students highlights the fundamental circularity of the DEP model, framing it as a never-ending cycle whose movement is animated by the balancing male-female forces of Sa'ah Naagháí and Bik'eh Hózhóón (see Figure 6). In his discussion of the philosophy on the first day of class, Patrick advised students not to be too concerned about distinguishing what step they were on as they wrote. As he told them, "Each of these steps can be happening at the same time. They're interrelated...Look at the writing process at Diné College as a cyclical process." Patrick's acknowledgement of the repetition, simultaneity, and interconnectedness of the four steps recognizes the often messy recursivity of writing, which rarely proceeds from step to step in straightforward, linear fashion. Patrick's attention to this point might reflect not only the influence of composition theory, but also his understanding of the epistemological foundations of DEP, particularly the importance of four-stage cycles in the spiritual and ceremonial knowledge that inform the philosophy.

Figure 6: DEP as Writing Process<sup>107</sup>

As I have discussed, Patrick's goal of unteaching "taught helplessness" also shaped his interpretations of DEP. His definitions for the steps emphasize time management, adhering to course procedures around feedback and revision, setting high personal standards for the quality of one's work, overcoming challenges by seeking out resources, and engaging in genre-specific literacy activities involved in researching and writing evidence-based arguments (see Figure 2). These inclusions highlight DEP as a framework for problem-solving that simultaneously offers strategies for completing academic writing assignments, fosters the development of study skills more generally, and inculcates a sense of personal responsibility for learning. Patrick thus interpreted DEP through the lens of his commitment to cultivating the independence and self-sufficiency that he believed were essential for enabling students to succeed at off-reservation

universities after transfer, and ultimately for furthering the well-being of the Navajo Nation.

Indeed, I understand Patrick's commitment to using DEP in his writing classes as motivated first and foremost by his commitment to Diné nation-building. Diné College's very existence is an act of educational self-determination, as are its efforts to counter "epistemologic privilege" by instituting Diné knowledge across the curriculum. Patrick has been a part of this project for three decades, through all its ups and downs. He did not perceive any major conceptual differences between DEP-based approaches and disciplinary ways of talking about writing process. As he said, "It's not different than what you may have learned in high school...If you take what you've learned elsewhere, high school, other colleges, other instructors, it fits within this paradigm." Rather, Patrick saw the primary value of the philosophy as its connection to students' Diné identities. He understood DEP as a framework that enabled Diné students to experience their cultural heritage as a resource for academic writing. In his view, asserting a legitimate place for Diné knowledge in the classroom was an important act of self-determination that empowered the students, the college, and the Navajo Nation.

Lily. Like Patrick, Lily also equated the four steps of DEP with disciplinary concepts of writing process. However, in contrast to the lengthy description of each step that Patrick provided (see Figure 2), in her syllabus Lily simply stated that the four steps of DEP "correlated" with the steps of "the writing process": thinking, planning, writing, and revision (see Figure 7). Of the four faculty in the study, Lily had the most extensive disciplinary grounding in composition studies, English education, and bilingual/bicultural education, and this background shaped the way she theorized writing process and how she structured students' writing experiences in her English 100B course. Her description of her views on DEP—written via Facebook message during our correspondence about an earlier version of this manuscript—

illustrates precisely the kind of interweaving of disciplinary and local knowledges that I describe in Chapter Three:

[A]s a teacher I use the SNBH, some aspect of it, but not totally embrace it fully or preach it. I am also influenced by other theories or approaches, sort of like, I can take some SNBH philosophy and integrated with other teaching philosophies such as Howard Gardner's multiple intelligence, Paul Freire's raising consciousness, John Dewey's approach of democracy, multiculturalism, and heavily dependent on the writing approaches from Nancy Atwell's create literate community to where students are involved in their own discovery through the process or stages of learning.

Thus, Lily brought together theories and principles from DEP *and* scholars from several disciplines and time periods to develop pedagogical practices that were both locally responsive and, in her estimation, more effective than any one of those theories would be on their own.

Figure 7: DEP in Lily's Syllabus

**COURSE GOALS AS RELATED TO SNBH:**

*As related to SNBH:*

The Dine Education Philosophy paradigm will be integrated into this course to enhance the student's understanding of the writing process by correlating Nitsahkees, Nahat'a, Iina, and Siihasin with thinking, planning, writing, and revision.

Lily introduced DEP to students on the first day of class, and, like her colleagues, she emphasized that the philosophy was uniquely Diné. As she told her students, Sa'ah Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón is a Navajo thought process. It's a Navajo way of thinking, rather than thinking linearly, from here to there, like Western thought. A lot of Native thinking, Navajo thinking, is circular, like the sun. It's a process, and always starts from the East, like all hogans have a door facing east.

Thus, like Patrick, Lily drew explicit attention to the philosophy's cyclical, processual nature,

although she framed this as contrasting rather than aligning with “Western” approaches. Like Patrick, she also highlighted the ways in which this circular process mapped onto the cardinal directions, something that even those students with relatively little knowledge of traditional Diné spirituality were likely to recognize as an important epistemological connection to their heritage.

For Lily, encouraging students to approach writing as a process was *the* central objective of her course, and the influence of her background in composition and English education was particularly evident in the way she emphasized revision and peer feedback in relation to DEP. After foregrounding the processual nature of the philosophy, she told students:

In this class there will always be lots of feedback on ideas, content, organization...We will never get it perfect the first time...Thinking, planning, writing, revision...You will go through first draft, second draft, third draft, and when you turn in the cleanest version, other people will have read it, three or four people.

This emphasis on the social nature of revision set Lily apart from James and Patrick, and was probably a function of disciplinary training. Based on her graduate coursework, her on-going engagement with the composition and education literature, and her experiences in the classroom, Lily believed it was very important for students to understand writing as a process that involved working with other people to develop “ideas, content, [and] organization.” By encouraging students to share their writing with one another, both in and out of class, Lily sought to help them develop social resources that would enable them to grow as writers and change their perception of writing as an isolated individual struggle.

Lily maintained this strong focus on writing process throughout the semester. Unlike James, she generally de-emphasized sentence-level concerns and prioritized what she called “voice,” as well as explicit documentation of students’ brainstorming strategies, planning,

drafting, and feedback-based revision in their mid-term and end-of-semester portfolios. Students engaged in frequent in-class workshops with peers, as well as various forms of informal reflective writing, and created PowerPoint presentations in which they showcased their four-step process for writing a descriptive paragraph. However, after the first day of class, Lily invariably used the English terms—brainstorming, outlining, drafting, and revising—for these steps. I never heard her explicitly reference DEP in class again. From Lily’s perspective, the course’s focus on writing process was implicitly aligned with the conceptual framework of DEP. She believed that putting too much emphasis on the philosophy’s terminology “becomes too abstract for them,” and that quibbling over interpretations of the words in Diné bizaad caused some students to “question the stages.” Lily felt that using the English terms kept the emphasis on the actual strategies students needed to learn while staying true to the underlying cyclical process orientation of DEP.

Barb. As a new instructor at Diné College, Barb was only just becoming familiar with DEP. Other than a brief orientation session during the week before classes, she had little opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the philosophy or think through how she would integrate it into her courses. During an interview a few days before classes started, she described her plans to address DEP principles in terms of her own disciplinary background and the practices she had developed through her previous teaching experiences:

With regard to the “thinking,” “planning,” “living,” and “assuring” principles, I see a lot of what I’m doing as what I understand in some academic worlds is called scaffolding. I see the strategies that I’m presenting to students...as sort of fitting into that thinking, planning, living, and assuring mode.

At this early stage, then, Barb was in the process of mapping her prior pedagogical theories and

practices onto the framework and conceptual vocabulary of DEP, at least as it is translated into English in the Diné College mission statement. Rather than viewing DEP as an entirely new approach, she—like Patrick and Lily—understood it as another way of talking about practices she had already developed and used in other contexts.

As required by the college, Barb included a statement about DEP on her syllabus (see Figure 8). This statement clearly presents the philosophy as a framework for writing process—in fact, she, like Lily, uses the term “correlating” to describe the connection between the four steps and the terms “thinking, planning, writing, and revision.” However, Barb also brings her own interpretation to the activities she associates with each of the four steps. Unlike her three colleagues, Barb situates drafting, revision, and proofreading in the nahat’á step, perhaps because they are all part of effective “organizational and communication skills.” Barb interprets iiná as life skills like goal-setting, collaboration, and personal responsibility, and she frames siihasin in terms of the kinds of reflection that take place after a writing task is complete. These interpretations interweave disciplinary and professional knowledge central to her long-standing pedagogical practices, most notably an emphasis on critical thinking and the importance of developing a sense of self-direction and responsibility for one’s writing.

Figure 8: DEP in Barb's Syllabus

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:** The Dine Education Philosophy paradigm will be integrated into this course to enhance the student's understanding of the writing process by correlating Nitsáhákees, Nahat'á, Iiná and Siihasin with thinking, planning, writing, and revision.

**Nitsáhákees:** Develop creative and critical thinking skills.

Students will develop and use these skills in planning and writing essays.

**Nahat'á:** Develop and demonstrate organizational and communication skills.

Students will write organized, well-developed paragraphs and essays using ideas generated in the thinking phase of the writing process. Students will improve their ability to use Standard English grammatical structures and usage and to proof their essays for errors.

**Iiná:** Demonstrate quality work and self-direction in achieving goals.

Students will share their ideas and essays and learn to work collaboratively. Students will cultivate a sense of responsibility for their work.

**Siihasin:** Evaluate one's competency and develop confidence in one's abilities.

Students will evaluate their writing and how effectively they engage in the writing process.

On the first day of her English 100B class, Barb briefly went over the section of the syllabus touching on DEP. She apologized for not being able to pronounce the words for the steps: as someone wholly unfamiliar with the language, Barb seemed to experience the complex orthography of Diné bizaad at a barrier to discussing the philosophy. She reiterated, however, that the class would focus on writing process and reflection. Like Lily, Barb foregrounded the importance of approaching writing as a process in her course. However, the version of “the writing process” that she presented to students in the coming weeks had five steps rather than four, and was entirely linear, without any of the cyclical recursivity advocated by the composition literature or implied by the DEP model. (In fact, she later expressed bafflement and frustration with the circularity of DEP.) As with Lily, I observed no other mention of DEP in Barb’s class after her introduction on the first day. With more time to become familiar with the philosophy, Barb might have found ways to integrate it into her courses. Or, like Lily, she might have continued to enact process-oriented pedagogical practices that she believed were conceptually congruent with DEP without feeling the need to address the philosophy explicitly.

#### *Student Responses to DEP in the Composition Class*

The sixteen students in this study reacted to their instructors’ use of DEP in varying ways, a function of both the diversity of faculty interpretations of the philosophy and the diversity of the students themselves. Only two had been familiar with the four-step cycle on which DEP is based prior to attending Diné College, although all were aware of the significance of the cardinal directions and the four sacred mountains that ground DEP spatially and spiritually. James’s students, who encountered in-class discussions of the philosophy most consistently, were far more likely to use the DEP terminology spontaneously during our interviews, and all four indicated that they found the four-step framework valuable. William, however, was quick to note

that the philosophy was “built in all people, not only Navajos”: he saw it as universal knowledge that human beings carried within them, even if only subconsciously.

Patrick’s students also found his application of the philosophy helpful. As he mentions in the opening vignette, Patrick assigned his students to write a reflective “process essay” for their exit portfolios addressing the ways in which they had used the DEP steps to write their first research papers. Three of his students spoke positively about this assignment, indicating that they had not fully understood the philosophy—which they had encountered in many of their Diné College courses by the time they reached English 102—until they had been required to reflect on it in this way. As Nicholene said,

I finally understand the Diné College [Philosophy]...because before I never—like, I would see the philosophy around school. You know, it’s on signs and things. I never really thought about it until I wrote this paper. I was thinking, 'Maybe they have us write this paper so we actually start applying it in other classes'... I had never really even thought about it until he made us do an assignment on it.

Such comments suggest that asking students to write *about* their use of DEP not only made them more aware of their own writing processes, but also enabled them to gain a deeper understanding of the philosophy structuring much of their other coursework at Diné College.

Lily’s students were generally enthusiastic about her process orientation, particularly the emphasis on peer feedback. Perhaps reflecting the extent to which DEP was left implicit rather than explicit in Lily’s course, only one student said she used the four steps consciously in her writing. However, two of Lily’s students said they believed they were using the steps “subconsciously.” David also expressed a strong appreciation for the value of reciprocity that he perceived to be embedded in the SNBH principles underpinning DEP:

We can't just expect that everything's just for our own growth. Like I was saying, you got to take something, you got to give something back. You get something good, you give back twice as good because with something like that, you're within the circle. If all you do is take, take, take, everything's just—it's not like the Earth no more...If we learn something a better way, why keep it for yourself when you can teach so many other people the same thing, and would bring so many people—so many more people up, and not just yourself?<sup>108</sup>

Lily's socially-oriented approach to the writing process, which she presented as correlating with DEP, seemed to resonate with David's understanding of Diné values while also enabling him to situate literacy learning within his broader desire to contribute to the well-being of the Navajo Nation.

Overall, the students in this study spoke positively about DEP as a framework for writing process—only two of the sixteen expressed doubt about the philosophy's utility, although most of Barb's students had little basis for comment. The majority of students reported also using DEP *beyond* their writing class. Three indicated that they consciously used the four steps for writing in other courses. Likewise, five students described using the steps to complete tasks in courses that did not involve writing, such as math and art: as Diné College speech instructor Marci Matlock suggests, DEP's across-the-curriculum implementation might make it particularly powerful for fostering learning transfer. Furthermore, *ten* of the sixteen students said they consciously used the four-step DEP process in non-academic areas of their lives, such as structuring extracurricular club meetings, improving their form in archery, arranging childcare, helping out parents or grandparents, overcoming transportation difficulties, and even making major life decisions like deciding to quit drinking. As Morning Star described it:

I used [the philosophy] from the beginning [of the course], where it says thinking about it. I started thinking about it. About what I was really wanting to do for myself as a writer—not only as a writer, but for myself, too. This whole course made me rethink my whole life over again. How not only we use it in the writing course, but we use it in our everyday decision, on how to make a good decision, and how we can make the best of what we have... I really thought about thinking, about these issues. The topics of what he was saying has helped me learn about myself, too. How our whole culture is based on that, too. It's good that he put, they put, that Sa'ah Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón in there.

Thus, for all the conflicts over its development and implementation, and all the varying ways it is being taken up (or not) by Diné College faculty, DEP seemed to be a worthwhile learning goal in and of itself, especially for students who were trying to succeed in college despite the pressing logistical challenges of rural reservation poverty. And, in a remarkable appropriation of the “heretofore compromised technology of writing,” the process-oriented composition classroom turned out be a generative site for *teaching* this local knowledge to the next generation of Diné people.

#### *DEP as Locally Responsive Pedagogy*

If we understand Diné College’s mobilization of DEP across the curriculum as an effort to desubalternize local knowledge, then both the contentious history of its development and the diversity of composition instructors’ interpretations and applications teach us something important about the nature of this kind of epistemological project, at least within pedagogical contexts like Diné College. Bringing local knowledges into conversation with what Canagarajah calls “established” knowledge does not necessarily result in any easy consensus about how either type of knowledge should be reconstructed or interpreted to meet local challenges in the twenty-

first century. Rather, such conversations result in a multiplicity of epistemological and pedagogical options: there may be nearly as many perspectives on local knowledge and how it should be taken up as there are project participants. This is not necessarily a bad thing, intellectually speaking—such a proliferation of theories and practices can lead to new insights and innovation. However, it does complicate efforts to form coherent institutional projects around specific learning goals.

This diversity of interpretations also reminds scholars not to fall into the intellectual trap of romanticizing Indigenous knowledges—or the Indigenous institutional spaces in which they are being engaged—as offering an idealized alternative to the epistemological and ethical complexities of “mainstream” academic knowledge-making. Such utopianism has a long history in colonial discourses, and my own experiences sharing this research in off-reservation academic settings suggests that there is still a tendency among some left-leaning scholars to imagine the tribal college as an “Other-worldly” space, one that is free from the economic, political, and ideological conflicts that characterize postsecondary education in the 2010s. This impulse says more, I think, about scholars’ own ambivalence regarding modernity than it does about Native intellectual and pedagogical spaces. Furthermore, such romanticization fails to appreciate the nature of the complex intellectual work that Diné College faculty are undertaking and inhibits genuine scholarly engagement with the local knowledge being made in this setting. I have personally learned a great deal from DEP as a teacher, a researcher, and a human being. However, that development only took place when I began approaching it with the same intellectual rigor I bring to all my scholarly work.

Finally, the range of Diné College composition instructors’ interpretations and applications of DEP tells us something important about the dynamics of locally responsive

pedagogy itself. In my own experiences teaching at the college, as well as in my course observations and conversations with students, it has often seemed that the most generative uses of DEP resulted from the thoughtful interweaving of robust theoretical knowledge, often although not exclusively from the field of rhetoric and composition, with an in-depth understanding of the Diné principles from which DEP derives. A deep knowledge of DEP without a rich theoretical understanding of writing process (including the insights of postprocess theorists—see Vandenberg, Hum, and Clary-Lemon) may not yield the most effective composition pedagogy. On the other hand, pedagogical practices that draw on disciplinary knowledge but decline to engage seriously with DEP miss an important opportunity to develop locally responsive pedagogies that affirm students' Diné identities, provide them with opportunities to learn about their heritage, and tap the resources of an across-the-curriculum process-oriented "paradigm" that fosters learning transfer within and beyond the institution. This suggests that the best locally responsive pedagogies result from a combination of a firm grounding in more global theories of writing and deep local knowledge. As I discuss in Chapter Eight, such a proposition has implications for composition faculty at *all* institution types.

## Chapter Seven

### “One World”: Locally Responsive Cosmopolitanism

*It's the Monday after Thanksgiving break, and morning sunlight filters through the classroom's south-facing window. Finals are just a few weeks away, and the students seated around the ring of tables look tired. I'm in my usual spot in the back corner of the crowded classroom, laptop on my knees. I've just begun typing a few preliminary notes when Lily strides into the room, smiling, a sheaf of papers in one hand and a mug of coffee in the other. Several students sit up a little straighter.*

*“Good morning!” she exclaims, looking around the room. “How was your break?”*

*Several students smile back. A few murmur responses. Lily hands the stack of stapled papers to the student closest to her: photocopies of an essay by Seminole writer Jim Shore about the use of Native American names and images in sports mascots. Pages flutter softly as the copies make their way around the room.*

*“What I want to do today is give you a sample writing, since we're still working on persuasive writing,” Lily says. “I think the best way to understand argument and persuasive is to focus on something you know, and often, as Native Americans, we are stereotyped. The media does this. Media could be movies, TV, film, magazines, books, anything. So how does the media stereotype you? Do you think media stereotypes you?”*

*A few students nod. David speaks up. “Tourists ask if we still live in tipis. They think we're all like Plains Indians. You see logos, like the Redskins, with headdresses with feathers.”*

*Lily nods encouragingly. “Stereotypes happen at all levels, right? You have experience*

*with this. David just demonstrated a strong argument of how stereotype happens. Lack of information. Indians grouped into one group of people. So it's interesting—let's see how this word is coined. Where did this word come from? How did it come to be? The word 'stereotype' comes from the word for setting type."* She reads from the handout.

*"If you check in the dictionary, you'll learn that the term stereotype originally referred to a plate for printing that was cast in metal from a mold of a page of set type. English borrowed the word from French, but its parts are ultimately of Greek origin: stereo, meaning "solid" or "three-dimensional," and type, mean "model." By extension, a stereotype has come to mean a widely held conception of a group that's fixed and that allows for little individuality among the group's members.'"*

*Lily looks up at the class. "We know that stereotype is no longer three-dimensional. We lost that original meaning. It has come to mean a one-dimensional understanding of a group of people." Lily holds up her coffee mug. "This is three dimensional." Then she holds up the page she was reading, turning it facedown so students see the thin edge. "This is one-dimensional. A stereotype is a one-dimensional idea.*

*"We are working on argument," Lily continues. "When we argue our position or point, we need to give specific reasons or facts. I thought this would be a good way for you to see how this particular article is written using argumentative writing. We know that sports mascots are everywhere, even TV. Some people really feel strong—they are opposed to it. And some people do not feel any way. We heard David talk about the meaning of stereotypes. What does it mean? We have people every year who stop by this area, Canyon de Chelly. They ask if we live in tipis. When you respond, you are making an argument, educating them about Native Americans. About yourself, your tribe, your race. You're undoing the stereotype. It's a type of*

*argument. When you reeducate someone, you're giving truthful information."*

*Lily glances around the room. "Reflect back on your own experience," she says. "Maybe there was a time that you had to correct or educate someone about you, yourself, about being a Native American. Has that happened to you, Thomas?"*

*Thomas nods from his seat in the back of the room. "Yes."*

*"Tell us," Lily says.*

*Thomas is quiet for a long moment, then says, "When I was in Wyoming, in college, a lot of the students were cowboys. They think Native Americans get free money."*

*Lily nods. "Yes! Some tribes get payouts, some have successful casinos, and they get money, per cap. Another stereotype is that we are dependent on government. Everything is free for us. We don't pay taxes. People who aren't familiar think we're very dependent on free things."*

*Norman, a Marine Corps veteran with a crew cut sitting near Thomas, volunteers, "Another stereotype I've experienced is people think all Native Americans are alcoholics."*

*Lily nods. "Expand on that."*

*"I've served with other people, and they think we get free stuff," Norman says. "It's not true. The smaller tribes they're familiar with—smaller tribes around Texas—they get monthly money and spend it on alcohol. They don't know other tribes aren't just alcoholics."*

*"There's a quote," Lily says. "'A good Indian is a dead Indian.' Meaning as long as you don't exist, you're good. It's still happening. We live in the twenty-first century. We think people have progressed, we have the Internet, but there's a continuation of these stereotypes. All Indians get bunched together. When they see a drunk Indian, they think all Indians are drunk."*

*She pauses, looking around the room again. "You will have to leave Diné College eventually," she says. "You will have to go out in the world, and you will argue with how people*

*think about you as a Native American. Having a voice is very important. Voice is connected to the ability to argue, the ability to persuade. If you don't have a voice, how are you going to persuade others to understand your viewpoint?"*

*Lily pauses again, letting this sink in. "Media does play a lot in how Native people are portrayed," she says. "Often they aren't accurate. In your lifetime, you won't have a choice. Someone will ask you a silly question, a dumb question. You'll respond by providing accurate information. You'll persuade that person to think your way. It's really hard to change people's mind. Thomas talked about Wyoming, which is dominated by white ranchers in that area. The conservative views, they really have the old white man ways of thinking. A lack of diversity. The old viewpoint. People of other races are increasing, but it's hard sometimes to convince people. They have the old set of mind. How do you change their mind?"*

*Lily lets the question hang in the air for several seconds, then turns back to the reading in her hand. "The writer is Jim Shore. The names, like the Florida Seminole: some universities have dropped the names, and some haven't. Think about college teams that have maintained the names, of colleges that keep Indian names for sports teams. Do you know any?"*

*"The Utes," one student offers.*

*Lily nods. "What is the Diné College mascot? The Warriors. Is that okay?"*

*Norman says, "There's a big controversy about that with schools, sports teams. Names like 'Redskins.' They need to change to more appropriate names."*

*Lily nods again and smiles. "Okay, sports fans. Let's come up with some names." She turns and draws two columns on the whiteboard. Several students chime in with team names, and Lily compiles two lists.*

Here on the reservation	Outside reservation Indian names
Diné College Warriors	Cleveland Indians
Window Rock Scouts	Washington Redskins
Tuba City Warriors	Kansas City Chiefs
Shiprock Chieftains	Florida State Seminoles
	University of South Dakota Sioux

*She turns back to the class. "Why is it okay that they have Indian names here?"*

*Norman responds, "We're Natives."*

*Lily nods, and writes on the board:*

*Reasons:*

1. We are Natives or Indians
2. We have knowledge of Indian history

*She turns back to the class. "We always question the outsiders. We always jump on the outsiders, but we also do it here, in this institution. Why is it okay that we use it?"*

*Norman elaborates, "We are proud to be Natives."*

*Lily nods, and adds to the list:*

*3. Proud*

*She turns back to the class. "Let's say someone came from New York, or an L.A. newspaper, and asked, 'Why is it okay for you to use these names and not the Cleveland Indians, the Washington Redskins?' I'm a guy, a bilagáana in my suit, asking you. These are the three best reasons you can offer that man?" Lily looks around the room, feigning incredulity.*

*Several students laugh.*

*“You think he’s going to go back and say, ‘They gave me these reasons’? Are you comfortable enough to go with only these reasons? Why do you think that you as an Indian person, a Native person, a Navajo person, can use these names?”*

*Norman says, “Because we’ve had warriors before.”*

*“That’s a good one,” Lily says. “Who understands Navajo?” Half a dozen students raise their hands. “If we have a cheii, an elder,” Lily begins, and then switches languages. David responds to her question in Diné bizaad, and a few students nod.*

*Lily switches back to English. “The language is connected to tribal identity. In Navajo society, there are different levels of warriorism. Specific language, words, and phrases are used on purpose. That’s how Native people think. They don’t just throw language around. They use a specific word on purpose. In Tuba City, when they picked the name Warriors, they had something specific in mind. Maybe the reason it’s okay is because there is a specific historical background. We understand it. We feel we have a right to use it. A historical connection.”*

*She pauses again. “Suppose we were to use ‘Diné College Popes.’” She looks around the room. “I see some smiles? You guys are smiling.” Several students laugh.*

*Norman says, “I would think this was a religious institute.”*

*Cloud suggests, “They’d want to know why we were using it?”*

*“Which group?” Lily asks.*

*“Catholics,” Cloud says.*

*“Does using this bring comfort or uncomforth?” asks Lily.*

*“Uncomfort,” several students say.*

*“It’s ironic,” Thomas mutters.*

*“Changing this brought reactions among us,” Lily says. “I don’t know much about Pope,*

*about Catholic. Why would I want to attach this name to my college? So Native people like you are arguing for that same purpose, using Indian names. They feel that they have no right to use that name because they're not People. They have no understanding of these words and phrases. No emotions."*

*"No understanding," Norman echoes.*

*"I hope this helps," Lily says. "I know it's very extreme, putting it like this. People like you have been arguing about the use of Indian names for decades now. It didn't just start. Slowly, it's changing."*

*Lily pauses for a long moment, then shifts gears. "I need three people in a group. See if you can answer this. What is the argument? What evidence did he use? He's arguing to teams, organizations, contributors to organizations. He's a Native writer. Identify the reasons, the facts. It's very important that you understand the claim and how this person has taken a stand, given us some reasons."*

*The room swells with the sound of scraping chair legs and conversation as the students turn to one another and begin discussing the article.*

Lily's lesson on argumentation demonstrates many of the dynamics of locally responsive pedagogy that I discuss in previous chapters. She interweaves theories and principles derived from her own personal experiences with stereotypes, her political commitment to making Diné voices heard, and her disciplinary training in rhetoric and composition, bilingual/bicultural education, and Native American Studies. Lily draws on these theories to respond pedagogically to several dimensions of the local. These dimensions include her *students'* backgrounds—their Diné identities and heritage, their linguistic resources, their geographical experiences, and their

interest in Navajo Nation athletics. Through her multilingual discussion of Diné warriorism, Lily also responds to Diné College's *institutional* mission to further student learning through the study of Diné language, history, and heritage culture. These dimensions of the local are oriented toward social life *within* the Navajo Nation, past and present.

However, Lily also responds to the ways in which Diné College and its students are interconnected with various communities and forces *beyond* the Navajo Nation. There are the tourists, who inject much-needed cash into the local economy but also bring their preconceptions about Native Americans. There is the ubiquity of Anglo media, which circulates misrepresentations of Native people that students have encountered since childhood. There are students' experiences with off-reservation schooling and employment, which have put them in contact with people who know little about Native lives beyond what they have seen in the media or in bordertowns. And there are also students' variable identifications with "Native American" as a social and political category: while Lily is clearly encouraging students to identify with the long-standing pan-Native struggle against the use of Indigenous mascots, Norman's comment about alcoholism among "other tribes" suggests that Diné students are themselves not immune from holding stereotypes about Native groups. Contending with such situated complexities is part of what it means to be Diné in the twenty-first century, an inescapable part of "the local" in which students live and Diné College faculty teach.

Lily's lesson on stereotypes also demonstrates how locally responsive pedagogy can be overtly critical, equipping students to understand and respond to rhetorical exigencies presented by their locations within broader social, economic, and political structures. Lily frames argumentation as a means of "educating" non-Native people: of "giving truthful information" about Diné history and contemporary lives and explaining what is at stake when Native images

are appropriated. Although Lily does not use the term, I understand her to be preparing students to engage the exigencies of settler colonialism. As I discuss in Chapter One, settler colonialism seeks to expropriate Indigenous lands, and in order to obscure the reality that such dispossession is neither inevitable nor complete, settler culture often ignores the continued existence of Indigenous peoples and/or denies their prospects for long-term survival (Veracini, “Introducing” 3). Settler culture may be eager to appropriate Indigenous images as a means of asserting local identity—sports mascots being one notable example—but such representations typically consign Indigeneity to the past or present Native people as in the process of disappearing. When Native rhetors “have a voice,” they challenge settler ideologies by deploying self-representations that assert Native presence and insist on Native futurity (see Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses; Survivance*).

These are the ideologies I see Lily identifying when she talks about the persistence of “the old white man ways of thinking,” and when she invokes that terrible saying, “A good Indian is a dead Indian.” This sentiment is, after all, the essence of the settler colonial desire for Native people to “go away” (Veracini, “Introducing” 2). Lily invites her students to assert Native presence by developing arguments against the use of ahistorical and homogenizing representations of Native people—specifically, arguments that will persuade the “bilagáana in his suit,” a personification of the predominantly white, male, urban, bicoastal corporate media that disseminates many of these images. Lily presents that bilagáana as *persuadable*, and she positions her students as the latest in a long line of Native *rhetors* responding to similar exigencies. This rhetorical work is locally situated—the class’s collaboratively constructed argument hinges, after all, on the specific history of Diné warriorism—but it is also national, and even global, in scope. As Lily tells her students, “You will have to go out in the world, and you will argue with how people think about you as a Native American...In your life, you won’t have

a choice.” The rhetorical abilities students are learning at Diné College, she suggests, will help them turn “dumb questions” into opportunities to change “the old set of mind.” Lily is preparing her students to make positive changes in the world, not just for Diné or Native Americans, but also, perhaps, for “people of other races” who are also marginalized by existing social structures.

In Chapters Five and Six, I examine how Diné College composition faculty responded to the inward-looking dimensions of the local: the characteristics of the Diné student population they served and the self-determined institutional mission to integrate Diné knowledge across the curriculum. In this final findings chapter, I examine how faculty responded to more outward-looking dimensions: the relationships between local and global. Drawing on Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner’s assertion that local conditions are shaped by global forces, I assert that the local is never “just” local. It is always in relation to larger structures of power. This has particular implications for writing pedagogy. As Deborah Brandt and Katie Clinton remind us, one of the primary functions of literacy is “incorporating individual agents and their locales into broader enterprises” (338). The local is always being made and remade through literate activity that connects it to the global, and local literate activity, in turn, helps make and remake the global.

Based on my work with Diné College faculty and students, I argue that any attempt to theorize locally responsive composition pedagogy must account for these interrelationships between local and global. Such theorization includes: a) identifying the communities<sup>109</sup> of varying scale in which the institution and its students are situated; b) recognizing the “asymmetrical relations of power” (Pratt 7) that structure these communities and their interrelationships; c) understanding the specific linguistic, rhetorical, literate, and cognitive resources students will need to move between these communities; and d) attending to how students might use what they are learning in the composition classroom to engage larger forces

and structures to make positive change in their communities, at every scale. This last point implies not only a practical need to move between knowledge systems and rhetorical contexts, but also an *ethic*: an understanding of students as rhetorical agents who have the ability and, indeed, the *responsibility* to improve conditions in their local, regional, national, and global communities. We might call this ethic a form of *cosmopolitanism*.

### *Indigenous Cosmopolitanism at Diné College*

In literary critic Arnold Krupat's formulation, the cosmopolitan perspective views all colonialisms, settler or otherwise, as part of larger global structures of inequality and exploitation. Operating from this premise, cosmopolitans seek to "translate between different bodies of knowledge" (7) in pursuit of a more just world order for all peoples. A version of this orientation is evident in the Diné College's institutional mission. In the statement published in its 2012-2013 general catalog, the college articulates its commitment to "fostering social responsibility, community service and scholarly research that contribute to the social, economic and cultural well-being of the *tribal, state, national, and global communities*" (10, emphasis mine).<sup>110</sup> This objective suggests that Diné College understands conditions on the Navajo Nation to be inextricably interrelated with the well-being of the Southwest, the United States, and the wider world. Furthermore, it makes the powerful assertion that the college and its students have a responsibility to be active participants in creating a *better* world, and that Diné people are equipped to make valuable contributions to that transnational project.<sup>111</sup> As I discuss in the sections that follow, similar orientations were evident in the locally responsive composition pedagogies of the faculty who participated in this study.

Diné College's "Indigenous cosmopolitanism" (Forte 11) speaks to long-standing scholarly debates about how we should understand the relationships between the local and the

global in Native contexts. Since the 1990s, the dominant paradigm in Native American studies has been tribal *nationalism*, which focuses on the specific histories, traditions, perspectives, and sovereignties of individual tribal nations. We might understand this critical orientation as a form of localism. Some nationalist scholars have voiced suspicion about cosmopolitanism, both because of its European intellectual genealogy and its potential to undermine tribal nationalist projects (e.g. Cook-Lynn). However, critics like Krupat and Lyons (“Actually Existing”) have maintained that embracing a cosmopolitan perspective does not preclude commitment to tribal nationalist political goals. In recent years, a number of scholars have begun theorizing cosmopolitanism from intellectual traditions beyond the term’s European genesis (e.g. Foster; Mignolo; Forte). Tol Foster points out that many Native intellectual traditions articulate ethics for negotiating the similarities and differences between peoples, and Native studies scholars might look to these traditions to conceptualize cosmopolitanism from explicitly Indigenous perspectives. One such example is the Center for Diné Studies’ articulation of the concept of k’é, or kinship, as a framework for understanding “global relations”: this principle likely informs the transnational commitments expressed in Diné College’s mission statement. Such theoretical movements suggest that, as societies become more interconnected through digital communications technologies, economic globalization, and the shared specter of environmental catastrophe, cosmopolitanism offers an increasingly attractive framework through which to imagine possibilities for addressing global problems that instantiate in locally-specific ways for Indigenous peoples and places.

As anthropologist Maximilian Forte observes, “multiple cosmopolitanisms”—Indigenous and otherwise—are emerging in a globalized world (6); no single discipline or intellectual tradition holds the definitive conceptualization of the term. Krupat’s formulation, however,

offers a helpful heuristic. He argues that cosmopolitan perspectives are characterized by two key features: a) a familiarity with multiple cultural and intellectual traditions, which allows the cosmopolitan to move productively between different bodies of knowledge; and b) a commitment to social justice that situates Indigenous anticolonial struggles within broader transnational fights against the forces of social inequality, capitalist exploitation, and environmental destruction. These features align remarkably well with the final two points in the Diné College mission statement: a) “prepar[ing students] for further studies and employment in a multicultural world”; and b) the aforementioned commitment to furthering the “social, economic, and cultural well-being of the tribal, state, national, and global communities” (“2012-2013 Catalog” 10).<sup>112</sup> While I have never heard anyone at Diné College refer to him- or herself as “cosmopolitan,” the faculty I interviewed seemed to embrace a perspective that could be described using this term. In their view, one of the major purposes of literacy education at Diné College was to introduce students to a range of perspectives that would help them effectively translate between their own knowledge and experiences and those of people elsewhere. Such an orientation put Diné history and struggles in broader structural context and prepared students to use academic literacies to seek solutions to problems facing their local communities, the Navajo Nation, and the wider world.

I organize the remainder of this chapter around two discussions, each of which examinations of how faculty addressed one of the final two points in the Diné College mission statement. First, I discuss how faculty sought to prepare their students for “further studies and employment in a multicultural world,” or to move between different bodies of knowledge, particularly in the off-reservation academic settings to which many would transfer. Then, I look at how faculty responded to the various “communities” in which Diné College and its students

are situated. While the Diné College mission statement delineates four such communities—tribal, state, national, and global—I observed faculty responding to six: the immediate communities surrounding the college; the Navajo Nation; the Southwest region; Native America; the United States; and the global community, broadly conceived.<sup>113</sup> Faculty not only invited students to think and learn about these communities, but in some cases also encouraged students to consider what they, as Diné people, could contribute to addressing the challenges those communities face. This sense of social responsibility extended beyond tribal nationalism to locate students rhetorically as what Lyons calls “Indigenous subjects acting on the world stage” (“Actually Existing” 295).

### *Further Studies in a Multicultural World*

In “The Fine Art of Fencing: Nationalism, Hybridity, and the Search for a Native American Writing Pedagogy,” Lyons asserts that the “mandate for fully transferable education” between tribal colleges and off-reservation institutions is inherently cosmopolitan (“Fencing” 96). Such transferability is precisely the goal expressed in Diné College’s mission to prepare students for further studies and employment in a multicultural world. The college seeks to equip students to succeed in a world characterized by plurality—a plurality imbricated, as Lily’s lesson makes clear, in structures of racism, classism, and settler colonialism. This aspect of the college mission aims to help students obtain greater financial security for themselves and their families, to foster economic development on the reservation, and to support Diné self-determination. For many students, achieving their career goals will require completing their bachelors’ degrees and/or attending graduate programs at off-reservation colleges and universities—places where Native students have historically struggled (Tierney; Carney; Stein; F. Clark). These students will need to read and write at the level of college juniors and be able to learn in large classes in which they

are usually minoritized and have little personal interaction with faculty. They must also develop the ability to work productively with people from diverse backgrounds, as their careers will almost inevitably put them into contact with non-Diné people. Thus, the cosmopolitan push for a fully transferable tribal college education—the acknowledgement that Diné people live, learn, and work within one complex “multicultural world” and will need to move between knowledge systems as a matter of course—is an economic and political necessity in the twenty-first century.

All four Diné College composition faculty in this study were acutely aware of their responsibility to prepare students to be successful readers, writers, and learners in off-reservation educational contexts. In interviews, Lily, James, and Patrick each noted that students were likely to face racist assumptions about their academic abilities at universities (for corroboration of this perception, see Tierney), and this reality made it all the more important that students leave Diné College able to represent themselves effectively in writing. As in Lily’s lesson on stereotypes, faculty often explicitly framed their discussions of academic expectations in terms of what students would need to be able to do when they left Diné College. They sought to help students begin “inventing the university” (Bartholomae)—linguistically, rhetorically, academically, and culturally—well in advance of transfer.

Language and rhetoric. Faculty often discussed the need for proficiency in Edited American English (EAE) in terms of the expectations students would encounter at off-reservation institutions. As James said, “One of the things I’m constantly reminding them of is this is the language they have to master if they really want to be successful in the world outside.” Lily, Barb, and Patrick expressed similar understandings, and Patrick was particularly adamant about the importance of developing “editing skills.” As he told his class:

Learning to edit your own work is a very important skill. If you rely on someone else, it's like a dependency on someone doing something for you...Especially when you go to places like [Northern Arizona University], [University of Arizona], it's going to come down to you. You're going to have to edit your own paper. There won't be anyone to rescue you.

As I discuss in Chapter Five, this emphasis on mastering EAE was evident in instructors' assessment practices as well as their in-class activities relating to grammar and mechanics. On this point, instructors' perspectives aligned with Lyons' "unsexy argument endorsing the value of teaching Standard English to Natives" ("Fencing" 79). The potential for racist interpretations of "nonstandard" features in students' writing, as well as the importance of effective writing for both internal and external tribal communications, led faculty to view proficiency in EAE as key to students' future success *and* to the well-being of the Navajo Nation.

In addition to promoting EAE, faculty also framed many of the genres and rhetorical strategies they were teaching in terms of what students would need to be able to do in order to achieve their purposes with off-reservation audiences. Lily's invocation of the "bilagáana in his suit"—a classed, raced, gendered, and geographically situated projection of a particularly challenging but important audience—is one striking example of this pedagogical move. Likewise, when teaching argumentation, Barb was careful to note discursive and genre-specific features that were geared toward the expectations of *academic* readers, which she explicitly distinguished from other, more local audiences like students' families. Patrick made this point even more concretely, informing his students that English 102's focus on what he called "opinion" writing was in direct response to the college's articulation agreements with Arizona universities, where students would be expected to write many argumentative research papers. In their writing

assignments and assessment criteria, Lily, Barb, and Patrick all placed a great deal of emphasis on thesis-driven school genres, citation styles, and research skills for precisely these reasons of transferability—the bilagáana in his suit could, after all, be a professor.

Technology. As I describe in Chapter Four, Diné College students’ functional technological literacies were quite diverse. Faculty were well aware of both the wide range in students’ experience with technology and the difficulties some faced in securing reliable computer access. Nonetheless, Patrick, Lily, and Barb were adamant that students needed to have opportunities to become proficient with technologies that would be essential to their success in university settings. All three required students to type rather than handwrite the papers they submitted, and Patrick insisted that his English 102 students own a laptop as a matter of course policy. As he told them on the first day of class:

This class has a technology requirement. You have to own a laptop... You should have your own equipment. My brother once told me, if you have horse, you should have all the tools you need for a horse. If you're going to be in college, you should have the basic equipment of a laptop.<sup>114</sup>

Patrick also required students to submit their drafts and receive his comments via email: those who did not have the technological knowledge to negotiate this system comfortably at the start of the semester had to (and did) learn.

Furthermore, at various points in the semester, Patrick, Lily, and Barb all gave students writing assignments that required them to conduct research online—they believed it was important for students to begin getting a sense of the resources available to them through academic databases and other kinds of web-based searches. As Barb said,

I'm cognizant that there are going to be some issues with technology, but I'm trying to figure workarounds for that that I can suggest to the students so that I don't take technology off the table. That's really important for functioning with this bigger world. As the students themselves often acknowledged, such technological proficiencies are essential for further studies and employment, both on- and off-reservation. Given the important role that social media and other digital communication technologies are playing in the creation and maintenance of reservation-based and diasporic Diné activism, transnational Indigenous communities, and other social justice movements, the ability to use these technologies is also increasingly vital for twenty-first century political engagement.

Study skills. As I discuss in Chapter Five, faculty perceived many of their Diné College students to be academically underprepared, particularly when it came to study skills, and they sought to equip students with the kinds of independent learning strategies they would need to succeed at off-reservation universities. Indeed, faculty often used the specter of university expectations to justify their insistence that students adhere to course policies surrounding due dates and attendance policies. For example, when Patrick's students described their struggles with procrastination during a full-class discussion at midterm, he warned them that they needed to develop time management strategies now, because this kind of behavior would cause them problems in their university classes. Barb was particularly adamant that she would not alter her late work policy, noting in several interviews that treating Diné College student differently in this regard would be doing them a disservice when they transferred. Even James, who did not penalize students for late work, frequently reminded them that he was more flexible than their university professors would be. While instructors were often willing to bend course policies to

accommodate the complexities of students' lives, they were usually at pains to ensure students understood this would not be the norm in other institutional settings.

Multicultural knowledge. Finally, faculty strove in various ways—and to varying degrees—to make their composition classrooms spaces where students would have opportunities to encounter a range of “multicultural” perspectives and experiences. They most often did this through readings by authors from diverse backgrounds, including Native authors from other tribal nations (e.g. Leslie Marmon Silko, Simon Ortiz, Sherman Alexie, and Ella Deloria); Americans from other minoritized racial or ethnic backgrounds (e.g. Sandra Cisneros and Martin Luther King); authors writing from other experiences of colonialism (e.g. Jamaica Kincaid and Jorge Luis Borges); or English and Euro-American writers of various genders, sexualities, and class positions, past and present (e.g. William Shakespeare, John Milton, Henry Longfellow, Walt Whitman, Thomas Hardy, Aldo Leopold, Scott Russell Sanders, and Pam Houston). Perhaps in part because of the graduate training she received in a writing program that emphasized multiculturalism, Barb was most explicit about her goal of exposing students to a variety of cultural perspectives. As she wrote in a mid-semester teaching reflection:

These students already have a pretty good sense of what it's like to be a Navajo. They need to learn what other people are like, what other cultures are like, what other tribes are like. They have lived in a pretty insulated world for a lot of years...They need to develop a better sense of what things are like for people beyond the border towns. What is it like to be Hispanic? What is it like to be black? What is it like to be white? What is it like to be Asian or European or African or Australian?

Particularly as a non-Native instructor, Barb believed what she had to offer her Diné College students was a chance to explore how people from other backgrounds expressed their

perspectives in writing. In her view, experience moving between knowledge systems would support students' ability to achieve their academic and career goals, and ultimately use their education to improve conditions on the reservation.

Patrick, who required his students to research and write about national and/or global issues as part of his English 102 assignment sequence, expressed a related sentiment, albeit from a more overtly political perspective. "Our students," he said, "are sheltered in many ways...They're not as aware of their environment, the changes that are going on and a lot of the propaganda...One thing I think is important for our students at Diné College is to have more diversity." For Patrick, whose political consciousness was shaped by the Red Power movement, exposing students to a broader range of perspectives was a necessary part of Diné nation-building: without an understanding of the many external forces that affected their lives and conditions on the reservation, students would not be equipped to protect and further the self-determination of the Navajo Nation. These considerations lead to the final point in the Diné College mission statement, which highlights Diné students' locations *within* and their responsibilities *to* an increasingly interconnected world.

### *One World*

The Diné College mission statement situates the institution within four communities: tribal, state, national, and global. However, my analysis of faculty's pedagogical practices suggests that we might productively understand there to be at least six interrelated conceptualizations of community to which they responded. Not all faculty responded to all of these communities, and instructors varied in terms of which communities they emphasized most. Taken together, however, their responses provide a kind of concentric map of differently constituted communities moving out from the Navajo Nation. These communities include: 1) the

immediate community in which the campus is located; 2) the larger “tribal” community of the Navajo Nation (both within and beyond the borders of the reservation); 3) the Southwest region in which the Navajo Nation is located, particularly the three states it spans (New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah); 4) the larger US Native community, which often (although not always) shares social and political goals as well as forms of pan-Native culture; 5) the broader national community of the United States, including other minoritized racial and ethnic groups with whom Native people sometimes (although, again, not always) share interests; and 6) the “world community” in the broadest sense of the term, which is increasingly interconnected through global capitalism, digital communications technologies, and threats of environmental destruction. In the following sections, I discuss how composition faculty responded pedagogically to Diné College’s situation within each of these communities and what this analysis contributes to theorizations of the interrelationships between local and global in locally responsive composition pedagogy.

Immediate community. Faculty often made references to, and occasionally asked students to read and write about, aspects of the immediate community surrounding their Diné College campus. James was most inclined make allusions to nearby communities and local landmarks during class discussion: recall, for example, his retelling of the story of Helen of Troy as “a cutie from Crownpoint” in Chapter Three. Lily also occasionally recast distant events into local settings. For example, she once compared individuals in an article about urban homelessness to the panhandlers outside Bashas’ grocery store in Chinle, a community twenty-five miles from the main Diné College campus. Such comparisons were a way to help students make more meaning from readings about people, places, and time periods with which they might have had little direct experience and, in some cases, few immediate reference points.

I did not directly observe any community-based or service-learning projects among the four faculty in this study. However, Lily described assigning such projects in composition courses she had taught at Diné College during previous semesters. She reported working with students in class to list problems in the community, and then telling them:

If we don't educate, if we don't have a voice, we're allowing that to happen. We're not doing anything. We're not contributing. That's what it takes to educate and bring that awareness out through writing and voicing, about establishing consciousness about who you are as a people, as a nation, as a community... You can send your concerns to the editorial, send your concern to your chapter, do a resolution. You can write a proposal, because you can't just talk, talk, talk. Nobody will listen to you if you just talk.

Lily framed this kind of writing-based civic engagement in terms of nation-building, invoking once again the powerful concept of "voice." She gave students the opportunity to use writing to address a concrete issue in the immediate community surrounding the college campus:

I had these students do a proposal, and they got the cleanup in their community. It really empowers them... One student started writing around the community, putting up billboards. "Pick up your trash." "Clean up." Start a group on how to organize something, a cleanup. That takes planning. That takes writing. Writing is more powerful than just talking, and I tell them that.

Through these discussions and activities, Lily articulated the relationships between pressing issues in the local community, the broader well-being of the Navajo Nation, and the importance of writing for effecting change at both these levels. The community-focused assignments that faculty gave often had this kind of an explicit civic engagement and social responsibility component. In the first short assignment in English 102, for example, Patrick asked students to

write persuasive letters to the college president, the *Navajo Times*, or chapter officials about concerns in their immediate community. He believed it was important for students to start developing written arguments with the issues and audiences they knew best.

Navajo Nation. Faculty also responded to the college's situation within the larger community of the Navajo Nation. In some cases, asking students to consider issues at this level was an important form of social and political consciousness-raising. Many students identified strongly with the particular communities they or their families were from, and sometimes they were not very familiar with the history or pressing political, economic, and environmental issues in other parts of the reservation. Thus, the English composition classroom became a site for reading, writing, and discussions that helped students understand their own experiences within the broader context of the Navajo Nation. We might understand faculty's response to this level of "the local" as a form of Diné nationalism. For instance, Patrick asked students to write their second assignment—which was their first major research paper—about a problem facing the Navajo Nation. In class discussion, Patrick framed this assignment in terms of students' responsibility as Diné people to improve conditions on the reservation.

Indeed, faculty often sought to make the case to their students that the academic literacies they were acquiring at Diné College could be used to further the well-being of the Navajo Nation. Perhaps the most striking example of this practice was the guest speaker Lily invited to her class for Veteran's Day. Henry, a Marine Corps veteran and Navajo Nation district attorney, discussed the importance of reading and writing for creating laws and issuing rulings that improved life on the reservation. An expert in Navajo Nation family law, Henry spoke at length about his own development as a writer and the key role that rhetorical awareness and legal literacies played in the work he did for the Diné people:

As a prosecutor, my audience is attorneys, advocates, defendants, and juries. The power of writing is important, and the overall results are helping abused children find a better situation, helping families get custody, improving lives, addressing crimes against women. A lot of the legal arguments we've made have made their way into the latest children's codes in Navajo Nation. Try not to underestimate writing and speaking skills. They address human rights and legal issues.

Henry, who openly acknowledged that he had struggled with writing in high school and had found the literacy demands of law school very challenging, provided students with a vivid example of how argumentation—both oral and written—was instrumental to addressing pressing issues for Diné families. In doing so, he explicitly foregrounded his mixed audience of “attorneys, advocates, defendants, and juries.” While many of these people were Diné, Henry made it clear that he had also needed to persuade a lot of bilagáanas in suits—including his law professors—to get to the point where he was using writing to “improv[e] lives” on the Navajo Nation.<sup>115</sup> It is worth noting that Henry’s obvious nationalist commitment to the sovereignty and self-determination of the Diné people in no way precluded him from espousing a cosmopolitan commitment to “human rights.”

Southwest region. Faculty also responded pedagogically to the larger region in which the Navajo Nation is situated. Sometimes this was a response to regional geology and ecosystems. Barb, for example, assigned her students several readings that focused on the natural environment of the Southwest. In other instances, faculty responded to regional social geographies, as when James invited students to write about their experiences traveling into bordertowns or urban areas beyond the reservation. In yet other cases, faculty responded to state or regional politics: Lily, for instance, emphasized the importance of participating in the Fall

2012 elections by telling students about the long fight for Native voting rights in the Southwest. Finally, some faculty gave students opportunities to examine the intersections between regional environmental issues, social geographies, and politics. In Patrick's class, for example, students often wrote their Navajo Nation-focused research papers about topics like regional water rights disputes or the coal mining and power plants that keep the Southwest's urban areas lit and air-conditioned at the expense of air, soil, and water quality on the reservation. Within the structures of settler colonialism, tribal sovereignty, state-level policies, and the physical environment of the Southwest are interrelated in complex ways. These interrelations present Diné people with rhetorical exigencies that faculty can and sometimes do invite students to take up.

Native America. The Navajo Nation is also part of the larger network of Native American nations and communities across the United States, and faculty responded to being situated in Indian Country. In some cases, students had relatively little knowledge of Native people beyond the Navajo Nation, particularly those nations whose homelands are outside the Southwest, and several faculty saw their composition classrooms as sites where students should have opportunities to encounter the history and traditions of other Native groups. James, for example, had his students read an English translation of a Tewa prayer, selections from *Autobiography of a Papago Woman*, and passages from Ella Cara Deloria's *Waterlilly*, a novel written in the 1940s about nineteenth-century Dakota life. In class discussion and reflective writing assignments, James invited students to draw connections between these texts and traditional Diné practices. Lily and Barb also provided students with opportunities to read texts by contemporary Native authors from other tribal nations, such as Leslie Marmon Silko and Sherman Alexie, asking students to reflect in conversation and/or writing about how these texts related to their own experiences. Furthermore, Lily and Patrick sometimes brought up Native American history, often

in explicitly political terms. Prior to the Thanksgiving break, for example, Lily assigned students to read an article from the *Huffington Post* called “Do American Indians Celebrate Thanksgiving?” In class, they discussed the provenance of the holiday, which is widely celebrated on the Navajo Nation. For some students, this was the first time they had been asked to think critically about their own relationships to a tradition with overt ideological links to settler colonialism; many had given little consideration to what they might share with Indigenous peoples in seventeenth-century New England.

As Lily’s lesson on stereotypes demonstrates, faculty also responded to contemporary social and political issues faced by Native people. For example, they sometimes assigned research projects that invited comparison between problems on the Navajo Nation and situations in other communities. Barb described asking students in her English 101 course to identify a challenge in their home community and then research how other communities had attempted to address similar issues: many students, she reported, researched how tribal nations in other parts of the country had tackled these problems. Patrick’s Navajo Nation-focused research assignment gave students a similar opportunity. There was often little Diné-specific published research on the topics students wanted to write about, and as a result, they frequently incorporated research about other tribal communities into their arguments.<sup>116</sup> Such discussions and assignments helped students place their own experiences as Diné people into a larger historical, cultural, and political context, and to understand the well-being of their communities as interrelated with that of other Native peoples.

United States. Three of the four faculty also responded to wider US social, political, and environmental issues, often inviting students to draw connections between these issues and concerns in their own communities. Patrick, for example, assigned students to write their second

major research paper about a national or global issue. (As I discuss in Chapter Three, this was a departure from his usual English 102 assignment sequence, in which he *required* students to write about a national issue for their second research paper and a global issue for their third research paper.) In Fall 2012, many of Patrick’s students chose to write about US-based topics—e.g. the rise of methamphetamine abuse, the obesity epidemic, and national energy policies—that were playing out in locally specific ways on the reservation. As her lesson on stereotypes demonstrates, Lily also addressed US political issues in in-class discussion and readings, often from an explicitly Native perspective. She openly discussed issues of race and diversity in US politics, situating the kinds of racism that students might have encountered personally within larger structures of inequality. And, as the opening of this chapter shows, Lily encouraged students to claim a voice on these issues—to represent themselves, the Navajo Nation, and Native Americans in ways that countered racist stereotypes. Finally, James and Barb both assigned readings by American authors, canonical and contemporary, from a range of ethnic, racial, and class backgrounds. Barb did so with the explicit goal of exposing students to the diversity of cultural, socioeconomic, and gendered perspectives within US society.

Global community. All four faculty in this study responded to the global communities suggested by the Diné College mission statement, often with the goal of helping students connect their own lives and communities to the experiences of people in other times and places. For James, this meant introducing students to a global literary heritage that included the European “classics” as well as Diné oral poetry and other Native American literature. He often assigned English poetry that he believed resonated with aspects of rural reservation life—the timeless agrarians of Hardy’s “In Time of ‘The Breaking of Nations’,” for example—or with themes from traditional Diné epistemology, such as Shakespeare’s meditation on the life cycle in Sonnet XV.

Barb undertook a similar project using more recent world literature, such as Kincaid's reflections on the history of slavery and the current tourist economy of postcolonial Antigua. Both James and Barb asked students to write reflective assignments in which they connected these readings to their own lives and experiences, a means of translating between experiences and knowledge systems and bridging the local and global.

Some faculty also approached global issues from a more political perspective. Perhaps the most substantive example was Patrick's assignment sequence for English 102. As I describe in Chapter Three, Patrick was experimenting with a new final writing assignment based on rhetorical appeals in Fall 2012. However, his usual sequence for the course culminated in a research paper about a global topic, and Patrick said he encouraged students to consider about "how they think the Navajo voice, Diné voice, could be heard in those global issues." This assignment echoes the Diné College mission statement's assertion that students—and Diné people more broadly—can and should contribute to the cosmopolitan project of improving conditions globally. Interestingly, those students in Patrick's class who chose to research global issues almost always wrote about the environment, most often energy policy or climate change.<sup>117</sup> Like many millennials, several of the younger Diné College students I interviewed were deeply concerned about environmental destruction. Given the extent to which transnational Indigenous movements have focused on environmental issues—in part because Indigenous communities are often bearing the brunt of the ecological devastation wrought by global capitalism—it is perhaps not surprising that Diné College students saw environmental debates as an arena in which they, as Indigenous people, had something important to offer global conversations.

*Student Responses to Cosmopolitan Pedagogies*

Many students expressed appreciation for the opportunities their English classes provided to engage with local issues in their communities and learn about challenges facing the Navajo Nation as a whole. In her first research paper, for example, Morning Star chose to write about Navajo Nation police response time. Through her research, she began to connect substance abuse-related problems in her own community to the larger problem of tribal law enforcement infrastructure:

I seen what alcohol and all these drugs would do to myself and my brothers and my cousins and just the whole community. The way I see it is that the police would probably need—just need to be more police officers. Either that, or the police probably need more, more help of some sort, or make substations. Find a way to have police response quicker. The quicker need for police officers that need emergency help in the remote areas. That's one of the issues, one of the things we have on the reservation is like a wide range, a big piece of land, and there are just limited police officers to help with what all the people are going through.

As she researched, drafted, and revised her paper, Morning Star started to connect the issue of Navajo Nation law enforcement infrastructure to the unchecked drug and alcohol activity that had led to the death of her brother and two of her cousins, and that she was desperately worried would influence her teenage son. This locally responsive writing assignment had a major impact on Morning Star's thinking about how she might use her education to improve conditions on the reservation: by the end of the semester, she was considering pursuing a career as a Navajo Nation police officer.<sup>118</sup>

Many students also appreciated the opportunity to view Navajo Nation concerns in broader Native, US, and global contexts. Most discussed their interest in Diné-specific issues in ways that did not preclude a desire to learn about other peoples and places. As Madison Lane said, “I like to read about things that are happening now...Native American, some of that is interesting to me. All of it. Whatever's happening with issues with both Navajos and other cultures.” Nicholene’s interests also encompassed communities of varying scales:

I’m really interested in reading about things about the environment—about the environment and about how the environment impacts the people who live there...I had always been interested in the way people think and why they are the way are...Just other opinions about other tribes and things that are affecting minorities. I’ve really become interested in that, especially in the Navajo tribe.

Nicholene’s comments reveal how her interests were evolving as she took college courses and encountered new ideas and perspectives. As she moved through her studies, questions and interests that connected Diné, Native, US, and global communities increasingly motivated her academic reading and writing.

Some students had a strong sense of the political importance of understanding the world beyond the Navajo Nation. In an interview toward the end of Patrick’s English 102 course, Dezba, who had just completed a research paper about climate change, said, “A lot of people don’t really know what’s going on out there. Everything, like right now we’re in our own little world, and we don’t realize what’s going on outside. I think that’s a big problem.” She seemed to grasp and appreciate the cosmopolitan ethic behind Patrick’s assignment sequence:

I think [the assignments] are all useful, because you have to use a different way to answer the question. Like, with the letter, we had to tell the president, like, our personal

opinions. Then, some— like how to find our voice in the paper. Then, he gave us the problems on the Navajo reservation, and then express your feelings towards that one...Then, again, finding your voice again. Then, this past one with the world problems, you've got to find your voice in that one, too, and express your opinions.

Like Lily and Patrick, Dezba believed it was important to develop arguments and “find her voice” on issues at each of these levels.

As I have continued to correspond and occasionally meet with many of the students in this study over the year and a half since my fieldwork semester ended, I have been struck time and again by the increasingly sophisticated connections they are drawing between problems in their own families and communities and the complex forces shaping life on the Navajo Nation. As Brandt and Clinton might have predicted, the technology of literacy is enabling students to engage with the global in locally situated ways. Younger Diné College students are part of the largest generation of Diné people in history (Shoemaker; Begay). As they are beginning to use their educations to pursue a variety of goals both within and on behalf of their communities, their engagement with the global is changing the local context of the Navajo Nation, too.

### *Why Cosmopolitanism?*

The Diné College composition faculty in this study sought to equip students to translate between knowledge systems as readers, writers, and rhetors in a “multicultural world.” In some cases, they also encouraged students to use these abilities to serve the well-being of “tribal, state, national, and global communities.” While I have argued that this is an inherently cosmopolitan orientation, none of the faculty in this study were familiar with ongoing scholarly debates about cosmopolitanism, either within or beyond Native American studies. Indeed, in an email he sent

responding to an earlier version of this manuscript, Patrick praised my analysis but questioned my choice of terminology. He wrote:

[Your analysis] connects/clarifies what [Diné College] is attempting to do in English composition to a theoretical name so that others can pin point what it is that we are doing here in English composition. For years, people have been trying to describe what pedagogy DC composition instructors are using. Now there appears to be a name emerging. Personally, I don't like the term "cosmopolitan". It sounds too much like a feminist magazine Lol. I would prefer something like emergence or synthesis which are more theory oriented. I might challenge you to come up with your own pedagogy terminology with respect to Dine College.

Patrick's recommendation of the term "synthesis" is suggestive: it points to the process of interweaving so central to the locally responsive pedagogies I observed at Diné College. Indeed, we might understand these instructors' movement between personal, disciplinary, professional, and local knowledge as a form of cosmopolitanism in and of itself. Likewise, Patrick's use of the term "emergence"<sup>119</sup> foregrounds the rhetorical work that he and Lily sought to foster as they encouraged Diné students to add their voices to conversations about local, Navajo Nation, Native American, regional, US, and world issues. Their pedagogies support students' emergence as Diné rhetors on all of these stages. Both of Patrick's proposed terms for Diné College composition pedagogy have helpful theoretical affordances.

My reasons for respectfully maintaining my use of the term *cosmopolitan* are threefold. First, this term highlights the reality that the distinctiveness of the Navajo Nation—the "local" to which faculty respond pedagogically—has been shaped by centuries of complex transnational engagement. This has included interactions with other Indigenous peoples; contact with the

Spanish empire and New Mexican settlements; the evolving conditions of US settler colonialism; and, in recent decades, global capitalism, digital communications technologies, and political activism around issues of social, economic, and environmental justice. As Diné poet and current Navajo Nation vice-president Rex Lee Jim asserts,

Historically and traditionally, the Navajos have always chosen to adapt and adopt, to change and Navajoize. Their ability to embrace change has allowed them to succeed in coping with an environment that has brought them into contact with other peoples. (422)

Diné people have been “adapt[ing] and adopt[ing] from “other peoples”—translating across bodies of knowledge—for a very long time, and Jim views this as one of their great strengths. Furthermore, the repurposed concept of *k’é*, which encompasses a sense of relationship, responsibility, and compassion for all of creation, offers an ethic for global citizenship, one that foregrounds respect for other-than-human life and the ecosystems we all inhabit. This Indigenous cosmopolitanism is part of students’ heritage, and I see Diné College composition instructors’ efforts to bridge the local and the global as expanding on this tradition.

Second, I believe the cosmopolitanism of Diné College instructors’ pedagogies—and of the Diné College mission itself—have something important to offer ongoing conversations in Native American studies, where debates about the social and political value of cosmopolitan critical perspectives have been playing out for decades (e.g. Cook-Lynn; Krupat; Brooks et al.). These conversations have often centered on interpretations of literary texts, but their political implications for Native communities are far-reaching. TCUs are on-the-ground embodiments of tribal nationalism: they exist to further the self-determination and sovereignty of their tribal nations. That the composition pedagogies emerging in these settings are cosmopolitan in orientation reveals something significant about the intellectual and rhetorical demands that

Native people face in the twenty-first century and the theoretical orientations that best equip them to meet self-determined objectives. The pursuit of sovereignty may well require the ability of move between knowledge systems—systems that are, in fact, already interrelated—and may be most achievable when situated within transnational social and environmental justice projects.

Finally, I maintain my use of the term *cosmopolitan* because I believe it makes an important contribution to how we theorize the relationships between the local and the global in locally responsive composition pedagogy. It offers the crucial insight that, while such pedagogies are responsive to local conditions, the theories and principles that inform them can, often do, and, in my view *should* understand locales as situated within and contributing to multiple communities of varying scale. This includes a global community that is becoming more interconnected and interdependent by the day. We all live in one “one complex, messy, conflictual, contemporary world” (Deyhle, “From Break Dancing” 10), a world that today’s students—at TCUs as well as the many other institution types where composition is taught—are preparing to inherit. The pedagogical practices enacted by Diné College faculty suggest that locally responsive pedagogies can embrace an ethic of global responsibility that mobilizes rather than sacrifices local knowledge and commitments.

## Chapter Eight

### Siihasin

This is not the dissertation I set out to write. Each of these chapters presents findings that were initially surprising to me. As I recount in Chapter One (“Looking for Locally Responsive Composition Pedagogy”), I began this project believing I was going to bring culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) to composition studies, but, instead, I ended up critiquing CRP and taking up David Gold’s concept of locally responsive pedagogy as an alternative. As it turned out, however, theorizing locally responsive pedagogy at Diné College was not simply a matter of identifying a shared set of teaching practices. Chapter Three (“What I Bring”) emerged from my bewilderment at the range of pedagogical practices I encountered in Diné College writing classrooms. At first I was alarmed that there seemed to be no single locally responsive pedagogy emerging from this setting: what was I going to write about if everyone was doing something different? However, as I came to understand the distinctive interweaving of personal background, disciplinary training, professional experiences, and local knowledge that informed each of these instructors’ pedagogical practices, I felt a growing appreciation for the complex intellectual work they were undertaking, work that was always in process.

Chapters Four and Five (“My Dream that Is Unfolding before Me” and “Start Where They Are”) sprang from the rapid reorientation I experienced as, interview by interview, the “actually existing” Diné College students in this study revealed themselves to be much more diverse—and much less “other”—than the scholarship on Native learners had led me to expect. As I got to know these students better, I began to understand the daunting logistical obstacles

many of them faced just getting to campus every day, and I became increasingly dissatisfied with the literature's preoccupation with cultural difference and relative lack of attention to the spatialized socioeconomic structures that seemed to be the major cause of these students' struggles. As these structural issues became more and more apparent to me, I started to see how instructors were responding not only to the specifically Diné aspects of students' experiences—for example, clan identity, language, and heritage knowledge and practices—but also to other dimensions of students' lives and circumstances, including the persistent challenges many encountered in the context of rural reservation poverty. Such responses were often subtle, but they demonstrated the value of expanding the notion of pedagogical responsiveness beyond "culture" to account for students' locations within regional social geographies, which are manifestations of ongoing US settler colonialism.

Chapter Six ("Your Unique Diné Way") developed out of study findings that were, at first, rather disappointing to me. James's descriptions of his use of the Diné Educational Philosophy (DEP) as a framework for teaching writing was an important part of what first drew me to Diné College: I was intrigued by the possibility of mobilizing traditional Diné knowledge to teach first-year composition, and the institutional documents I encountered seemed to suggest that DEP was fully integrated across the curriculum. Within weeks of starting my fieldwork, however, it became apparent that DEP was not being consistently defined or applied by the faculty in the study. In early versions of Chapter Six, I found myself attempting to paper over these inconsistencies, as well as the potentially problematic understandings of writing process that some faculty brought to DEP. As a non-Native guest at Diné College, I was hesitant to portray this epistemological project as anything other than an unmitigated success. However, once I became comfortable enough with my theorization of locally responsive pedagogy—and

my relationships with my Diné College colleagues—to be honest about what I thought was happening with DEP and why, I think the story became more interesting, and ultimately more respectful of the complexities of this pedagogical undertaking.

Chapter Seven (“One World”) also came out of findings that were initially troubling to me. I was at Diné College to study locally responsive pedagogy: how was I supposed to explain the fact that instructors were assigning readings by Wordsworth, Hardy, Borges, and Kincaid, and asking students to write about issues far beyond the Navajo Nation? Over the course of the semester, however, it became apparent that these composition faculty saw a pressing need for Diné College students to use reading and writing to engage with a variety of perspectives, both in and beyond the reservation. I started to notice that the broader Native, US, and global issues students chose to write about nearly always connected back to local concerns in some way. I began to realize that I had developed a somewhat uncritical preoccupation with “the local,” which, in the context of twenty-first century global capitalism, has become what Richard Weaver might call a God term in the counterhegemonic discourses of many leftist political movements. Once I got beyond feeling disgruntled by course materials and assignments that at first struck me as insufficiently specific to the Navajo Nation, I began to understand what these instructors were up to, albeit in varying ways. Theirs was a locally-grounded cosmopolitanism, and they taught me the importance of inviting students to move between bodies of knowledge to engage rhetorically with the transnational forces shaping their local context.

I opened this dissertation with a Big Question: How do we, as writing teachers, equip diverse students with literacies that support their intellectual, economic, and political empowerment while respectfully engaging with the identities, values, and motivations they bring to the classroom? Over the course of this research, I have come to believe that one important

answer to this question is to shift the unit of analysis from students alone to a broader consideration of locale. This frame allows us to see particular populations of students—and their diverse and ever-evolving identities, experiences, motivations, and locations—in relation to institutional mission and community “needs and desires” (Gold, *Rhetoric* 153), however complex, contested, and politically situated those might be. Thus, one possible answer to the Big Question is locally responsive pedagogy, which I have come to theorize as teaching adapted to a specific institution, the student population(s) it serves, and the communities of varying scale in which the institution is situated. As I discuss in Chapter Three, local responsiveness manifests across multiple dimensions of instruction, and it emerges from an ongoing process by which instructors interweave personal, disciplinary, and professional knowledge and experience with their evolving understanding of their local teaching context. None of these sources of pedagogical theory and principles are static, and local contexts are themselves continuously changing, so locally responsive pedagogies are always in development. Finally, locally responsive composition pedagogies are never politically neutral: all locations are situated within larger power structures, all rhetorics are ideological, and all faculty bring political commitments and ideological orientations to their local teaching context that inform their pedagogical responses, consciously or otherwise.

One reader of this dissertation asked, “How is locally responsive pedagogy different from ‘good teaching’ or ‘high quality instruction’?” Based on my experiences as a researcher and teacher—at Diné College and in other two- and four-year institutions, both access-oriented and elite—I suspect there is no such thing as “good teaching” in the abstract. What constitutes “high quality instruction” is, for one, always contingent on subject matter and discipline. When compositionists say “good teaching,” what they typically mean is teaching that is a) theoretically

grounded in disciplinary knowledge about language, rhetoric, literacy, and learning, and b) supported by empirical evidence. However, our own theories tell us that writing, and thus writing instruction, is *always* socially and materially situated, and always located in time and space (see Vandenberg, Hum, and Clary-Lemon). Further, we increasingly recognize that even our means of gathering evidence about instructional effectiveness—our assessment practices—must be validated locally (Huot “Toward”; *(Re)articulating*). There simply is no one-size-fits-all writing pedagogy. This is not to say that disciplinary knowledge is not important for developing good locally responsive pedagogy: as my examination of instructors’ varying interpretations of DEP suggests, the theories faculty bring to their local contexts inform their pedagogical responses and yield teaching practices that may be better (or worse) for that locale. However, I believe that “good teaching” in any context is always locally responsive to some degree—we *all* adapt our pedagogical practices based on where we find ourselves teaching, although we often do so intuitively, inconsistently, and/or idiosyncratically. The purpose of the framework I offer here is to help us do that better.

I have theorized the process of locally responsive pedagogy through ethnographic research with composition instructors in the specific and highly distinctive locale of Diné College. However, I believe that a conscious awareness and cultivation of local adaptation might facilitate the development of composition pedagogies that are more deliberately and coherently responsive to a wide range of local settings. In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss the implications of my findings for the fields of composition and Native American studies, as well as for Diné College. I then outline directions for future research, ending with a discussion of my own preliminary efforts to adapt this framework for my own new teaching context: the University of Utah.

### *Implications for Composition*

The findings I present in this dissertation have a number of implications for the field of composition. First and foremost, they suggest the pedagogical value of fostering a dialogic relationship between disciplinary theories and an understanding of local context. As I have noted, disciplinary knowledge is essential, but it is not sufficient in and of itself, perhaps particularly at institutions that serve historically marginalized student populations and communities. This finding has major implications for composition instructors, who typically understand the need to be content-area experts but may or may not feel a professional obligation to consciously cultivate knowledge about dimensions of their teaching context that I identify as part of “the local.”<sup>120</sup> This is largely a function of academic training. As Peter Vandenberg and Jennifer Clary-Lemon observe, graduate education often fails to teach emerging academics how to engage with local pedagogical and civic issues. Furthermore, learning about the history and contemporary social, economic, and political issues of a particular locale is an inherently *interdisciplinary* endeavor. Most graduate programs are designed to deepen rather than broaden students’ disciplinary engagements, and therefore may not foster the requisite research skills and intellectual habits required to assemble a multifaceted understanding of local context. This study bolsters Vandenberg and Clary-Lemon’s argument that graduate education in rhetoric and composition can and should do more to prepare future faculty to engage pedagogically with local concerns.

My findings also suggest another hidden cost of the heavy reliance on contingent labor in writing programs across the United States. Both graduate students and part-time adjunct faculty—the workforce that does much of the actual teaching of composition in postsecondary settings—often lack the institutional resources, motivation, or time in place to develop locally-situated expertise. That two-year colleges tend to rely particularly heavily on adjunct faculty

(Klausman) *and* are likely to be serving student populations who might particularly benefit from locally responsive pedagogies is especially problematic. These findings bolster the case for greater attention to equitable labor conditions that support faculty retention and the cultivation of local teaching expertise.

This study also has implications for composition curricula, the selection and use of textbooks, and program-wide assessment practices, all of which matter for writing program administrators (WPAs). These findings suggest that WPAs should consider whether and how programmatic learning goals, course materials, and assessment practices respond to specific student populations they serve, as well as the institutional mission, surrounding communities, and local instantiations of broader social, economic, and political forces. Likewise, this study raises questions about the nature of the faculty professional development that WPAs offer the graduate students, adjunct instructors, permanent lecturers, and tenure-track faculty in their writing programs. How might professional development activities be designed to elicit and share the local expertise faculty are developing while fostering a conscious and continual interweaving of local and disciplinary (as well as personal and professional) knowledge?

One possible answer to this question is to combine the concept of locally responsive pedagogy into Shari Stenberg and Amy Lee's notion of *pedagogical inquiry*. Posited as an alternative to instrumental training-based approaches to instructor professional development, pedagogical inquiry conceives of teaching as an "ongoing process of discovering—and responding to—revisionary possibilities" (340, emphasis mine). Stenberg and Lee assert that pedagogical inquiry should constitute an "ongoing, *locally specific* dialogue between teaching and research, action and reflection" (345, emphasis mine). It is thus a continual process of reflexively developing and improving pedagogy in local context: this process model aligns well

with the mechanisms of locally responsiveness I observed among Diné College composition faculty (and, I would note, with the cyclical reflective process of DEP). The principles of pedagogical inquiry might, in fact, bring greater intentionality and reflexivity to those mechanisms. The conceptual components of locally responsive pedagogy that I have derived from this study provide a powerful heuristic that can orient pedagogical inquiry towards greater local responsiveness.

Finally, this study offers much-needed empirical research into the distinctive intellectual work of two-year college English faculty, who teach more than half the first-year composition courses offered in the United States each year (Lovas; Hassel and Giordano). While two-year college English faculty have made many important contributions to the scholarship of teaching and learning (see J. Sommers; Andelora; M. Reynolds, “Knowledge-Makers”), the majority do not publish or publically present on the knowledge they make in their classrooms (Toth, Griffiths, and Thirolf; Toth). My research with Diné College composition instructors suggests that two-year college English faculty are, in fact, engaged in a great deal of pedagogical innovation, and that the need for local responsiveness—something that globally-oriented academic disciplines are often ill-equipped to address—drives much of this development. As a field, composition can and should do more to a) recognize and respect the nature of two-year college English instructors’ locally-oriented intellectual work; b) strive to produce scholarship that is more attentive to the importance of locale and more explicitly amenable to local adaptation, particularly in two-year college settings; and c) present relevant scholarship in genres, media, and forums that are accessible and rhetorically effective for the field’s large two-year college constituency, including the significant subset of two-year college faculty who teach in minority-serving institutions. This final point is particularly important in light of my findings about how faculty interweave

disciplinary insights with personal, professional, and local knowledge. If we believe that composition pedagogy benefits from engagement with up-to-date disciplinary theories of language, rhetoric, literacy, and learning, then we need to be much more conscientious and audience-aware about getting this scholarship into the hands of two-year college English faculty.

### *Implications for Native American Studies*

The findings of this study also have several implications for conversations in Native American studies. First of all, this research speaks to the value of TCUs as sites of knowledge-making in and about Native communities. In early 2012, I attended a panel event at the University of Michigan in which several prominent scholars shared their perspectives on the current state of Native American studies and future directions for the field. During the question-and-answer period, I asked the panelists what role they thought tribal colleges might play in the field's future. The scholar who responded to my question shrugged and said, "Well, they're really just community colleges." As someone who researches and often teaches in "just community colleges," I had to consciously lower my hackles, but I understand what he meant. Most academic research comes out of major universities: that is not the mission of two-year colleges, which are, by design, teaching institutions, nor are TCUs generally resourced to support extensive research activity. However, I believe this study suggests there is a great deal to be learned from the intellectual work taking place in the academic environments of TCUs, not least because these are spaces in which theoretical developments in Native American studies are taken up within "actually existing Indian nations" (Lyons, "Actually Existing").

Secondly—and to this point—the remarkable variety in Diné College students' intersecting identities, geographical experiences, literacy practices, language backgrounds, and motivations all support Lyons' "next big project for Native American studies," which is to

“develop new ways of engaging with the irreducible *modernity* and *diversity* that inheres in every Native community” (“Actually Existing” 297). While I recognize the rhetorical power of strategic essentialisms about Native cultural difference, I found that I became a much more effective researcher *and teacher* at Diné College once I recognized that twenty-first century Diné society is far more diverse and complex than much of the scholarly literature initially led me to believe. To be clear, familiarity with Diné history, language, and heritage knowledge is extraordinarily helpful in this setting, as is understanding that Diné language, traditional spiritual practices and perspectives, and longstanding economic activities like ranching and weaving remain an important part of many Diné people’s lives. However, I do not believe it does Diné College, its students, or the Navajo Nation any favors to ignore or obscure the modernity and diversity of twenty-first century Diné communities. As I discuss in Chapter One, such essentialist discourses may actually play into the settler colonial bait-and-switch by redirecting attention from Native political claims. My research suggests that Native students are better served by instructors who understand the range of their students’ experiences and perspectives. Thus, I view this study as an empirical contribution to Lyons’ big project, and I hope it helps other scholars in Native studies develop new ways of engaging.

Third—and relatedly—this study contributes to emerging conversation in Native studies that about epistemological projects that seek to “delink” knowledge-making from the logics of “coloniality/modernity,” in part by “desubalternizing” local knowledges (Mignolo *Darker Side; Local Histories; “Geopolitics”*). I agree that we can and should critically examine *any* knowledge system in order to understand how it might propagate structures of inequality and dispossession.<sup>121</sup> However, Diné College’s experiences developing and implementing DEP suggest that efforts to desubalternize local knowledge in Native institutional settings may be

characterized more by debate, dissensus, and a proliferation of interpretations than by coherence, consensus, or common understanding. This does not mean such projects should not be undertaken—I, for one, have had great success interweaving DEP and disciplinary knowledge in my own Diné College classes, and I have talked to many students who value the philosophy and its inclusion across the curriculum. Indeed, I believe DEP offers an identity-affirming way for students to bridge seemingly disparate disciplinary content and ways of knowing across the curriculum, something general education reformers have recently sought to foster in many postsecondary settings (e.g. White). However, I find Suresh Canagarajah’s postcolonial definition of local knowledge as a process of “interpret[ing] established knowledge for local needs and interests” while “reconstructing local knowledge for contemporary needs” (“Reconstructing” 14) to be the most apt description of what I observed (and practiced) in Diné College composition classrooms. For scholars inclined to advocate a separatist reinstatement of Indigenous epistemologies—or to imply that such a thing is even possible in academic institutional spaces—the story of DEP may be instructive.

This leads to one final finding of this research that has key implications for Native studies: the pervasive cosmopolitanism of Diné College composition pedagogies, even at an institution with core tribal nationalist commitments. In Chapter Seven, I discuss the debates in Native studies surrounding cosmopolitanisms; I will not belabor those points here. It is worth observing, however, that movement across multiple—often transnational—bodies of knowledge was happening at many levels at Diné College: in composition instructors’ own interdisciplinary backgrounds; in their interweaving of personal, disciplinary, professional, and local knowledges; in their reconstructions of DEP as a framework for teaching writing process; and in their efforts to prepare students for further study and employment in a multicultural world. And students

themselves were constantly translating between knowledge systems in their own out-of-school literacy practices—for example, David’s investigations comparing Asian philosophy and Sa’ah Naagháí Bik’eh Hózhóón, or Cookie’s supernatural romance screenplay, which drew from Diné skinwalker stories and Coyote trickster tales as well as the popular vampire love saga *Twilight*. Furthermore, Diné College, its composition faculty, and many of the Diné students in this study espoused unambiguous desires to contribute to the well-being of tribal, state, national, and global communities. In short, the arguments of Native studies scholars like Arnold Krupat and Lyons are bolstered by the observation that a commitment to Diné nationalism and a widely shared goal of furthering the study of Diné language, culture, and history did not preclude organic and ubiquitous cosmopolitanisms in this actually existing Indigenous nation.

### *Implications for Diné College*

The faculty, students, and staff I have worked with at Diné College have been extraordinarily generous with their time and insights over the last three years. In return, I offer my thoughts on the implications of this study for the college, which I hope will be received in the spirit I intend them: as an effort to support the important work Diné composition faculty are doing for their students and the Navajo Nation. I present these implications with full awareness that funding for faculty professional development is limited. That, too, is a feature of the local context. To whatever extent the college is interested, I am eager to serve as a disciplinary and professional resource to the English and Foundational Studies Department, both now and in the future.

First, this study demonstrates the value of adapting composition instruction to the local context of Diné College. The three long-time faculty in this study—James, Patrick, and Lily—brought a deep local knowledge to their teaching, and this knowledge enabled them to develop

pedagogies tailored to Diné students, the institutional mission, and the communities in which the college is situated. Barb, however, had little opportunity to acquire this kind of knowledge before the starting her position, and, as a result, she faced a steep learning curve. While a certain amount of stress is inevitable during the first semester at any new institution, the college might think about how to provide incoming faculty with more information and mentorship regarding the local context and how to adapt one's teaching to it. The dimensions of the local I examine in this dissertation could offer a useful framework for thinking through what kinds of information would be most helpful to new Diné College English instructors. Indeed, new faculty—particularly if they have little experience in Native communities—might benefit from reading excerpts of Chapter Four (“My Dream that Is Unfolding before Me”) in order to hear a range of Diné student voices and get a sense of their locally-specific resources and challenges.

Second, students’ positive responses to the presence of DEP in their composition courses—and the evidence that DEP facilitates learning transfer both within and beyond the college—indicate that this Diné knowledge is a valuable instructional resource. However, faculty’s widely varying implementations of DEP suggest several steps that might be taken at the departmental and institution level to enable instructors to take full pedagogical advantage of the philosophy. As Barb’s experiences indicate, there may be linguistic, conceptual, and, perhaps, ideological barriers to new instructors’ uptake of DEP. Barb seemed unclear about the provenance or purpose of the philosophy and uncomfortable with the Diné bizaad words and orthography, and the DEP training sessions she attended early in the fall did not clarify these matters. As a result of her confusion, Barb made relatively few efforts to integrate DEP into her course. This suggests a need to rethink DEP-related professional development for incoming faculty: while it is no replacement for sustained mentorship, excerpts from Chapter Six (“Your

Unique Diné Way””) might provide a helpful overview for new composition instructors. At the same time, even the experienced faculty in the study understood and implemented DEP differently, in large part because of the varying disciplinary theories of writing process they brought to the four-step framework. This suggests there might be value to fostering greater faculty engagement with pedagogical theories from the discipline of rhetoric and composition, as well as department-wide conversations about the theories of writing process faculty are drawing on and how they might be more consistently interwoven with the steps of DEP.

To this point, several faculty in this study noted that they had few opportunities to confer with their departmental colleagues about their pedagogical approaches: the diversity of instructors’ locally responsive pedagogies might result in part from classroom isolation, which is a common phenomenon among postsecondary faculty at both two- and four-year institutions (Grubb; Stenberg and A. Lee). Diné College might seek to provide more opportunities for disciplinary faculty to share effective pedagogical theories and practices across the college system. It might also be beneficial to organize opportunities to exchange knowledge and practices with English faculty at other postsecondary institutions with large Diné student populations, such as Navajo Technical University, the Institute of American Indian Arts, Southwest Indian Polytechnic Institute, and the many Diné-serving community colleges and public four-year institutions in the Four Corners region. Such collaborations would help composition instructors at a variety of institution types understand how Diné students’ experiences as writers are shaped by a range of local conditions.

Finally, the college might continue to support instructors’ participation at tribal, state, regional, and national conferences. I can attest from my own experiences presenting with Diné College faculty that such appearances increase the field’s awareness of the important

pedagogical work that takes place at TCUs: they help make Native student writers and the faculty who teach them more visible to scholars who, by dint of their own locations within the structures of settler colonialism, often have no idea tribally-controlled institutions exist. Such participation would also enable Diné College faculty to connect with disciplinary professional communities (both within and beyond writing studies) and stay current with disciplinary theories and principles that they can continue to interweave with their understanding of the local Diné College context. While the wide-ranging disciplinary backgrounds of two-year college English faculty offer rich variety to their locally responsive pedagogies, instructors might also benefit from stronger ties to disciplinary organizations like the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), the Council on Basic Writing (CBW), and the Two-Year College English Association (TYCA) and its West and Southwest regional affiliates. These organizations would certainly benefit from the participation of Diné College faculty.

#### *Directions for Future Research*

As with many ethnographic studies, my work at Diné College has generated more research questions than it has answered. While this study focuses on the pedagogies that instructors had already developed, it has also revealed pedagogical issues that are in need of further research. The role of the unique and shifting forms of language diversity in Diné College composition classrooms may be chief among them, precisely because none of the faculty in this study seemed to feel that their pedagogical approaches were responding to language-level issues adequately. Given the importance that Diné College clearly and understandably places on students' proficiency with Edited American English (EAE), there is pressing need for more research on Navajo English as a distinct language variety (or, perhaps, multiple varieties). A better understanding of the status and features of Navajo English(es) would enable Diné College

composition faculty to make use of recent disciplinary insights in composition regarding translingualism, particularly the importance of understanding language diversity as a *resource* that students can learn to wield rhetorically (Horner; Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur; Horner, Lu, and Matsuda; J. Jordan; Canagarajah, “Codemeshing”). Research about language diversity in Diné College composition classrooms also stands to make important *contributions* to those emerging scholarly conversations.

This study also suggests that there is much more research to be done regarding tribal college students’ extra- and co-curricular literacy practices. For example, globalized Japanese youth culture—e.g. manga and animé—is widely popular among Diné young people, and I have seen evidence that this engagement sometimes informs students’ frames of reference and research interests in the composition classroom. Likewise, Cookie was one of several Diné College students I met through my research and teaching who was combining popular genres and narrative tropes from young adult literature, television, and film with distinctly Diné story lines, characters, and settings in their own creative writing. Such practices are compelling sites for understanding how Diné millennials are negotiating issues of identity, language, values, and place through reading and writing. Finally, as I discuss in Chapter Four, Diné College students of all ages are engaged in variety of digital literacy practices, and these practices intersect with the Navajo Nation’s distinctive forms of language diversity in fascinating ways. For instance, my anecdotal experiences communicating with Diné students via text message and Facebook suggest that there is a rich Diné digital vernacular that integrates phoneticizations of Navajo English and words and phrases in Diné bizaad, as well as emoticons and verbal and digital slang from other sources, such as fan communities, hiphop, and heavy metal. These dimensions of Diné College

students' literacy practices—and how they might intersect with school-based literacies or be treated as resources in the composition classroom—are another exciting area for future study.

Given what this study reveals about how Diné College faculty interweave disciplinary and local knowledge, there also seems to be a great deal of potential for ongoing collaborative research between university-based writing researchers like myself and willing Diné College faculty, who have a wealth of local knowledge as well their own professional and departmental research agendas. Such studies might include developing and implementing curricular innovations, designing locally responsive placement and assessment procedures, or other forms of collaboration that meet the self-determined needs of Diné College, its English faculty, and its students. Likewise, I hope to work with Diné College English instructors, as well as composition faculty at other TCUs, to forge stronger connections between the tribal college movement, the field of writing studies, and our relevant professional organizations. This means, among other things, continuing to produce research that bridges conversations in CCCC's Indigenous rhetorics community and TYCA.

Finally, there is the need to research whether the framework for locally responsive pedagogy I have developed here can be taken up or reinterpreted in other contexts. These contexts could include other TCUs and minority serving institutions (i.e. historically Black colleges and universities, predominantly Black institutions, and Hispanic-serving institutions). They could also include other two-year colleges, regional and urban-serving universities, religious colleges and universities, and secular liberal arts colleges. And, of course, even major research universities are locally situated, however global their missions and diverse their student populations. What locally responsive pedagogy can or should be in these settings remains an open question.

*Toward Locally Responsive Pedagogy at the University of Utah*

As I prepare to move into a faculty position in the University of Utah's Department of Writing and Rhetoric Studies, I am using the framework that emerged from this study to begin developing locally responsive composition pedagogy in a new scene. My next teaching day is dawning: I am cycling back around from siihasin to nitsáhákees. At this stage, my conceptualization of locally responsive pedagogy is a heuristic rather than a full-fledged model. It involves iterative reflection and research guided by a series of questions derived directly from what I learned at Diné College:

1. What do I bring to this setting? What aspects of my personal background and commitments, my disciplinary knowledge, and my prior professional experiences will inform my pedagogical practices at the University of Utah? What knowledge and perceptions do I already have about this local context? What do I need to learn, and what resources are available for learning it? How can I access a *range* of perspectives about this context, both within and beyond the University? How might my own identities, subjectivities, and positionality offer pedagogical affordances and present constraints in this particular setting?
2. “Where” are the University of Utah students? What are the locally specific populations that the University serves, and what are the salient dimensions of diversity among these students? What are their intersecting identities, language resources, interpersonal communication norms, heritage knowledges, family histories, social networks, geographical experiences, personal interests, literacy practices, prior schooling experiences, socioeconomic backgrounds, and goals and motivations? How are students located within local power structures and social geographies? What specific

commonalities and differences among University of Utah students might present pedagogical challenges and opportunities in this context?

3. What is this institution? What is the University of Utah's history and current mission(s)? What role does it play within the statewide higher education system? What pedagogical resources and student support services does it offer? What are its institutional and departmental structures and policies? How does my composition course fit within the department's curriculum and the university's broader goals for student learning? What meta-language are my colleagues using to discuss language, literacy, and learning with their students? What local assessment processes are in place that might influence which students enroll in my class and what I should be preparing them to do as writers?
4. What are the communities of varying scale in which the University of Utah is situated? What are the University and its students' locations and interrelationships within Salt Lake City? Within the Wasatch Front valleys? Within the state of Utah? Within the Great Basin region and the Intermountain West? Within the United States? Within hemispheric and global communities? What are the local histories and current issues surrounding settler colonialism and Indigenous land claims? What about issues surrounding federal and industrial control of land, water, and other natural resources? How do global forces shape social, economic, political, and environmental conditions at the local level? What rhetorical exigencies do these forces present for University of Utah students and their communities? What knowledge systems will students need to be able to navigate in order to engage these forces? How might they contribute their locally situated perspectives to furthering social justice at city, state, regional, national, and transnational scales?

5. How do I use my emerging understanding of this locale to develop concrete pedagogical practices? How do I adapt my teaching across multiple dimensions of instruction in response to features of the local context? How might I select or create course materials that engage the local? How might I design writing assignments that respond to local exigencies? How might I adapt my in-class activities? The way I communicate with students individually? How I establish assessment criteria and course policies? In the midst of all of these adaptations, how do I maintain coherent engagement with disciplinary theories of language, literacy, and learning?
6. How will I make locally responsive pedagogy an on-going process? As I attempt locally responsive pedagogical practices, what principles will I use to determine whether to adopt, adjust, or abandon those practices? What will I use as indicators of instructional effectiveness, and which of these indicators are best supported by disciplinary theories of writing assessment? How will I remain alert to changes in the local student population, institutional context, or surrounding communities—as well as new disciplinary insights—that suggest the need to attempt new pedagogical practices, or to adjust or abandon longstanding ones?
7. How will I continuously reassess my perceptions of the local context? How will I respect and learn from the local knowledge my University of Utah colleagues possess while maintaining a critical awareness of the possibility for overgeneralization, theoretical incoherence, ideological bias, and outdated perceptions in practitioner “lore” (North 22)? How will I regularly reevaluate my own assumptions about this setting? How will I continue to seek out additional information and perspectives regarding the local context from a variety of sources, both within and beyond the University? How will I contribute

to the department's ongoing efforts to understand our students' experiences and address their learning needs? How can I help make the interweaving of local and disciplinary knowledge an integral part of ongoing professional development for faculty of all ranks?

Clearly, I have my pedagogical work cut out for me. My initial efforts to answer these questions have involved reviewing institutional documents, collaborating with departmental colleagues on assessment design, and seeking out conversations with long-time faculty across several departments: I hope to launch a more formal study of long-time writing instructors' local pedagogical knowledge in the near future. I have also been reading up on this local context across a variety of disciplines, including environmental, Indigenous/settler, educational, and labor histories of the region. In short, I have been doing a lot of "deep hanging out" at the University of Utah and the communities in which it is situated, just as I did at Diné College. Laying the groundwork for locally responsive composition pedagogy is, it seems, a form of ethnographic research in and of itself. It requires talking with students and colleagues, moving through institutional and community spaces, and encountering texts and other media with my antennae up, always on the alert for local insights and global connections that can be brought into the composition classroom.

A key premise of this study has been that TCUs, their faculty, and their students have something important to teach the field of writing studies. I believe the findings I present here uphold that premise. The framework for locally responsive pedagogy that I have gained by reflecting on my Diné College experiences has equipped me—and will also, I hope, help equip other instructors—to think and plan responsively in new pedagogical scenes. However, understanding what locally responsive composition pedagogies can, do, and should look like in

other locales and institution types is an expansive and ongoing project, one that is well beyond the purview of a single academic career. Moving forward, one of my goals as a scholar will be to persuade other researchers to take up this line of inquiry in their own local settings.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Throughout the dissertation, I follow the prevailing conventions in Diné College’s website and institutional materials, using the term “Diné” (usually translated as “the People”) rather than Navajo, and “Native American” or “Native” rather than American Indian (or just “Indian”) unless I am directly quoting another writer or speaker. In day-to-day conversation, these terms are often used interchangeably by Diné College faculty and students—in fact, “Navajo” tends to be used more commonly than “Diné,” which I have heard several people refer to as “politically correct.” I have also chosen to leave words in Diné bizaad, the Navajo language, unmarked by italics. This decision reflects my own experience of the multilingual environment at Diné College, where both Diné and non-Native faculty frequently integrate words and phrases in Diné bizaad into everyday English speech.

<sup>2</sup> “Tradition” is, of course, a vexed term—much of what is considered traditional in many Native communities, including the Navajo Nation, has come from other sources, some of them Euro-American, often in the fairly recent past. Throughout this dissertation, I use this term in the sense that most of people I have met at Diné College do: as a reference to heritage knowledges and practices that, whatever their provenance, are associated with Diné elders and ancestors and considered in danger of being lost if not consciously preserved or maintained.

<sup>3</sup> While most TCUs are located on or near reservations and serve specific tribal nations (or several geographically proximal nations and, in a few cases, large local populations of non-Natives), Haskell Indian Nations University and the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) are not tribally-specific: they attract Native students from across the United States and beyond (Carney).

<sup>4</sup> Throughout this dissertation, I use the term “writing studies” to refer to the broadest interdisciplinary configuration of scholars who seek to understand writing as a phenomenon. I consider rhetoric and composition to be interrelated fields within writing studies, and composition to be the subset of scholars who are focused on pedagogical issues related to the teaching and learning of writing, particularly although not exclusively in postsecondary settings. In my view, the richest composition scholarship is engaged with conversations across writing studies, including rhetoric, literacy studies, and linguistics, as well as other relevant fields (in my case, Native American and Indigenous studies, education, and anthropology).

<sup>5</sup> Much of the empirical research relating to the experiences of Native student writers has appeared in unpublished dissertations (Komlos; Vasquez-Illaoa; Maughan; Uber-Kellogg; Bedard; Hill), only one of which (Komlos) deals specifically with TCUs.

<sup>6</sup> James eventually became a participant in this study (see Chapter Two). I refer to all study participants using pseudonyms that they have either self-selected or approved.

<sup>7</sup> Diné College offers fewer technical programs than many community and tribal colleges because the Navajo Nation’s other tribally controlled postsecondary institution, Navajo Technical University (NTU), offers many two- and four-year degrees in these areas.

<sup>8</sup> The college currently offers one four-year degree, a teaching certification in Diné bilingual/bicultural education. In Fall 2014, it will launch a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration focusing on tribal economic development.

<sup>9</sup> During the late 1950s, there were approximately 2000 Native students enrolled in higher education nationally. Among those who did attempt college, the persistence rates were very low;

in 1961, for example, only sixty-six Native students graduated from a four-year college nationwide (Wright and Tierney). At some colleges and universities, the dropout rate for Native students was as high as 90%, and in 1970, researchers estimated that Native students in any form of postsecondary education had an overall attrition rate hovering around 75% (Boyer).

<sup>10</sup> For the purposes of framing the term “locally responsive pedagogy,” I follow Gay in using the term culturally *responsive* pedagogy to include a variety of related concepts, including culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, “Toward a Theory”), culturally appropriate pedagogy (Au and C. Jordan), and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris; McCarty and T. S. Lee; Paris and Alim), with full acknowledgement that this last term has been introduced very recently in response to many of the same concerns I express about the static and politically problematic notions of culture that characterized the early CRP literature. I find the theoretical advances of the term “culturally sustaining” and “culturally revitalizing” pedagogy promising. However, I maintain that the spatialized concept of “locally responsive pedagogy”—which keeps the adjective (“responsive”) but rethinks the adverb—offers a different kind critical purchase, one that might be particularly generative in postsecondary composition settings.

<sup>11</sup> In their very helpful review of the literature on Native learners, Angelina Castagno and Brian Brayboy offer what I think is a helpful reframing of the CRP concept with their idea of culturally responsive *schooling*. In Castagno and Brayboy’s model, schools are responding to the Native *communities* in which they are situated, rather than taking (and essentializing) Native students as the units of analysis. They offer a more thoughtful reflection on the complexities of the term *culture* than is typical in the CRP literature, and they call for greater attention to issues of racism, sovereignty, and epistemology in research on Native schooling.

<sup>12</sup> The single major work on CRP at the college level, Raymond Wlodkowski and Margery Ginsberg’s *Diversity and Motivation: Culturally Responsive Teaching*, provides a helpful discussion of the importance of appealing to the values and priorities of students from diverse backgrounds. However, this volume it is not discipline-specific, and it focuses more on the pedagogical demands of diverse urban college and universities than on tribally-specific institutions like TCUs.

<sup>13</sup> Throughout the dissertation, I use ellipses to indicate that text has been omitted from direct quotations.

<sup>14</sup> There may be promise in more porous terms like “sociality,” which anthropologists Nicholas Long and Henrietta Moore define as “a dynamic relational matrix within which human subjects are constantly interacting in ways that are co-productive, continually plastic and malleable, and through which they come to know the world they live in and find their purpose and meaning within it” (41).

<sup>15</sup> Lyons’ description of the postmodern “hybridity” (“Fencing” 86) of his own reservation community of Leech Lake parallels much of what I have observed on the Navajo Nation: “In a nutshell, [Leech Lake] is already hybrid to the hilt, with a tremendous number of differences intersecting in every possible way: on maps and in the names of towns, in treaties and the makeup of tribal governments, in cultural spheres like Christian churches and traditional practices (some of which, traditionalists will be quick to tell you, aren’t really that traditional at all but rather recent pan-Indian inventions), and especially the concrete fact of Indians and non-Indians living in checkerboard fashion, even if that fact isn’t always publicly acknowledged. Even among the Ojibwe population, hybridity is the most accurate metaphor to characterize life in the community. With some possible exceptions (although I can’t think of a single one), every

Ojibwe family has Christians, traditionalists, and those who choose to sit the religion game out; every family has people speaking or learning to speak Ojibwemowin, as well as those who don't really care; every family has intermarriage or some other important connection to people from other peoples. No, Leech Lake, and the Ojibwe Nation itself, has long been hybrid, cosmopolitan, and, for lack of a better word, *impure*, and that particular condition, I'd say, makes the Ojibwe classically indigenous" (Lyons, "Fencing" 84–85).

<sup>16</sup> Language shift is the process by which English is becoming the dominant language on the Navajo Nation—rates of intergenerational transmission of Diné bizaad have been falling rapidly since the 1960s (Spolsky; House; McCarty, Romero-Little, and Zepeda). I discuss this issue further in Chapter Four.

<sup>17</sup> My concerns about the static notions of "culture" in the CRP literature are echoed in Ladson-Billings' recent reflections on the ways in which her concept of culturally relevant pedagogy has been taken up in school settings over the last two decades ("CRP 2.0").

<sup>18</sup> The histories and legal structures of other Anglophone settler states (e.g. Canada, Australia, New Zealand) are distinct, but in each, settler colonialism has been driven by one overriding impulse: *acquiring Indigenous land*.

<sup>19</sup> Like Deyhle, I have arrived at a position that aligns with perspectives in Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings, "Critical"), viewing many of the educational policy discourses surrounding Native students as contributing to purportedly "colorblind" legal structures that in fact function to further marginalize and disenfranchise Diné students.

<sup>20</sup> The 110 chapters of the Navajo Nation are "community governing bodies...the most recognized and most important unit of local government" (Wilkins 147). They range in population from 400 to over 1000 residents, and, as Wilkins describes it, chapters "provide a forum for discussion and dissemination of information, a venue to work out local disputes, and an opportunity to learn how one may acquire services or goods like help with wood hauling, irrigation projects, community farm, etc. They also play an important role in the Navajo electoral process" through voter registration (149). Since the 1998 Local Governance Act, chapters have also had been "issuing home and business leases and permits; acquiring, selling or leasing chapter property; entering into agreements for the provision of goods and services; retaining legal counsel; and entering into intergovernmental agreements with federal, state, and tribal entities" (Wilkins 150). In short, chapters are highly local forms of government that have significant power to shape life in their communities, and they represent an important scene for Diné rhetorical engagement. As Lily once told me, Diné College students immediately understand the concepts of persuasion and audience when she uses the example of chapter house meetings.

<sup>21</sup> This conceptualization, introduced by Patrick Wolfe ("Elimination"), itself invokes the spatialized metaphor of built environment to counter the settler colonial impulse to understand invasion/settlement as simply temporal.

<sup>22</sup> Of course, ethnographic research of this type is expensive to carry out. This project has been funded through multiple sources, including research grants from the University of Michigan's Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies, the Center for the Education of Women, and the Joint Program in English and Education, as well as assistance from Bowdoin College's Alumni Graduate Scholarship fund. During my fieldwork semester, I was able to cover most of my cost of living with my Diné College adjunct salary, although this would not have been possible without the generosity of "Janet," a Diné College faculty member who provided me

with free housing. My member-checking travel throughout 2013 and 2014 was supported by personal frequent flyer miles, Diné College summer adjunct pay, and the free use of a friend's trailer at Navajo Technical University. I covered the remainder of my costs with income I earned through hourly work on faculty-led research and grant projects at the University of Michigan and Portland State University (my former employer). Finally, the flexible schedule required for this study was made possible by the University of Michigan's School of Education Scholars Award, a Rackham Predoctoral Fellowship, and the Sweetland Center for Writing's willingness to allow me to fulfill many of my graduate research assistantship duties remotely.

<sup>23</sup> The variability in interview length was due to different conversational styles among the participants.

<sup>24</sup> Barb's observed English 100B section was a late addition to the Fall 2012 course schedule and had a lower enrollment than most of her other courses. Enrollments at James's branch campus tended to be lower than at the main campus, but he still described this 101 course as a "small group."

<sup>25</sup> Sixty-one of the 68 students initially enrolled across the four courses (90%) consented to the observation portion of the study.

<sup>26</sup> In retrospect, it would have also been helpful to include questions about students' living situations and their proficiency in Diné bizaad.

<sup>27</sup> These interviews did, however, suggest the potential value of a long-term longitudinal study of Diné College students' writing experiences, particularly among those who transfer to off-reservation institutions. As part of my research agenda, I plan to follow up with many of the student participants in this study to learn more about their long-term writing experiences and development.

<sup>28</sup> Most of the course documents were scanned .pdf files that could not be readily converted to .txt files and therefore could not be imported into HyperResearch for coding. Because of this limitation of HyperResearch, I coded all course documents in an Excel spreadsheet (see Appendix I).

<sup>29</sup> Throughout the dissertation, I quote all written documents and correspondence with study participants verbatim, leaving unconventional spelling and usage intact. In some cases, unconventional syntax reflects features of Navajo English and participants' varying familiarity with the conventions of Edited American English. In other cases, digital devices and social media platforms likely exacerbated mistakes in casual messages.

<sup>30</sup> Madison Lane's description of her struggles to write about yé'ii bicheii in a reading response for Barb's class about Luci Tapahonso's poem "The Motion of Song's Rising" provides insight into how some students may have felt about negotiating this kind of communication with a bilagáana: "It was really kind of difficult for me to explain that to her. She probably never—didn't know that was, like, the traditional way, I guess. It was kind of hard for me to explain it, because I really don't talk about things like that...It was really hard because this is—these are the things we're not supposed to talk about...Well, I'm not traditionally Navajo, so I don't really believe in the teachings and the things that they try to teach us because we were raised Christian...It's kind of like—like the Navajos, it's like their culture, but that's—I mean, I am Navajo, but that's not my culture. I don't want to live that way, where I have to go to these traditional ceremonies and stuff, because that's not how I was raised. I really don't know anything about that. That's why it was kind of difficult for me to explain it to her for the first time." Clearly, there were many complex identity issues involved for students during such moments of

self-representation, especially when they were not sure how much I knew about traditional Diné spiritual practices—or what my own religious views might be—and when their own relationships with that heritage were far from simple.

<sup>31</sup> Donna Deyhle (*Reflections in Place*) and Joanne McCloskey have also written in compelling ways about the particular closeness of their friendships with some of the Diné women who collaborated on their research.

<sup>32</sup> Kinaaldá is the traditional Diné female puberty ceremony. It is still widely—although not universally—practiced on the Navajo Nation.

<sup>33</sup> NAC is the commonly used acronym for the Native American Church, a syncretic pan-Native religious movement that began in the late nineteenth century involving prayer ceremonies centered on the ingestion of peyote. NAC integrates elements of both Christian and North American Indigenous spiritual practices. On the Navajo Nation, NAC ceremonies often include Diné language and aspects of traditional Diné spirituality (Lewton and Bydone).

<sup>34</sup> Crownpoint is a community on the eastern side of the Navajo Nation.

<sup>35</sup> Becenti is a community on the eastern side of the Navajo Nation.

<sup>36</sup> This hiring preference serves TCUs' goal of supporting tribal self-determination. In addition, Native faculty are also more likely to possess tribally specific knowledge that helps serve TCUs' "cultural" mission. Furthermore, these faculty can serve as role models for Native students in a way that Anglo faculty might not, and they are often better equipped to connect learning to students' lives (Manuelito).

<sup>37</sup> In one interview, Lily noted her identification with Richard Rodriguez's narrative of the gulf that his education and literacy experiences created between him and his parents in *Hunger of Memory*.

<sup>38</sup> In a follow-up conversation in Spring 2014, Lily noted that her mother now understands and ascribes more value to such literacy practices.

<sup>39</sup> For an excellent analysis of gender inequality in Navajo Nation politics, see Jennifer Denetdale's article "Chairmen, Presidents, and Princesses: The Navajo Nation, Gender, and the Politics of Tradition."

<sup>40</sup> In a follow-up conversation, Patrick noted that when he made this observation, he was thinking specifically of the privileges outlined in Peggy McIntosh's "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack."

<sup>41</sup> Settler colonial theorists like Wolfe might prefer the term "settler" to "immigrant" ("Recuperating"). Following Veracini, however, I prefer to reserve the term "settler" for those groups of non-Indigenous peoples (*Settler Colonialism*) who carry the sovereignty of the colonial power or settler state with them.

<sup>42</sup> The other three faculty described using similar indicators to measure their pedagogical effectiveness, as well as longer-term indicators, such as students reenrolling in their courses in subsequent terms and students' success in other writing-intensive courses, both at Diné College and after transferring to off-reservation institutions.

<sup>43</sup> It is worth noting that the modes-based developmental writing textbook Barb and Lily used, *Along these Lines*, was the text recommended by Diné College's English and Foundational Studies department. Neither instructor believed this book was very effective for their students, and Lily had students use it primarily as a supplemental reference.

<sup>44</sup> Patrick's experience with *Everything's an Argument* is another example of the problems of using generic textbooks at Diné College: none of Patrick's students spoke positively about the

book, and Patrick has quit using it since Fall 2012, stating that it does not provide enough examples of actual student writing and costs too much. (On one of my first visits to campus, another Diné College English instructor held up a copy of *Everything's an Argument* and simply said, "This doesn't work here.") These experiences speak to the importance of developing locally responsive course materials, something about which both James and Lily were adamant.

<sup>45</sup> David emailed me this scholarship essay in summer 2013, looking for feedback and help with editing. In December 2013, I asked him if he would be willing to allow me to use it as the opening to the chapter of the dissertation about Diné College students, and, after reviewing the essay again, he agreed. I have reproduced the essay as he sent it to me, without editing or changing "unconventional" syntax, much of which reflects features of Navajo English.

<sup>46</sup> As Gere ("An Art of Survivance") and Castagno and Brayboy remind us, however, efforts to integrate tribal languages, arts, and culture into federally controlled schooling for Native students can be traced back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>47</sup> Some of the common themes in the literature on Native learning styles include students' preferences for: a) the use of visuals; b) hands-on, concrete, experiential learning or learning that connects to students' actual lives; c) holistic or global learning that emphasized the larger picture before focusing in on the details; d) collaborative or cooperative learning experiences; e) learning rooted in the natural world and/or spirituality; f) learning through creative and/or reflective activities; and g) learning processes wherein observation precedes performance (Castagno and Brayboy; Klug and Whitfield). As Gay has noted about CRP more generally, teaching practices tailored to these "learning styles" would probably improve the learning experiences of *most* students, Native or otherwise.

<sup>48</sup> Indeed, as Deyhle describes, teachers and school administrators in bordertown high schools have used such concepts to track Native students into vocational rather than academic programs, and to explain away the consequences of structural racism (Deyhle, "Navajo Youth"; *Reflections in Place*).

<sup>49</sup> Deyhle's extensive work on Native youth in bordertown communities—particularly *Reflections in Place*—is rich with examples of how social geographies affect students' experiences: racist bordertown economic and educational systems, hours-long bus rides for children on the reservation, and frequent relocations to access employment and educational opportunity exert enormous influences on students schooling experiences.

<sup>50</sup> Such assertions also seems to risk implying that students with family obligations *not* shrouded in the mystique of Native cultural difference are somehow less worthy of instructors' respect or accommodation.

<sup>51</sup> The Navajo Nation Council passed a 2005 act defining marriage as exclusively heterosexual, citing "traditional" gender roles. There is, however, a large Diné LGBT community, and there are many historians, cultural experts, and activists, who understand the story of the nádleeh twins in Diné Baháné, the Diné Emergence Story, as asserting a respected place for LGBT people in Diné society.

<sup>52</sup> This is a tradition in which many Native writers have participated since the eighteenth century, including Samson Occum, William Apess, and George Copway.

<sup>53</sup> In a follow-up conversation in Spring 2014, Cookie told me that her maternal grandfather was a medicine man who practiced traditional Diné healing. Her grandmother was a church-going Christian, a path that Cookie's mother followed, but both also participated in traditional Diné healing ceremonies, as well.

<sup>54</sup> For a fascinating portrait of the historical, linguistic, and economic diversity within the Navajo Nation, see the on-going “Chapter Profile” series that has been running in the *Navajo Times* since Fall 2012.

<sup>55</sup> The ways in which these economic dynamics shape Diné families’ movements between the reservation, bordertowns, and urban areas are also vividly illustrated in Deyhle’s *Reflections in Place*.

<sup>56</sup> In follow-up conversations in Spring 2014, Madison Lane indicated that she planned to work in a bordertown or urban area but planned eventually to retire near her mom on the reservation. Jeffrey stated that he had changed his mind about his career goals after participating in a summer internship with a Navajo Nation technology internship. His new goal was to stay on the reservation and help foster tribal economic development.

<sup>57</sup> As Joanne McCloskey has described, many of the jobs available on the Navajo Nation (e.g. healthcare, social work, education, and clerical positions) are more traditionally considered “women’s work” and require at least some postsecondary education. Men like Johnny have often had to leave the reservation to find work in fields like construction and mining. In many households, multigenerational groups of women do the day-to-day work of caring for children and maintaining the home.

<sup>58</sup> For an examination of these discourses among white educators in a bordertown public school district, see Deyhle’s *Reflections in Place*.

<sup>59</sup> It is worth noting here that many marriages on the Navajo Nation are common-law (see McCloskey). Throughout this dissertation, I defer to the language students’ chose to use regarding spouses, partners, and in-laws.

<sup>60</sup> Because Diné clans are matrilineal, all Diné people belong to the same clan as their maternal grandmothers and aunts and uncles, and are therefore even more closely related to those members of their family. In practice, many Diné women refer to their sisters’ children as their sons or daughters, and to the children of those sons and daughters as their grandchildren; furthermore, cousins who are the children of one’s maternal aunt, and who are therefore also clan relatives, are considered siblings. I quickly stopped trying to distinguish among these relationships in conversations with students—once they got comfortable with me, students sometimes forgot to “translate” these family relationships into Anglo terms, and I decided that there was no reason to keep these categories separate when the students themselves did not feel compelled to make the distinction.

<sup>61</sup> There was also diversity in the work histories within students’ families: most had at least one parent who was employed, although only a handful had careers that would be considered middle-class. Three had close family members who served in the military, while two had mothers working in clerical positions at Navajo Nation agencies or with companies in bordertowns. Eight students had parents who held manual labor positions, either skilled or unskilled: operating heavy machinery; working in facilities maintenance, auto mechanics, welding, or mining; and working as hotel housekeepers. Two had parents or grandparents with relatively high-level positions at tribal or federal agencies. Two students’ parents ran their own small businesses—Anastasia’s mother ran a non-emergency transportation service, and Cookie’s father, who was Hopi, made Kachina dolls. Many students described parents or other relatives supplementing the family’s income by making and selling artwork, most often jewelry, hand-woven rugs, or baskets.

<sup>62</sup> It is notable that, in almost every case, the relatives who had attended college were women. Five students mentioned men in their family pursuing some kind schooling after high school, but,

with the exception of Madison Lane's brother and Jeffrey's father, these were vocational rather than academic programs.

<sup>63</sup> Diné College has played an important role in this effort, offering language classes for both fluent and second-language learners, preparing bilingual Diné educators, and creating instructional materials used in language classrooms across the reservation.

<sup>64</sup> It is worth noting that, while Eden had grown up in a bordertown, Anastasia had spent her entire life in a large community on the western side of the Navajo Nation: thus, proficiency in Diné bizaad was not necessarily a function of geographical experience.

<sup>65</sup> This pattern corroborates McCarty, Romero-Little, and Zepeda's assertion that there is more linguistic knowledge among younger Diné than has been acknowledged in the literature. Several students described households in which their parents were bilingual, speaking to children in English and to elders in Diné bizaad or "Navlish," which is Navajo that is inflected with both the morphological structures and vocabulary of English, similar to Spenglish (Webster, *Explorations*).

<sup>66</sup> In terms that resonate with Lyons' arguments against code-meshing in Native contexts ("Fencing"), Johnny said, "Navajo, I just leave it on that side...I just keep it separate."

<sup>67</sup> In a follow-up conversation in Spring 2014, Madison Lane joked that the only reason she needed Diné bizaad was so she could understand her family members' gossip.

<sup>68</sup> Operating from the widely shared theoretical understanding that "literacy is best understood as a set of social practices" (8), David Barton and Mary Hamilton have defined "literacy practices" as "the general cultural ways of utilising written language which people draw on in their lives. In the simplest sense, literacy practices are what people do with literacy...They straddle the distinction between individual and social worlds, and literacy practices are more usefully understood as existing in the relations between people, within groups and communities, rather than as a set of properties residing in the individual" (7).

<sup>69</sup> Indeed, lamentations among Diné College faculty that texting was ruining student writing were common at Diné College. As Sherry explained to me, most people on the Navajo Nation who qualify for food stamps are also eligible for a subsidized "rez phone," and for a small additional fee, they can get a texting plan to go with it. Given that the cell network is spotty in many parts of the reservation, it is often easier to send a text message than place an actual phone call. As a consequence, even many older Diné people now use text messaging regularly.

<sup>70</sup> He memorably called his movement between languages in these sermons "whipping both sides of the horse"—his congregation included both elders and young people, and the patterns of intergenerational language shift on the Navajo Nation were reflected in this setting.

<sup>71</sup> William's Christianity might be understood as a kind of *literacy sponsor*. Brandt defines literacy sponsors as "agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, suppress, or withhold literacy" (556). Given the historical role that Christianity has played in authorizing and enacting settler colonialism, some might be inclined to view this sponsor as embodying all of the nefarious intent that Brandt's definition suggests. However, in my conversations with William, what always came to the forefront was the degree of agency—of deep intellectual engagement and individual choice—that characterized his faith-related experiences. Whatever role Christianity might have played (or continue to play) in the mechanics of settler colonialism, it was evident that William was involved in it for his own reasons, and that he was applying the Christian literacy practices in which he was participating toward a variety of ends of his own choosing, both within and beyond the church.

<sup>72</sup> In a follow-up conversation in Spring 2014, David pointed out that he also read about the spiritual traditions of many other cultures, from traditional Ojibwe beliefs to the stories of Catholic saints to the samurai code. He said he was interested in “seeing the similarities” and “bridging as many gaps as we want” while “still keeping individualism in each region.”

<sup>73</sup> Canyon de Chelly, located in the center to the Navajo Nation (not far from the main Diné College campus in Tsaile), is a spiritually as well as historically important place. It is home to ancestral Puebloan ruins as well as many petroglyphs and rock paintings, and it has been occupied by Diné people for centuries: Diné families still farm the canyon floor. Canyon de Chelly was also the site of some of the Diné people’s most important conflicts with colonial powers—first the Spanish and Mexicans, and then the invading US Army (Iverson).

<sup>74</sup> Morning Star also had to keep up fairly extensive documentation to track her self-employment income in order to receive the welfare benefits she needed to support her children.

<sup>75</sup> Much of the work on Diné literacy practices has focused on literacy in Diné bizaad rather than English (see McLaughlin).

<sup>76</sup> Both also encountered particular challenges with the writing assignments at these institutions. Judy said she had trouble writing about the “world problems” topics that her instructor assigned, while Jeffrey described having difficulty meeting the expectations for a lengthy research paper in a course about Indian law.

<sup>77</sup> There is plenty of room for skepticism about the validity of this placement instrument in this context, particularly given the linguistic diversity of the Diné College student population (see Elliot et al.; Herrington and Stanley). I have been unable to secure recent official figures on the rates of student placement into developmental writing at Diné College. However, one faculty member told me that over 90% of incoming students placed into at least one developmental English course. This aligns with the placement rates reported by Kay Thurston in the late 1990s (32).

<sup>78</sup> Over the course of the semester, three students (Johana, Eden, and Anastasia) scaled back their degree aspirations from a bachelor’s degree or higher to an associate’s degree or technical certificate, a phenomenon that Burton Clark has famously called the “cooling out” function of community colleges. On the other hand, five of the students who had initially aspired to an associate’s (Judy, Sherry, Cloud, Dezba, and Morning Star) had set their sights higher by the end of the semester, deciding they wanted to pursue a bachelor’s or graduate degree—Regina Deil-Amen refers to this phenomenon as “warming up.” For the students in this study, then, it seems that Diné College had both a cooling out and a warming up effect, with more students “warming up” than “cooling out.”

<sup>79</sup> Cookie, however, aspired to attend a private university in Hawai’i or Alaska, and Cloud planned to enroll at Haskell Indian Nations University, a pan-Native tribally-controlled institution in Kansas.

<sup>80</sup> In a follow-up conversation in Spring 2014, David indicated that he now felt a strong commitment to work with the alumni network to contribute to Diné College’s long-term development, saying he wanted to use his education to “help this place grow into the university it should be.”

<sup>81</sup> As I note in Chapter One, this observation aligns with Deyhle’s (“Navajo Youth”; *Reflections in Place*) arguments about the impact of racism—both academic and economic—on Native students’ schooling experiences in a bordertown school district in Utah.

<sup>82</sup> On several occasions, I gave Morning Star a ride home after her evening class because I was worried about her safety.

<sup>83</sup> Hedges and Sacco define “sacrifice zones,” a term they adopt from an Appalachian anti-mining activist, as “those areas in the country that have been offered up for exploitation in the name of profit, progress, and technological advancement” (xi). I first encountered this term in a conversation with Scott Lyons, who has cited it in his own recent work.

<sup>84</sup> This phrase seems to be particularly appealing to faculty at community colleges and other open-access institutions (see, for example, Mauk; Tinberg “Model of Theory-Making”; Shaughnessy), perhaps because these types of institutions serve highly local and disproportionately low-SES, working-class, and/or racially and linguistically minoritized student populations.

<sup>85</sup> It is important to note here that *all* US students (and their composition faculty, and scholars that study and theorize writing instruction) are located within the structures of settler colonialism. However, those locations vary geographically and along lines of class, race, and tribal citizenship.

<sup>86</sup> James also made references to Native American Church peyote meetings, which are not strictly Diné but are associated in many people’s minds with “tradition” and Native identity. Interestingly, I observed no pedagogical response to the presence of Christian students in the class. This may be in part because of the history and cultural mission of Diné College, as well as faculty’s own religious backgrounds: none were themselves practicing Christians, although Barb had been raised Protestant and Patrick had many family members who were active in the Baptist church. James described himself as “sympathetic” to traditional Diné spiritual practices and expressed ambivalence about the presence of Christian missionaries on the Navajo Nation. It may also be the case that faculty were uncomfortable with the long and sometimes troubled relationship between Christian missionizing and education on the Navajo Nation and therefore preferred not to bring it up. (As an instructor, I certainly worried that any attempts to respond pedagogically to students’ Christian identities would be viewed through this lens.) Barb, who was new to the Navajo Nation, expressed surprise when I told her that there *were* Christian students at Diné College—institutional discourses promoting Diné heritage might function to obscure this reality from those who are new to the community. Whatever the reasons for this lack of pedagogical response to this dimension of Diné diversity and modernity, the omission is noteworthy.

<sup>87</sup> There are 130 Diné clans. Many of these clans are connected to particular geological features on the reservation, or from the adoption of peoples from other tribal or ethnic groups over the centuries, including refugees from the Pueblo Revolt and as well as Mexicans who were incorporated into Diné society. Clans are matrilineal: Diné people belong to their mother’s clan, and, therefore, their maternal grandmother’s clan, which is shared by their mother’s siblings and their mother’s sisters’ children. They are “born for” their father’s clan, shared by their maternal grandmother and their father’s siblings. The formal clan introduction includes the speaker’s clan, the clan he or she is born for, and the maternal and paternal grandfathers’ clans, as well as the speaker’s community of origin, which would, traditionally, have been his or her mother’s family’s home (Iverson; McCloskey).

<sup>88</sup> Patrick also introduced himself by clan and asked students to do the same—several of the students in the class were related to him by clan, and for the rest of the semester, Patrick and these students teased each other almost weekly about their respective clan relationships and characteristics.

<sup>89</sup> James used clanship as a source of analogy in the writing classroom. On the first day of class, James described the relationships between sentences and paragraphs in terms of family and clan, saying, “Paragraphs are blocks of details that are all bordered by one general idea—like putting a fence around a corral. If individual sentences are like nuclear families, longer sentences are an extended family, and a paragraph is like a clan.” Such analogies simultaneously helped illustrate writing concepts and affirmed the importance of traditional Diné social structures.

<sup>90</sup> He also used the traditional Diné concept of male-female duality as an analogy for subject-verb pairings within clauses, asserting that comparison tapped into fundamental Diné values associated with procreation (see Chapter Three).

<sup>91</sup> In the traditional Diné understandings, each clan is associated with a set of characteristics and skills. Diné society needs all of those pieces to function (Aronilth).

<sup>92</sup> In the late 1990s, long-time Navajo Community College (NCC) English instructor Kay Thurston acknowledged that many students spoke a “nonstandard dialect” of English, and asserted that “composition instructors at NCC approach [Standard American English] as one dialect, not superior to Navajo English, but the one required for success in the world beyond the Navajo Nation’s four sacred mountains” (32). While this may well have been accurate in the 1990s, and is perhaps true in other instructors’ courses, it was not the case with the faculty in this study. In this article, which was selected as *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*’s article of the year in 1998, Thurston also noted that instructors were “in the process of designing a textbook specifically for Navajo students, one that uses Navajo themes in its sample writings and exercises and that addressed the kind of errors bilingual Navajos are most likely to make” (32). Unfortunately, Thurston passed away, and James indicated that the textbook project was never completed.

<sup>93</sup> While I can recall some specific instances of this behavior during my course observations, I unfortunately did not consistently record these kinds of data in my written fieldnotes. Video or audio-recording class sessions would have enabled me to collect better data in this regard.

<sup>94</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Similarly, James, Lily, and Patrick all embraced storytelling as a form of teaching. In James’s case, these were stories from his own life and from Euro-American mythology as well as traditional Diné stories illustrating important lessons; for Lily and Patrick, these were more often stories describing how they or other students had overcome challenges in their own lives and educational experiences (see Chapter Three). James and Lily both told students that this was how Diné elders would teach in traditional settings. As with DEP, however, it is difficult to say whether they did so in order to make students aware of some of their own pedagogical preferences, to teach them about how knowledge was traditionally transmitted intergenerationally in Diné communities, or some combination of both.

<sup>96</sup> This rhetorical reading of “being Indian” aligns rather well with Vizenor’s concept of Native rhetors as “postindian warriors” (*Manifest Manners; Fugitive Poses*).

<sup>97</sup> As Lily pointed out in one interview, there are also some topics and traditional practices that Diné people are not supposed to talk publically or write about, and not all students are well-versed in those proscriptions. There are thus some dangers associated with inviting students to write about “traditional culture”—one non-Native Diné College English instructor told me he steered clear of these topics for precisely that reason.

<sup>98</sup> Another form of accommodation related to technology. James permitted students to turn in handwritten papers if access to technology was a problem, and Patrick gave students his cell and

home phone number so that they could call or text-message questions if they did not have email access.

<sup>99</sup> As I discuss in Chapter Six, the Diné Educational Philosophy also offered a set of strategies for this kind of problem-solving.

<sup>100</sup> Nicholene offered a similarly striking analysis of Diné College students' needs: "I think [instructors] need to realize that sometimes some families don't—their families aren't as literate and they're coming from places where reading and writing and English wasn't really emphasized. They mainly come from places where Navajo may have been spoken at first and so they won't have a strong sense of English language...That students come from far places—from really rural places, like middle of the nowhere areas. They have different needs because they have to commute here every day and I think that takes a toll on people who have to commute, especially in the winter months. There's a lot of Navajos who have children early on and so I think they need to take that into account because almost everyone I know who's a commuter has a kid. I think those need to be considered."

<sup>101</sup> In recent years, Mignolo's concept of decoloniality has been gaining traction with scholars of Indigenous rhetorics and literacies (see, for example, Haas; Cushman, "Wampum, Sequoyan, and Story").

<sup>102</sup> It is worth noting that the pervasiveness of the idea of "balancing" the college's dual mission—typically framed in terms of an Diné/Western binary—is itself an invocation of the deeply rooted Diné aesthetic and spiritual value of achieving harmony between opposites, specifically between the duality of female and male, which are linked to the forces of blessing and protection. (In interviews, David compared this to the concept of "yin and yang.") Restoring the balance between these forces is the goal of many Diné ceremonies, which may lend rhetorical power to calls for achieving a balance between complementary halves of the Diné College mission.

<sup>103</sup> An inadequate but perhaps helpful analogy might be the challenge of explaining the concept of "grace" to someone with little knowledge of Christian history, theology, or practice.

<sup>104</sup> Although I have never had the opportunity to observe this directly, both James and Lily reported using DEP as a framework for teaching comprehension strategies in their developmental reading courses, as well.

<sup>105</sup> In Summer 2012, shortly before my fieldwork began, English and Foundational Studies (i.e. developmental reading and writing) split off from the Humanities division to form their own department.

<sup>106</sup> In the midst of the departmental restructuring, the portfolio review process was temporarily suspended in Fall 2012, but Patrick's students wrote the process essay anyway.

<sup>107</sup> The relatively poor quality of this image reflects the copy quality of the handout Patrick distributed rather than my document scanner.

<sup>108</sup> In a follow-up conversation in Spring 2014, David expressed dissatisfaction with what he perceived as the vagueness of the statement he had made a year and a half earlier. He elaborated, saying, "Once you start seeing everything in circles, you see the widespread effect as it ripples out. The Earth goes full circle. It's connected. Everything helps one another grow. That's the overall integration, the kinship underlying the meaning of SNBH."

<sup>109</sup> Throughout this chapter, I use this term "community"—which I adopt from the Diné College mission statement—with an awareness of what Joseph Harris calls the need for "skeptic[ism]" for terms for social groupings like *community* which valorize that which they claim to describe"

(“Beyond Community” 3). I follow Harris in embracing a “specific and material view of community: one that...allows for both consensus and conflict” (“Idea of Community” 20).

<sup>110</sup> The 2013-2014 mission statement—the most recent available at the time this dissertation was being finalized—was wholly revised and reorganized. Written in Diné bizaad and then translated into English, it no longer contains the phrase “tribal, state, national, and global communities.” It does, however, offer a “Diné College History” section that states, “The Navajo Nation sought to create an institution of higher education that encouraged Navajo youth to become contributing members of the Navajo Nation and the world” (“2012-2013 *General Catalog* 8).

<sup>111</sup> Scholars have recently begun to trace the long history of Indigenous transnationalisms in North America. Within this emerging discussion, the term “transnational” can apply to relations or movements between tribal nations *within* the settler state—e.g. pan-Native social or political activism in the United States—as well as relations that cross or transcend the borders of modern nation-states, such as hemispheric and global Indigenous movements (see Huhndorf).

<sup>112</sup> As Krupat might have predicted, these cosmopolitan objectives did not preclude the nationalist goals—furthering the study of Diné language, history, and heritage culture and integrating Diné knowledge across the curriculum—expressed in the first half of the mission statement.

<sup>113</sup> Through my analysis of interviews, observations, and course document analysis of the four primary faculty and five one-time faculty interviews, I actually identified eight such communities: the six discussed in this chapter, plus “state” and “global Indigenous” communities. However, these last two codes were rare and did not occur across the majority of faculty, so I opted not to discuss them here.

<sup>114</sup> In a follow-up conversation in Spring 2014, Patrick also described his efforts to help students become more aware of the need to protect their flash drives and computers against viruses.

<sup>115</sup> Henry’s presentation made a big impact: all four of the students I interviewed in Lily’s class spoke positively about his visit. As David said, “I thought it was great that she brought in a speaker because it also lets you know you can take, like, an average person, somebody who develops their own writing skills, and do something a lot more to incorporate his writing to make changes in the fundamental law, and try to better our community...Like he said, you know, he wasn’t a real smart guy in high school. I wasn’t either, but like it’s just your own determination on how hard you want to push yourself, how far you want to get. And how you see yourself, and how you want to present yourself to the world.” David’s observations demonstrate the value to students of hearing that it was possible to achieve academically and make positive changes in the community despite a rocky educational start. David’s comments also reveal his emerging understanding that efforts to address pressing issues on the Navajo Nation are highly rhetorical, hinging on “how you want to present yourself to the world.” Such self-presentation extends beyond the immediate context of the college, or even the Navajo Nation, looking outward toward an increasingly global audience.

<sup>116</sup> For students like Morning Star, it was sometimes a revelation to discover “what other tribes are going through with the same issues”—she had previously assumed that these challenges were unique to the Navajo Nation.

<sup>117</sup> As Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing suggests, the models of “the global” emerging from the discourses surrounding climate change may provide a new way of understanding the interconnectedness of various locales across cultural and political boundaries.

<sup>118</sup> In a follow-up conversation in Spring 2014, Morning Star indicated that learning more about the physical demands of police work—which would be difficult given her age and a longstanding shoulder injury—had led her to return to her original career goal of becoming a teacher.

<sup>119</sup> This term has particular local resonance in relation to the story of the People's emergence through the four worlds in Diné Baháne.

<sup>120</sup> This perspective reflects the academy's tendency to view itself as a community of intellectual exchange that transcends place and ignores the undeniably local dimensions of academic work (Sinor).

<sup>121</sup> Indeed, Maureen Konkle's *Writing Indian Nations* persuasively demonstrates how nineteenth-century Native intellectuals leveled such critiques at the emerging scientific racism that abetted the US settler state's expansion into Native lands.

## Appendix A: Diné College Letter of Support



# DINÉ COLLEGE

THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION OF THE NAVAJO

Office of the President

May 18, 2012

Christie Toth  
Joint Program in English and Education  
University of Michigan  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109

Dear Christie,

I am writing to express my support for your research study, "Locally Responsive Composition Pedagogy at a Tribally Controlled College," to be conducted by you during the Fall 2012 semester.

Diné College will allow you to interview English instructors, students, and alumni, as well as observe those instructors' composition class meetings and collect course documents at its Tsáílé campus and Crownpoint site. This research will begin in mid-August 2012, during the week prior to the start of classes, and end in mid-December, the week after final grades have been submitted. All instructors, students, and alumni who participate in the study will be financially compensated for their time, and will have the opportunity to participate in the interpretation of the findings. The identities of all instructor, student, and alumni participants will be kept confidential.

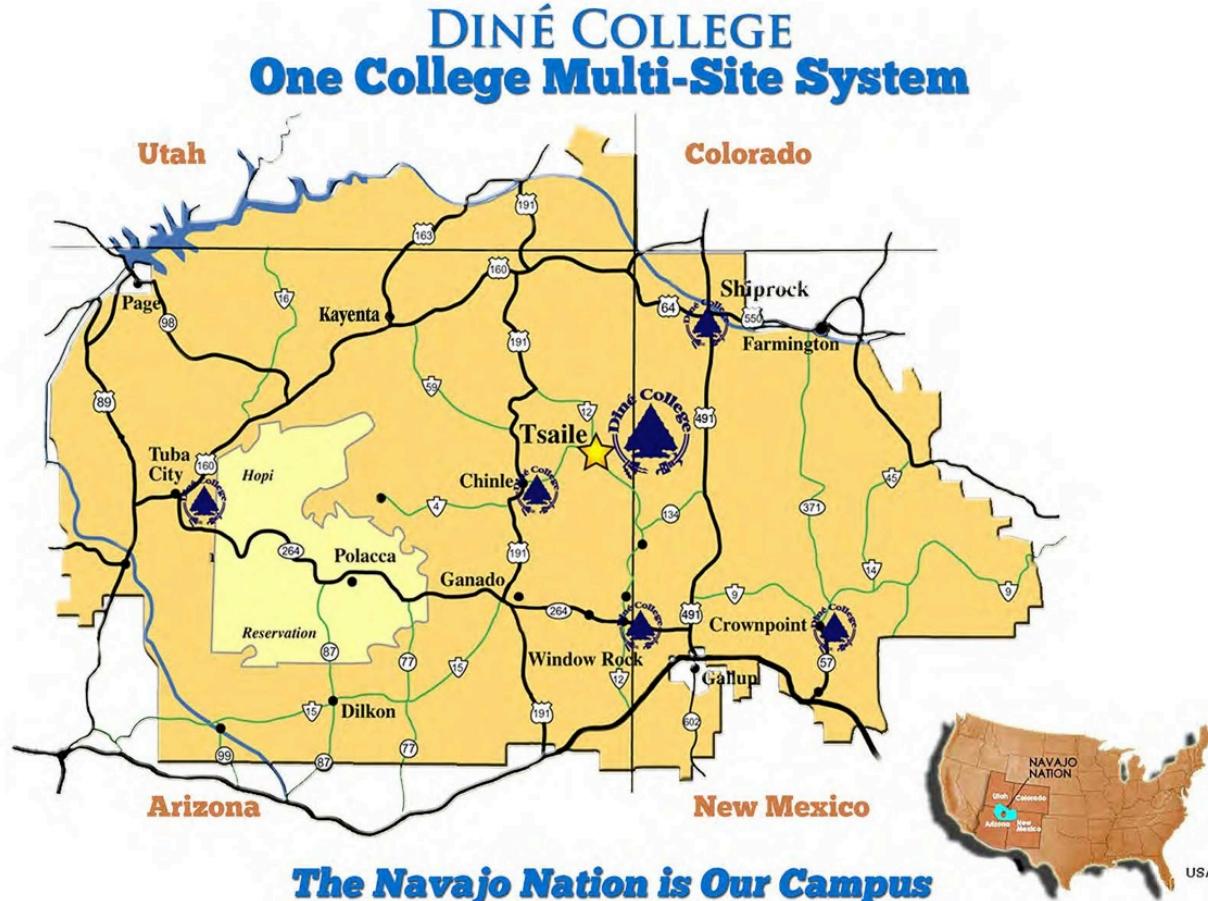
The findings from the study will be shared with the College Administration and a copy of the dissertation will be placed in the Diné College library.

Sincerely,

Maggie George, Ph.D.  
President

## Appendix B: Diné College System Map

This map of the Diné College system is reproduced from the 2013-2014 *Diné College General Catalog* (80).



## Appendix C: Recruitment Materials

### 1. Faculty Recruitment Letter

May 15, 2012

Dear [Instructor],

My name is Christie Toth, and I am a PhD candidate in the Joint Program in English and Education at the University of Michigan. I am looking for English instructors who would be willing to participate in a dissertation study of composition pedagogy at Diné College. I would like to invite you participate in this study during the Fall 2012 semester.

I'm eager to learn more about your approaches to teaching composition at Diné College, and hope you will consider participating in this study. If you agree to participate, you will receive a stipend of \$250 in appreciation for your time. I will personally conduct the interviews and observations, all of which will take place at your convenience on the Tsáile campus.

There are five major components to participating in this study:

**1. Course observations:**

I would like to sit in on approximately half of the class meetings for one of your English composition sections throughout the Fall 2012 semester. I will record these observations through written fieldnotes, and will always use pseudonyms to protect your identity and the identities of your students.

**2. Four interviews with you:**

These interviews will focus on your approaches to teaching composition at Diné College, and will take place at the following intervals throughout the semester:

- a. 1 90-minute interview prior to the start of classes
- b. 1 45-minute interview during the fifth week of the semester
- c. 1 45-minute interview during the tenth week of the semester
- d. 1 hour-long interview after final grades are submitted

**3. Collection of course documents**

Throughout the semesters, I would like to collect copies of the materials and handouts that you use in your course, including the syllabus, assignments, readings, and study guides and resources. Please know that I will never share or distribute any of these materials without requesting your permission.

**4. Student interviews:**

During the first week of classes, I would like to recruit four students in your course who are willing to be interviewed four times throughout the semester. *In order to protect students' confidentiality and to ensure that their participation has no bearing on their*

*course grade, I will not tell you which students have agreed to participate in the study.* All student participants will be compensated for their time at a rate of \$25 per interview. I will ask them to participate in a series of four interviews over the course of the semester:

- a. 1 one-hour interview during the third week of the semester
- b. 1 forty-five minute interview during the seventh week of the semester
- c. 1 forty-five minute interview during the eleventh week of the semester
- d. 1 forty-five minute interview after final grades are submitted

##### 5. **Alumni interviews**

In addition to interviewing current students, I would also like to conduct one-time interviews with at least two of your former students who have gone on to transfer to a four-year college or university and/or entered their chosen career fields. All alumni participants will be compensated for their time at a rate of \$25 per interview.

In addition to offering a stipend to you and compensating any of your students who are interested in participating in the study, I will be happy to make myself available to provide one-on-one workshop/tutoring time for students in your class who want additional feedback on their writing. *I will gladly work with any students in your class who want help, regardless of whether they opt to participate in the research study.*

I will return to Diné College in March 2013 with preliminary findings from the study. If you are interested and available, I would like to meet with you at that time to discuss my initial interpretations and hear your feedback and corrections. I will also send you the relevant sections from the dissertation and any conference papers and publications that might result from the study to get your input on my representations and interpretations. I will never present or publish anything about you or your students that you believe is inaccurate or misrepresented.

If you choose to participate in this study, you and your students' identities will be kept confidential, and all interview transcripts, teaching documents, and notes from observations will be stored in a secure location. You will be free to withdraw your participation from the study at any time.

The findings of this study will be published in my dissertation, and might also appear in academic journals or other scholarly publications. This research will also help share the successful teaching practices developed by Diné College instructors with faculty at other tribal colleges, and bring more scholarly attention to the important work that takes place in tribal college English classrooms.

If you are interested in participating in this research project, please let me know by **August 15, 2012**, and I will be in touch with you right away. If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please feel free to contact me by email at [cmtoth@umich.edu](mailto:cmtoth@umich.edu), or by phone at (503) 833-2604.

Sincerely,  
Christie Toth

## 2. Student Interview Recruitment Questionnaire

If you are interested in being interviewed as part of this study (and receive \$25 per interview, for a total of \$100 over the course of the semester), please answer the following questions:

1. Are you able to commit to participating in four interviews throughout the Fall 2012 semester (once per month in September, October, November, and December)?

No

Yes

2. What is your full name? \_\_\_\_\_

3. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is your gender?

Female

Male

5. Do you have any children?

No

Yes

6. Based on your current career plans, what degrees do you plan to earn? (Circle all that apply)

Associate's degree

Bachelor's degree

Advanced degree (for example, a master's or doctoral degree)

7. As of this semester, what career field do you plan to enter?

8. What is your email address? \_\_\_\_\_

9. What is your phone number? \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D: Informed Consent Documents

### **1. Primary Faculty Informed Consent**

Consent to Participate in a Research Study  
 Composition Pedagogy in a Tribally Controlled College

**Principal Investigator:** Christie Toth, PhD Student in the Joint Program in English and Education, University of Michigan

**Faculty Advisor:** Dr. Anne Ruggles Gere, Co-Chair of the Joint Program in English and Education and Director of the Sweetland Center for Writing, University of Michigan  
 Dr. Scott Richard Lyons, Associate Professor of English and American Culture

#### **Invitation to Participate in a Research Study**

Christie Toth invites you to participate in a research study about composition pedagogy in Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities.

#### **Description of Participant Involvement**

Your involvement in this study would include allowing the researcher to observe approximately half of the class sessions of one of your Fall 2012 composition courses, permitting the researcher to collect copies of course documents (e.g. syllabi, handouts, readings, and assignments), and participating in a series of four face-to-face audio-recorded interviews lasting between one and two hours, as well as possible follow-up interviews or correspondence via telephone or email. The first interview will focus on your personal and professional background as it relates to your decision to teach at a tribal college, major influences on your teaching philosophy, and pedagogical practices that you have found particularly effective for teaching composition in a tribal college context. Subsequent interviews will focus on the events that take place in the observed course throughout the semester, and on your reflections on the course after final grades have been submitted. If you choose to participate in this study, four students from the observed section of your course will be recruited to participate in a series of interviews, as will at least two students from previous semesters. In order to protect students' privacy, you will not be informed of which students have agreed to participate in this study.

#### **Benefits**

You may directly benefit from this study as an opportunity to discuss and reflect on your teaching. Furthermore, your participation is part of a larger study that may benefit the tribal colleges and their students and faculty by increasing knowledge about effective composition instruction. Finally, increasingly knowledge about effective composition pedagogies being developed in tribal college contexts could benefit faculty working in other two- and four-year institutions with diverse student populations.

#### **Risks**

The researcher has taken steps to minimize the risks of this study. Even so, you may still experience some risks related to your participation. The major risk is that, despite the use of a pseudonym and efforts to remove any identifying information in the dissertation and any subsequent publications or conference presentations, the small size of your college may make it possible for community members to guess your identity.

#### **Compensation**

In appreciation of the significant time commitment that this study involves, you will receive a \$250 stipend for your participation. Because this study pays more than \$100, the University of Michigan will

collect your name, address, social security number and payment amount. This information will be safely stored. Because this stipend is less than \$600 for the calendar year, it will not be reported for income tax.

### **Confidentiality**

The researcher plans to publish the results of this study, but will not include any information that would identify you. However, because of the above-mentioned risk related to the small size of the tribal college community, the researcher will be particularly careful about the presentation of any sensitive quotes or narratives, and you will have the opportunity to review sections of the dissertation that quote you or refer to your experiences. At that point, you may request the removal of any material that you feel may reveal your identity. There are some reasons why people other than the researchers may need to see information you provided as part of the study. This includes organizations responsible for making sure the research is done safely and properly, including the University of Michigan, government offices or the study's faculty advisor.

To keep your information safe, the researcher will label all audio files, transcripts, and course materials with a pseudonym.

### **Storage and Future Use of Data**

The information you provide (including audio files, interview transcripts, course materials, and observation fieldnotes) will be stored either in a locked filing cabinet or on secure server space at the University of Michigan. The researcher will retain these data indefinitely. These data will not be made available to other researchers for other studies following the completion of this research study.

### **Voluntary Nature of the Study**

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. If you decide to withdraw early, all audio files, interview transcripts, and course materials will be destroyed at your request.

### **Contact Information**

If you have questions about this research, you may contact Christie Toth at (503) 833-2604 or [cmtoth@umich.edu](mailto:cmtoth@umich.edu). You may also contact Dr. Anne Ruggles Gere at (734) 936-3144 or [argere@umich.edu](mailto:argere@umich.edu).

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the University of Michigan Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board, 540 E Liberty St., Ste 202, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210, (866) 936-0933, [irbhsbs@umich.edu](mailto:irbhsbs@umich.edu).

### **Consent**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in the study. You will be given a copy of this document for your records and one copy will be kept with the study records. Be sure that questions you have about the study have been answered and that you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact the researcher if you think of a question later.

*I agree to participate in the study.*

---

Print Name

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Signature

---

Date

*I consent to allow the interviews in which I participate to be audio recorded. I understand this consent is voluntary.*

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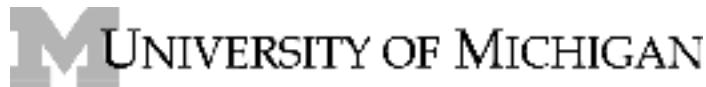
Signature

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Date

## 2. Student Observation Informed Consent

Joint Ph.D. Program in English and Education



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

610 E. UNIVERSITY AVE., 2022  
 ANN ARBOR, MI 48109  
 (734) 763-6643 (734) 615-6524

August 28, 2012

Dear Student,

My name is Christie Toth, and I am an English instructor and graduate student in the Joint PhD Program in English and Education at the University of Michigan. This semester, I am here at Diné College working with English faculty on a study about how they teach writing. This study is for my dissertation, which is a large research project that is part of the requirements for completing my doctoral degree. I hope this project will make teachers and education researchers at other colleges aware of the important work happening at Diné College, and that it will also be useful current and future writing instructors at Diné College as they prepare students to achieve their career goals, meet the needs of their families and communities, and serve the Navajo Nation.

Throughout the semester, I will be sitting in on meetings of this class once a week so I can learn more about how your instructor teaches. During the days when I am sitting in, I will take notes on what goes on in class: how your instructor explains certain concepts, what the class discusses, that sort of thing. While I am taking notes, I will not write down any of names or other information that would reveal who is in the class: the focus of this study is really your instructor. However, sometimes I might want to take notes on things that individual students do, such as asking a question or giving an answer. **I will not make any notes about you individually unless you have given me permission by signing the back of this form.**

In addition to sitting in on the class and talking to your instructor, I would also like to interview several students to find out more about what you are learning and how you are experiencing the course. I will ask those students who participate in the interview part of this study to meet with me four times throughout the semester: once next week, once in October, once in November, and once in December, after the semester ends. **Those who participate in the interviews will receive \$25 per interview, or a total of \$100 for all four interviews.** Your instructor will not know which students in the class are being interviewed, and your decision about whether or not to participate in the study will have no influence on your course grade.

**If you would be interested in participating in a series of four interviews throughout the semester, please answer the questions on the following page.** There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Unfortunately, I may not be able to interview all students who would like to be part of this study, so I will use these questions to make sure I talk to students who have a wide range of backgrounds and future goals.

Thank you for allowing me to sit in on your class and learn alongside you this semester. I look forward to getting to know you all better, and if there's anything I can do to help you be successful in the course, please let me know.

Sincerely,  
 Christie Toth  
[cmtoth@umich.edu](mailto:cmtoth@umich.edu)  
 (503) 833-2604

### 3. Student Course Observation Consent

#### Consent to Participate in a Research Study

**Principal Investigator:** Christie Toth, PhD Student in the Joint Program in English and Education, University of Michigan

**Faculty Advisors:** Dr. Anne Ruggles Gere, Co-Chair of the Joint Program in English and Education and Director of the Sweetland Center for Writing, University of Michigan

Dr. Scott Richard Lyons, Associate Professor of English and Native American Studies

#### **Invitation to Participate in a Research Study**

Christie Toth invites you to participate in a research study about writing instruction at Diné College.

#### **Description of Participant Involvement**

Your involvement in this study would include permitting the researcher to make notes on your activities during the class sessions she observes in your English course.

#### **Benefits**

Your participation is part of a larger study that may benefit the Diné College and its students and instructors by increasing knowledge about effective writing instruction at this institution. The knowledge gained in this study about effective writing instruction might also benefit faculty and students at other colleges and universities.

#### **Risks**

There are no known risks associated with participating in this study.

#### **Confidentiality**

The researcher plans to publish the results of this study, but will not include any information that would identify you. Your instructor will not know whether or not you have agreed to participate in this study, and if any information about your individual actions are included in write-ups about the study, your real name will not be used. There are some reasons why people other than the researchers may need to see information you provided as part of the study. This includes organizations responsible for making sure the research is done safely and properly, including the University of Michigan, government offices or the faculty advisor for the study. To keep your information safe, the researcher will label all notes and course materials with a pseudonym.

#### **Storage and Future Use of Data**

All notes from course observations will be stored on secure server space. The researcher will retain these data indefinitely. These data will not be made available to other researchers for other studies following the completion of this research study.

#### **Voluntary Nature of the Study**

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. If you decide to withdraw early, all notes about your actions in class will be destroyed at your request.

#### **Contact Information**

If you have questions about this research, you may contact Christie Toth at (503) 833-2604 or [cmtoth@umich.edu](mailto:cmtoth@umich.edu). You may also contact Dr. Anne Ruggles Gere at (734) 936-3144 or [argere@umich.edu](mailto:argere@umich.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the University of Michigan Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board, 540 E Liberty St., Ste 202, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210, (734) 936-0933 [or toll free, (866) 936-0933], [irbhsbs@umich.edu](mailto:irbhsbs@umich.edu).

#### **Consent**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in the study. You will be given a copy of this document for your records and one copy will be kept with the study records. Be sure that questions you have about the study have been answered and that you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact the researcher if you think of a

question later.

*I agree to participate in the classroom observation part of this study.*

---

Print Name

---

Signature

---

Date

## 4. Student Interview Informed Consent

Consent to Participate in a Research Study  
 Composition Pedagogy in a Tribally Controlled College

**Principal Investigator:** Christie Toth, PhD Student in the Joint Program in English and Education, University of Michigan

**Faculty Advisors:** Dr. Anne Ruggles Gere, Co-Chair of the Joint Program in English and Education and Director of the Sweetland Center for Writing, University of Michigan  
 Dr. Scott Richard Lyons, Associate Professor of English and American Culture

### Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

Christie Toth invites you to participate in a research study about writing instruction at Diné College.

### Description of Participant Involvement

Your involvement in this study would include participating in a series of four face-to-face audio-recorded interviews lasting approximately one hour each, as well as possible follow-up interviews or correspondence via telephone or email. The first interview will take place during the first few weeks of the semester, and will focus on previous experiences with writing and what you hope to learn in the course. The rest of the interviews will focus on your experiences in your English course throughout the semester, including what you are finding most helpful in the course and what you're finding most challenging, and the last interview will be a chance to reflect back on your learning after final grades have been submitted. Your instructor will not know whether you have agreed to participate in this study, and your decision about whether to participate will have no impact on your grades in the course.

### Benefits

You may directly benefit from this study as an opportunity to discuss and reflect on your learning and writing. Furthermore, your participation is part of a larger study that may benefit the Diné College and its students and instructors by increasing knowledge about effective writing instruction. Finally, increasingly knowledge about effective effective writing instruction being developed at Diné College could benefit faculty working in other colleges and universities.

### Risks

There are no known risks associated with participating in this study.

### Compensation

As a thank you for your time, if you participate in this study you will receive \$25 per interview, or a total of \$100 if you complete all four interviews.

### Confidentiality

The researcher plans to publish the results of this study, but will not include any information that would identify you. Your instructor will not know whether or not you have agreed to participate in this study, and if any quotes or stories that you share are included in write-ups about the study, your real name will not be used. There are some reasons why people other than the researchers may need to see information you provided as part of the study. This includes organizations responsible for making sure the research is done safely and properly, including the University of Michigan, government offices or the faculty advisor for the study.

To keep your information safe, the researcher will label all audio files, transcripts, and course materials with a pseudonym.

**Storage and Future Use of Data**

The information you provide (including audio files, interview transcripts, course materials, and observation fieldnotes) will be stored either in a locked filing cabinet or on secure server space at the University of Michigan. The researcher will retain these data indefinitely. These data will not be made available to other researchers for other studies following the completion of this research study.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study**

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. If you decide to withdraw early, all audio files, interview transcripts, and course materials will be destroyed at your request.

**Contact Information**

If you have questions about this research, you may contact Christie Toth at (503) 833-2604 or [cmtoth@umich.edu](mailto:cmtoth@umich.edu). You may also contact Dr. Anne Ruggles Gere at (734) 936-3144 or [argere@umich.edu](mailto:argere@umich.edu).

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the University of Michigan Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board, 540 E Liberty St., Ste 202, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210, (734) 936-0933 [or toll free, (866) 936-0933], [irbhsbs@umich.edu](mailto:irbhsbs@umich.edu).

**Consent**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in the study. You will be given a copy of this document for your records and one copy will be kept with the study records. Be sure that questions you have about the study have been answered and that you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact the researcher if you think of a question later.

*I agree to participate in the study.*

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Print Name

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Signature

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Date

*I consent to allow the interviews in which I participate to be audio recorded. I understand this consent is voluntary.*

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Signature

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Date

*I certify that I am 18 years of age or older.*

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Signature

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Date

## 5. One-Time Faculty Interview Informed Consent

Consent to Participate in a Research Study  
Composition Pedagogy in a Tribally Controlled College

**Principal Investigator:** Christie Toth, PhD Student in the Joint Program in English and Education, University of Michigan

**Faculty Advisor:** Dr. Anne Ruggles Gere, Co-Chair of the Joint Program in English and Education and Director of the Sweetland Center for Writing, University of Michigan  
Dr. Scott Richard Lyons, Associate Professor of English and American Culture

### Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

Christie Toth invites you to participate in a research study about writing instruction at Diné College.

### Description of Participant Involvement

Your involvement in this study would include participating in a face-to-face audio-recorded interview lasting approximately 90 minutes, as well as possible follow-up interviews or correspondence via telephone or email. This interview will focus on your experiences teaching English composition at Diné College.

### Benefits

You may directly benefit from this study as an opportunity to discuss and reflect on your teaching. Furthermore, your participation is part of a larger study that may benefit the tribal colleges and their students and faculty by increasing knowledge about effective composition instruction. Finally, increasingly knowledge about effective composition pedagogies being developed in tribal college contexts could benefit faculty working in other two- and four-year institutions with diverse student populations.

### Risks

There are no known risks associated with participating in this study.

### Compensation

As a thank you for your time, if you participate in this interview you will receive \$50.

### Confidentiality

The researcher plans to publish the results of this study, but will not include any information that would identify you unless you request that she do so. Diné College will not know whether or not you have agreed to participate in this study, and if any quotes or stories that you share are included in write-ups about the study, your real name will not be used. There are some reasons why people other than the researchers may need to see information you provided as part of the study. This includes organizations responsible for making sure the research is done safely and properly, including the University of Michigan, government offices or the faculty advisor for the study.

To keep your information safe, the researcher will label all audio files, transcripts, and course materials with a pseudonym.

### Storage and Future Use of Data

The information you provide (including audio files, interview transcripts, course materials, and observation fieldnotes) will be stored either in a locked filing cabinet or on secure server space at the University of Michigan. The researcher will retain these data indefinitely. These data will not be made available to other researchers for other studies following the completion of this research study.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study**

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. If you decide to withdraw early, all audio files, interview transcripts, and course materials will be destroyed at your request.

**Contact Information**

If you have questions about this research, you may contact Christie Toth at (503) 833-2604 or [cmtoth@umich.edu](mailto:cmtoth@umich.edu). You may also contact Dr. Anne Ruggles Gere at (734) 936-3144 or [argere@umich.edu](mailto:argere@umich.edu).

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the University of Michigan Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board, 540 E Liberty St., Ste 202, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210, (734) 936-0933 [or toll free, (866) 936-0933], [irbhsbs@umich.edu](mailto:irbhsbs@umich.edu).

**Consent**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in the study. You will be given a copy of this document for your records and one copy will be kept with the study records. Be sure that questions you have about the study have been answered and that you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact the researcher if you think of a question later.

*I agree to participate in the study.*

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Print Name

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Signature

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Date

*I consent to allow the interviews in which I participate to be audio recorded. I understand this consent is voluntary.*

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Signature

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Date

## 6. Alumni Interview Informed Consent

Consent to Participate in a Research Study  
 Composition Pedagogy in a Tribally Controlled College

**Principal Investigator:** Christie Toth, PhD Student in the Joint Program in English and Education, University of Michigan

**Faculty Advisor:** Dr. Anne Ruggles Gere, Co-Chair of the Joint Program in English and Education and Director of the Sweetland Center for Writing, University of Michigan  
 Dr. Scott Richard Lyons, Associate Professor of English and American Culture

### Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

Christie Toth invites you to participate in a research study about writing instruction at Diné College.

### Description of Participant Involvement

Your involvement in this study would include participating in a face-to-face audio-recorded interview lasting approximately one hour, as well as possible follow-up interviews or correspondence via telephone or email. This interview will focus on your experiences in your English composition course, including what you have found most helpful about what you learned in the course, how you have used what you learned in the course as you have pursued your academic and career goals, and what you now wish you'd learned more about in that course. Your former instructor will not know whether you have agreed to participate in this study.

### Benefits

You may directly benefit from this study as an opportunity to discuss and reflect on your learning and writing. Furthermore, your participation is part of a larger study that may benefit the Diné College and its students and instructors by increasing knowledge about effective writing instruction. Finally, increasingly knowledge about effective effective writing instruction being developed at Diné College could benefit faculty working in other colleges and universities.

### Risks

There are no known risks associated with participating in this study.

### Compensation

As a thank you for your time, if you participate in this interview you will receive \$25.

### Confidentiality

The researcher plans to publish the results of this study, but will not include any information that would identify you. Your former instructor will not know whether or not you have agreed to participate in this study, and if any quotes or stories that you share are included in write-ups about the study, your real name will not be used. There are some reasons why people other than the researchers may need to see information you provided as part of the study. This includes organizations responsible for making sure the research is done safely and properly, including the University of Michigan, government offices or the faculty advisor for the study.

To keep your information safe, the researcher will label all audio files, transcripts, and course materials with a pseudonym.

**Storage and Future Use of Data**

The information you provide (including audio files, interview transcripts, course materials, and observation fieldnotes) will be stored either in a locked filing cabinet or on secure server space at the University of Michigan. The researcher will retain these data indefinitely. These data will not be made available to other researchers for other studies following the completion of this research study.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study**

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. If you decide to withdraw early, all audio files, interview transcripts, and course materials will be destroyed at your request.

**Contact Information**

If you have questions about this research, you may contact Christie Toth at (503) 833-2604 or [cmtoth@umich.edu](mailto:cmtoth@umich.edu). You may also contact Dr. Anne Ruggles Gere at (734) 936-3144 or [argere@umich.edu](mailto:argere@umich.edu).

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the University of Michigan Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board, 540 E Liberty St., Ste 202, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210, (734) 936-0933 [or toll free, (866) 936-0933], [irbhsbs@umich.edu](mailto:irbhsbs@umich.edu).

**Consent**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in the study. You will be given a copy of this document for your records and one copy will be kept with the study records. Be sure that questions you have about the study have been answered and that you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact the researcher if you think of a question later.

*I agree to participate in the study.*

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Print Name

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Signature

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Date

*I consent to allow the interviews in which I participate to be audio recorded. I understand this consent is voluntary.*

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Signature

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Date

## Appendix E: Interview Protocols

### **1. Primary Faculty Interview #1**

*Introductory Comments*

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me and talk about your teaching. Today's interview will last approximately two hours, but you're free to end the interview at any time. I have a series of questions I'd like to ask you, but if I ask any questions that you don't feel comfortable answering, please let me know, and we'll just go on to the next question. I want to emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions: I'm interested in whatever insights and experiences you feel comfortable sharing. Do you have any questions before we begin?

First, I would like to know a little bit more about you-- where did you grow up, what type of education you received, how you ended up here, that sort of thing.

1. First off, could you tell me about where you grew up?

*Probe:* What kinds of connections or experiences did you have with tribal communities when you were growing up?

2. Tell me about your path to teaching at Diné College.

*Probe:* What was your path from high school to college to graduate school? What did you study?

*Probe:* What courses or readings that have shaped how you teach writing?

*Probe:* How about teachers or mentors at other institutions?

*Probe:* How about teaching experiences prior to coming to this college?

*Probe:* What kinds of experiences have you had teaching at other tribal colleges or working with Native students in other contexts?

Now let's turn to your work here at Diné College.

3. How long have you been teaching here?
4. *If not already addressed:* How did you come to be teaching here?
5. What courses have you taught here?

*Probe:* Which of these courses do you teach regularly?

*Probe:* What courses do you enjoy teaching most? Why?

6. What is your typical teaching load?

7. How many students do you typically have in your composition classes?

Okay, now I have some questions about your approaches to teaching writing. First, I have the copy of your course syllabus that you sent me. Could walk me through it and tell me a bit about what you're doing in your course this semester and why you've designed the course the way you have?

*Questions 9 and 10 are as-needed, depending on what emerges from the syllabus discussion.*

8. How would you describe your goals for your composition courses here at Diné College?

*Probe for learning goals, as well as goals for students' personal development, broader social or political goals, etc.*

*Probe:* What kinds of teaching practices have you developed to accomplish these goals?

9. In what ways have your experiences at Diné College influenced the ways you go about teaching composition here?

*If appropriate, ask them to compare how they teach composition at Diné College to how they have taught (or are teaching) at other institutions.*

*Probe:* In what ways has teaching writing at Diné College shaped the course content and/or readings you use?

*Probe:* Can you think of any specific examples of this?

*Probe:* How did you come up with this content (or find these readings)?

*Probe:* Why do you think this content works well in this context?

*Probe:* In what ways has teaching writing here shaped the way you design or structure writing assignments?

*Probe:* Can you think of any specific examples of this?

*Probe:* How did you come up with these assignments?

*Probe:* Why do you think these assignments work well in this context?

*Probe:* In what ways has teaching writing here shaped the way you assess and evaluate student writing? [This includes how you provide feedback as well as how determine grades.]

*Probe:* Can you think of any specific examples of this?

*Probe:* How did you come up with this approach to assessment?

*Probe:* Why do you think this approach works well this context?

*Probe:* In what ways has teaching writing at Diné College shaped the way you interact with students?

*Probe:* Can you think of any specific examples of this?

*Probe:* Why do you think this style of relating or interacting works well in this context?

10. What kinds of instruction or mentorship for working with Diné students have you had since you joined the faculty here?

*Probe:* How has this instruction or mentorship influenced your teaching?

I have a copy here of the Diné College mission statement. Could you tell me about the ways in which your teaching responds to the different components of the college's mission?

[Show mission statement.]

Okay, now I have a few general questions about your students' writing abilities here at Diné College.

11. In your experience, what strengths in writing do your students bring to the classroom?

*Probe:* What are some specific examples from your recent teaching experiences?

In what ways do you draw on those strengths in the classroom?

12. In your experience, what are some challenges with writing that your students experience?

*Probe:* What are some specific examples of this from your recent teaching experiences?

What kinds of teaching practices or strategies have you developed for addressing these areas of difficulty?

Thank you very much for your insights about teaching composition here. I have just a few closing questions to ask about your experiences as an instructor here.

13. What aspects of who you are (such as gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, or age) do you think have been relevant to your experiences as a teacher at this college?

*Probe:* In what ways has this affected your teaching experiences here?

14. What would you say are the biggest challenges of teaching composition at Diné College?
15. What would you say are the greatest joys or rewards you experience teaching composition at Diné College?

Thank you so much for sharing your time and insights with me today. As we've discussed, I'll be sitting in on your [100B/101/102] course once a week this semester, and doing shorter interviews once a month. Do you want to try to set a time now to talk during the week of September 24?

## 2. Primary Faculty Interview #2

1. Overall, how do you think the [100B/101/102] course is going so far?

Why?

Probe: How many students did you start with, and how many are still enrolled?

2. What stand out to you as some of the high points of the semester so far?

Why?

3. What activities or assignments do you think have been most successful so far?

What makes you say that?

Why do you think this assignment/activity worked so well?

4. What activities or assignments didn't work out as well as you'd hoped they would?

What makes you say that?

Why do you think this assignment/activity didn't go as planned?

5. Have you met with any students outside of class time (office hours, conferences, etc)?

If yes: What meetings stand out to you as being particularly successful?

What makes you say that?

Why do you think that meeting went so well?

What meetings stand out to you as not having gone as well as you would have liked?

What makes you say that?

Why do you think that meeting didn't go so well?

6. At this point in the semester, which students in the class stand out to you as being particularly successful?

What makes you say that?

Why do you think this student is doing so well at this point?

7. At this point in the semester, which students in the class do you think are struggling the most?

What makes you say that?

Why do you think this student is having a difficult time in the class?

8. What changes have you made to your initial plans for the semester?

What led you to make these changes?

How well do you think those changes have worked out?

9. What do you think has been the biggest surprise you've experienced teaching this class this semester?

10. What do you think has been most rewarding about teaching this class so far?

11. What do you think has been most challenging about teaching this class so far?

### 3. Primary Faculty Interview #3

1. Overall, how do you think the [100B/101/102] course has gone this semester?

Why?

Probe: How many students did you start with, and how many are still enrolled?

2. What stand out to you as some of the high points of the semester since midterm?

Why?

3. Particularly since midterm, what activities or assignments do you think have been most successful?

What makes you say that?

Why do you think this assignment/activity worked so well?

4. What activities or assignments since midterm didn't work out as well as you'd hoped they would?

What makes you say that?

Why do you think this assignment/activity didn't go as planned?

5. Particularly since midterm, what readings/handouts/resources do you think have been most successful?

What makes you say that?

Why do you think this assignment/activity worked so well?

6. What readings/handouts/resources since midterm didn't work out as well as you'd hoped they would?

What makes you say that?

Why do you think this assignment/activity didn't go as planned?

7. Since midterm, have you met with any students outside of class time (office hours, conferences, etc)?

If yes: What meetings stand out to you as being particularly successful?

What makes you say that?

Why do you think that meeting went so well?

What meetings stand out to you as not having gone as well as you would have liked?

What makes you say that?

Why do you think that meeting didn't go so well?

8. Going into the last few weeks of the semester, which students in the class stand out to you as being particularly successful?

What makes you say that?

Why do think this student is doing so well at this point?

9. Going into the last few weeks of the semester, which students in the class do you think are struggling the most?

What makes you say that?

Why do think this student is having a difficult time in the class?

10. What changes have you made to your for the second half of the semester since midterm?

What led you to make these changes?

How well do you think those changes have worked out?

11. What do you think has been the biggest surprise you've experienced teaching this class since midterm?

12. What do you think has been most rewarding about teaching this class over the last month or so?

13. What do you think has been most challenging about teaching this class over the last month or so?

14. At the end of the semester, what kinds of questions do you think I ought to be asking the students in your class who participated in the interview portion of this study?

15. What kinds of questions do you think I ought to be asking you about the class but haven't been asking?

#### 4. Primary Faculty Interview #4

First, I have some questions about how the [100B/101/102] course went this semester.

1. So, overall, how do you think the [100B/101/102] class went this semester?
  - a. Probe: How many students who started the class were still enrolled by the end?
  - b. Probe: How many students passed the class?
  - c. Probe: What was the final grade breakdown for the class?
  - d. Probe: How satisfied were you with the quality of the writing the students turned in at the end of the semester? [explain]
  - e. If appropriate: How many students who were in this class have signed up for the next course in the sequence with you next semester?
2. What do you hope were students' major takeaways from this course?
3. Looking back over the semester, what in-class activities or lessons do you think were most successful?
  - a. Probe: Why do you think these worked so well?
4. What activities or lessons didn't work as well as you'd hoped?
  - a. Probe: Why do you think these activities or lessons didn't work so well?
5. Look back over the semester, what readings do you think the students found most interested or engaging?
  - a. Probe: Why do you think they liked these readings so much?
6. What readings did the students not respond to as well as you'd hoped?
  - a. Probe: Why do you think these readings weren't as engaging for them?
7. Looking back over the semester, what writing assignments do you think were most successful?
  - a. Probe: Why do you think these assignments worked so well?
8. What writing assignments didn't go as well as you'd hoped?
  - a. Probe: Why do you think these assignments didn't go so well?

9. Looking back over the semester, how well do you think students were able to apply the feedback you gave them on their assignments to improve their writing?
  - a. Probe: Why do you think your approach worked/didn't work
10. What do you think were the biggest strengths that the students in [100B/101/102] brought to their writing this semester?
11. In what areas did the students in this [100B/101/102] class improve the most over the course of the semester?
12. What do you think were the biggest challenges or areas of difficulty with writing for the students in this class?
13. In what areas did they not make as much progress as you had hoped?
14. *If appropriate:* In your estimation, how typical was this [100B/101/102] class compared to other sections of [100B/101/102] at Diné College, in terms of ability and performance?

Now I have a few questions about what you might have learned from teaching the [100B/101/102] course this semester.

15. If you could go back and teach this course over again, what would you do differently?
16. Based on your experiences this semester, what changes might you make to future iterations of this class?
17. What advice would you give a new instructor who was about to teaching English [100B/101/102] at Diné College for the first time?
  - a. Probe: What do you think are common misconceptions that writing teachers have about Diné College students and their writing?
  - b. Probe: What mistakes do you think English teachers often make when teaching writing at Diné College?

Now I have a few more general questions about students at Diné College.

18. What aspects of students' lives and experiences do you think have the biggest influence on their writing abilities when they first enter Diné College?
19. What aspects of students' lives and experiences do you think have the biggest influence on their ability to grow and improve as writers while they're in your class?
20. What subgroups of students do you think tend to be particularly successful writers at Diné College? [e.g. differences based on gender, language background,

religion/traditionalism, age, time or experiences on/off reservation, day versus evening students, etc.]

- a. Probe: Why do you think these students tend to do better? *Examples*
  - b. Probe: What do you do to capitalize on these students' strengths in your writing classes? *Examples*
21. What subgroups of students do you think tend to have a particularly difficult time with writing at Diné College? [e.g. differences based on gender, language background, religion/traditionalism, age, time or experiences on/off reservation, day versus evening students, etc.]
- a. Probe: Why do you think these students have such a hard time? *Examples*
  - b. Probe: How do you try to meet these students' needs in your writing classes? *Examples*
22. Generally speaking, what do you think motivates Diné College students to work hard at becoming better writers?
- a. Probe: How does this vary for different subgroups?
23. In what ways do you think Diné College students' writing instructional needs are similar to those of students at other open-access two-year colleges?
24. In what ways do you think Diné College students' writing instructional needs are different from those of students at other open-access two-year colleges?
- a. Probe: How did your approach to teaching [100B/101/102] this semester address those needs?

Thank you. I just have a few more questions—they focus on your participation in this study.

25. How do you think participating in this study affected how the class went this semester?
  - a. Probe: How did it influence your approaches to teaching?
  - b. Probe: How did it influence the dynamic in the classroom?
26. Check about pseudonym.
27. Explain member-checking.

## 5. Student Interview #1

### *Introductory Comments*

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me and talk about your experiences in your English class. Today's interview will last about one hour, but you're free to end the interview at any time. I have a series of questions I'd like to ask you, but if I ask any questions that you don't feel comfortable answering, please let me know, and we'll just go on to the next question. I also want to make sure you know that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions: I'm interested in whatever thoughts or experiences you feel comfortable sharing. Do you have any questions before we begin?

First, I would like to know a little bit more about you-- where did you grow up, what your school and work experiences were before you came to college, and why you decided to come to Diné College, that sort of thing.

1. First off, could you tell me about where you grew up and went to school?

*Probe:* Who did you live with while you were growing up? What school(s) did you attend?

2. What kinds of writing did you do when you were in high school?

*Probe:* How much and what kinds of writing did you do for classes? For extracurricular activities or hobbies? What kinds of writing did you enjoy? What kinds of writing did you dislike?

3. Tell me about your path to attending Diné College.

*Probe:* Did you go straight from high school to college? Why/Why not? What did you do during that time between high school and college? What kinds of writing did you do during that time?

*Probe:* Why did you decide to go to college? Why did you decide to attend Diné College?

*Probe:* What do you plan to do once you finish here at Diné College? What are your longer-term goals?

4. What role do you think writing will play in your longer-term goals?

Okay, now I have some questions about your experiences with writing here at Diné College.

*If this is not the student's first semester:*

5. What other English classes have you taken here at the college?

*Probe:* Have you taken any classes with [instructor's name] before this semester?

*Probe:* What do you think were the most important things you learned about writing in that/those course(s)? Why?

*Probe for specific assignments, activities.*

*Probe:* What kinds of things were you hoping to learn in that class but didn't?

6. What kinds of writing have you had to do for your other classes here at Diné College?

*Probe:* What kinds of writing assignments for these classes have you found most valuable or interesting? Why?

*Probe for specific assignments, activities.*

*Probe:* What kinds of writing assignments for these classes have you found most difficult or boring? Why?

*Probe for specific assignments, activities.*

*For all students:*

7. What kinds of writing do you think you are strongest at right now?

*Probe:* Why do you think this is an area of strength for you?

*Probe for prior experiences, instructors, interests that have led students to this self-assessment.*

8. What do you want to learn about writing this semester?

*Probe:* Why are these the things you want to learn?

9. Based on your experiences in this English class so far, do you think you're going to learn these things?

*Probe:* What leads you to think that?

10. What are you finding most valuable or interesting about this English class so far?

*Probe for specific examples—assignments, readings, activities, feedback, interaction styles, etc.*

*Probe:* Why have you found this so valuable/interesting?

11. If you could change anything about this class so far, what would it be? Why?

*Probe for specific examples.*

Thank you very much for taking the time to talk with me today. It's been really helpful to hear about your experiences in your English class so far. If this sounds okay to you, we'll get together again in about a month to talk again about how you think the course is going for you.

## 6. Student Interview #2

1. Overall, how is this semester going for you?
  - a. Probe: Personal/family life
  - b. Probe: Other classes
  - c. Probe: This class
  - d. What stand out to you as some of the high points of the [100B/101/102] course so far this semester?
  - e. Why?
2. So far this semester, what do you think about the way [instructor] uses class time?
  - a. What's most useful?
  - b. What's most enjoyable?
  - c. What's least useful?
  - d. What's least enjoyable?
  - e. So far this semester, what do you think about the assignments that [instructor] has given?
  - f. What's been the easiest assignment?
  - g. What's been the most difficult?
  - h. What's been the most interesting/useful/enjoyable?
  - i. What's been the most uninteresting or least useful?
3. So far this semester, what do you think about the textbook/handouts/readings the instructor have been using?
  - a. What's most useful?
  - b. What's most enjoyable?
  - c. What's least useful?
  - d. What's least enjoyable?

- e. So far this semester, what do you think about the feedback that [instructor] has given you on your writing?
  - f. In what ways does he/she give feedback?
  - g. What kind of feedback has he/she given you?
  - h. What's been the most helpful feedback he/she has given you?
  - i. What's been the least helpful feedback?
  - j. What do you think about the grades you've received so far?
    - i. Probe: Accuracy, fairness
4. Can we take a look at that assignment you brought?
- a. Would you be okay with me scanning a copy?
  - b. In your own words, what do you think [instructor] was asking you do for this assignment?
  - c. What do you think were the strengths of your response to this assignment?
  - d. What do you think were the weaknesses of your response to this assignment?
  - e. In your own words, what do you think [instructor] was trying to teach you with this feedback?
  - f. How have you used or applied this feedback in the writing you've done since?
5. Have you ever stayed after class to talk with [instructor]?
- a. If yes: What did you talk about?
  - b. How helpful was that conversation?
6. Have you ever gone to talk with [instructor] during office hours?
- a. If yes: What did you talk about?
  - b. How helpful was that conversation?
7. Have you ever contacted [instructor] by phone or email?
- a. If yes: What did you talk about?

- b. How helpful was that conversation?
8. What would you say are the most important things you've learned about writing in your [100B/101/102] course so far?
9. What would you say has been the biggest surprise about your [100B/101/102] course so far?
10. What do you think has been most challenging about your [100B/101/102] course so far?
11. What kinds of things were you hoping to learn in this course but haven't yet?
12. What do you think [instructor] could do to help you learn more?
13. How have you used what you've learned in your [100B/101/102] class in your other courses?

## 7. Student Interview #3

Some of these questions might seem similar to our last conversation.

1. So, overall, how is this semester going for you at this point?
  - a. Probe: Personal/family life
  - b. Probe: Other classes
  - c. Probe: This class
2. Thinking back over the last month or so of [100B/101/102], what do you think about the way [instructor] uses class time?
  - a. What's most useful?
  - b. What's most enjoyable?
  - c. What's least useful?
  - d. What's least enjoyable?
  - e. Thinking back over the last month or so of [100B/101/102], what do you think about the assignments that [instructor] has given?
  - f. What's been the easiest assignment?
  - g. What's been the most difficult?
  - h. What's been the most interesting/useful/enjoyable?
  - i. What's been the most uninteresting or least useful?
3. Thinking back over the last month or so of [100B/101/102], what do you think about the textbook/handouts/readings the instructor have been using?
  - a. What's most useful?
  - b. What's most enjoyable?
  - c. What's least useful?
  - d. What's least enjoyable?

- e. Thinking back over the last month or so of [100B/101/102], what do you think about the feedback that [instructor] has given you on your writing?
  - f. What kind of feedback has he/she given you?
  - g. What's been the most helpful feedback he/she has given you?
  - h. What's been the least helpful feedback?
  - i. What do you think about the grades you've received at this point in the semester?
    - i. Probe: Accuracy, fairness
4. Can we take a look at that assignment you brought?
    - a. Would you be okay with me scanning a copy?
    - b. In your own words, what do you think [instructor] was asking you do for this assignment?
    - c. What do you think were the strengths of your response to this assignment?
    - d. What do you think were the weaknesses of your response to this assignment?
    - e. In your own words, what do you think [instructor] was trying to teach you with this feedback?
    - f. How have you used or applied this feedback in the writing you've done since?
  5. Over the last month or so of [100B/101/102], have you ever stayed after class to talk with [instructor]?
    - a. If yes: What did you talk about?
    - b. How helpful was that conversation?
  6. Over the last month or so of [100B/101/102], have you gone to talk with [instructor] during office hours?
    - a. If yes: What did you talk about?
    - b. How helpful was that conversation?
  7. Over the last month or so of [100B/101/102], have you contacted [instructor] by phone or email?

- a. If yes: What did you talk about?
  - b. How helpful was that conversation?
8. Thinking back over the whole semester to this point, what would you say are the most important things you've learned about writing in your [100B/101/102] course?
  9. Thinking back over the whole semester to this point, what would you say has been the biggest surprise about your [100B/101/102] course?
  10. Thinking back over the whole semester to this point, what do you think has been most challenging about your [100B/101/102] course?
  11. What kinds of things were you hoping to learn in this course but haven't yet?
  12. What do you think [instructor] could do to help you learn more?
  13. How have you used what you've learned in your [100B/101/102] class in your other courses?
  14. How have you used what you've learned in your [100B/101/102] class for writing outside school?
  15. What questions do you think I should be asking you and other students in the class about your experiences?

## 8. Student Interview #4

Okay, first I have a few questions about your experiences in this class over the whole semester.

1. Overall, how did this semester go for you?
  - a. Probe: Personal/family life
  - b. Probe: Other classes
  - c. Probe: This class
2. After taking [course], what do you think are the characteristics of good writing in college?
3. What do you know about writing for college now that you didn't know at the beginning of the semester?
4. How do you think you've grown as a writer since you started this class?
5. In what areas do you think you still need to improve as a writer?
6. If you could go back and take this class over again, what would you do differently?
7. What advice would you give a student who was just starting out in this class?
8. If [instructor] asked you how s/he could improve the class for future students, what advice would you give him/her?
  - a. Probe: What things should s/he keep doing?
  - b. Probe: What should s/he add or change to help students learn more?
9. How likely are you to go back to [instructor] after this class for help with your writing?

Okay, now I have some more general questions about your experiences as a writer at Diné College.

10. What topics are you most interested in reading about in your college classes?
11. What topics are you most interested in writing about in your college classes?
12. In what ways did you use the Diné Educational Philosophy (SNBH, four steps) in your writing for this course?
  - a. Follow up: How did you use it in your other courses this semester?

- b. Follow up: How have you used it in your life outside of college?
13. What do you think English teachers need to know in order to teach Diné College students to write well?
- a. Probe: What kinds of things can English teachers *do* to help Diné students become successful college writers?
14. What aspects of students' lives and experiences do you think instructors need to take into account when they teach writing at Diné College?

Okay, now I have a few questions about your future plans.

15. Are you planning to come back to Diné College next semester?
- a. If yes: How do you think you will use what you learned in this course in your classes next semester?
  - b. If no: What are your plans for next semester?
    - i. If transferring to another institution: How do you think you will use what you learned in this course for your classes at [new institution] next semester?
16. At this point in your college education, what are your long-term career goals?
- a. Follow-up: How do you think you will use what you learned in this course in your career?
17. How do you think you will use what you learned in this course in your life outside of college?

Next I have a few questions that are more about your personal situation as a student.

18. What motivates you to work hard in school, particularly on your writing?
19. What role does your family play in your education?
- a. Probe: How do they support your efforts to do well in school?
  - b. Probe: How have they influenced your educational goals?
  - c. Probe: What could they do to be more helpful or supportive while you're in school?

- d. Probe: Have there been times when you felt torn between your family's needs or expectations and your schoolwork?
20. Besides the feedback that [instructor] gave you on your assignments, who else gave you feedback or help on your writing this semester?
- a. Probe: What kinds of feedback did they give you?
21. How have you been sharing what you've learned in [course] with other people in your life?
- a. Probe: Family, friends, other Diné College students
22. [If I don't already know the answer to this] I don't know if we've ever talked about this directly, but do you speak Navajo fluently?
- a. If yes: Do you consider Navajo to be your first language? When did you learn English?
  - b. If no: How well do you understand Navajo when other people speak it?
  - c. What language(s) did your family speak while you were growing up?
  - d. How do you think this language background has influenced your writing?

Okay, I just have a few more questions related to your participation in this research study.

23. How do you think has participating in this research influenced your experiences in this course?
24. What name would you like me to use for you when I write up this study?

Explain about member-checking in the spring and summer.

This is still in the planning stages, but over the next several years, I'd like to follow up with the students who participated in this study every once in a while to talk about how you're using what you learn about writing at Diné College. Would you be willing to keep in touch, and maybe participate in that follow up study?

## 9. One-Time Faculty Interview Protocol

### *Introductory Comments*

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me and talk about your teaching. Today's interview will last approximately ninety minutes, but you're free to end the interview at any time. I have a series of questions I'd like to ask your background with teaching college English and your approach to teaching writing here at Diné College. If I ask any questions that you don't feel comfortable answering, please let me know, and we'll just go on to the next question. I want to emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions: I'm interested in whatever insights and experiences you feel comfortable sharing. Do you have any questions before we begin?

First, I would like to know a little bit more about you-- where did you grow up, what type of education you received, how you ended up here, that sort of thing.

1. First, could you tell me where did you grow up?

*Probe:* What kinds of connections or experiences did you have with tribal communities when you were growing up?

2. Tell me about your path to teaching college English.

*Probe:* What was your path from high school to college to graduate school? What did you study?

*Probe:* What courses or readings that have shaped how you teach writing?

*Probe:* How about teachers or mentors at other institutions?

*Probe:* How about teaching experiences prior to coming to this college?

3. What kinds of experiences have you had teaching at other tribal colleges or working with Native students in other contexts?

Now let's turn to your work here at Diné College.

4. How long have you been teaching here?
5. How did you come to be teaching here?
6. What courses have you taught here?

*Probe:* Which of these courses do you teach regularly?

*Probe:* What courses do you enjoy teaching most? Why?

7. What is your typical teaching load?

8. How many students do you typically have in your composition classes?

Okay, now I have some questions about your approaches to teaching writing. Do you have a copy of the syllabus for any of the writing courses you're teaching this semester? Please walk me through it and tell me what you're doing in your course this semester and why you've designed the course the way you have.

*Questions 9 and 10 are as-needed, depending on what emerges from the syllabus discussion.*

9. How would you describe your goals for your composition courses here at Diné College?

*Probe for learning goals, as well as goals for students' personal development, broader social or political goals, etc.*

*Probe:* What kinds of teaching practices have you developed to accomplish these goals?

10. In what ways have your experiences at Diné College influenced the ways you go about teaching composition here?

*If appropriate, ask them to compare how they teach composition at Diné College to how they have taught (or are teaching) at other institutions.*

11. In what ways has teaching writing at Diné College shaped the readings you use in the course?

*Probe:* What are some specific examples of this?

*Probe:* How did you come up with this content (or find these readings)?

*Probe:* Why do you think this content works well in this context?

12. In what ways has teaching writing here shaped the way you design or structure writing assignments?

*Probe:* What is a specific example of this?

*Probe:* How did you come up with this assignment?

*Probe:* Why did you design the assignment the way you did?

*Probe:* Why do you think these assignments work well in this context?

13. In what ways has teaching writing here shaped the way you provide feedback student writing?

*Probe:* What is a specific example of this?

*Probe:* How did you come up with this approach to assessment?

*Probe:* Why do you think this approach is works well this context?

14. In what ways has teaching writing at Diné College shaped the way you interact with students?

*Probe:* What is a specific example of this?

*Probe:* Why do you think this style of relating or interacting works well in this context?

15. What kinds of training or mentorship for working with Diné students have you had since you joined the faculty here?

*Probe:* How has this instruction or mentorship influenced your teaching

I have a copy here of the Diné College mission statement. In which ways does your teaching respond to the different components of the college's mission?

[Show mission statement.]

Okay, now I have questions about your students' writing abilities here at Diné College.

16. What strengths in writing do your Diné College students bring to the classroom?

*Probe:* What are some specific examples from your recent teaching experiences?

How do you tap into those strengths in your teaching?

17. What are some challenges with writing that your Diné College students experience?

*Probe:* What are some specific examples of this from your recent teaching experiences?

What kinds of teaching practices or strategies have you developed for addressing these areas of difficulty?

My last set of questions are about your experiences as an instructor here.

18. What would you say are the greatest joys or rewards you experience teaching composition at Diné College?
19. What would you say are the biggest teaching challenges at Diné College?
20. This last question is more personal. I would like know how much aspects of your personal identity, such as your gender, ethnicity, age, or class background are relevant to your teaching experiences here at Diné College. For example, is being a man/woman relevant? Being Diné/Anglo?

*Probe:* In what ways has this aspect of your identity influenced your teaching experiences here?

Thank you so much for sharing your time and insights with me today.

## 10. Alumni Interview Protocol

### *Introductory Comments*

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me and talk about your experiences with writing. Today's interview will last about one hour, but you're free to end the interview at any time. I have a series of questions I'd like to ask you, but if I ask any questions that you don't feel comfortable answering, please let me know, and we'll just go on to the next question. I also want to make sure you know that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions: I'm interested in whatever thoughts or experiences you feel comfortable sharing. Do you have any questions before we begin?

First, I would like to know a little bit more about you-- where did you grow up, what your school and work experiences were before you came to college, and why you decided enroll at Diné College, that sort of thing.

1. First off, could you tell me about where you grew up and went to school?
2. What kinds of writing did you do when you were in high school?
3. Tell me about your path to attending Diné College.

*Probe:* Did you go straight from high school to college? Why/Why not? What did you do during that time between high school and college? What kinds of writing did you do during that time?

*Probe:* Why did you decide to go to college? Why did you decide to attend Diné College?

4. What have you been doing since you graduated from Diné College?

*Probe for transfer to other institutions and jobs held.*

Okay, we'll come back to your experiences after you finished up at Diné College, but first I have a few questions about your experiences with writing while you were still a student there.

5. What English classes did you take at Diné College?

*Probe:* What do you think were the most important things you learned about writing in each of those course(s)? Why?

*Probe for specific assignments, activities.*

*Probe:* What kinds of writing assignments for these classes did you find most valuable or interesting? Why?

*Probe for specific assignments, activities.*

*Probe:* What kinds of things were you hoping to learn in those courses but didn't?

6. What kinds of writing did you do for your other classes at Diné College?

*Probe:* What kinds of writing assignments for these classes did you find most valuable or interesting? Why?

*Probe for specific assignments, activities.*

Okay, now I have a few questions about your experiences with writing after you finished up at Diné College.

*For students who transferred to a four-year institution:*

7. When you first started at [receiving institution], how prepared do you think you were to do the kinds of writing your professors assigned?

*Probe:* How did the kinds of writing assignments you received compare to the writing assignments you did at Diné College?

*Probe:* What kinds of feedback did you receive from your professors about your writing?

*Probe:* Was there anything that surprised you about writing at [receiving institution]?

*Probe:* While you were writing for your courses at [receiving institution], what did you find most helpful or useful from what you learned about writing at Diné College?

*For students who are currently employed:*

8. What kinds of writing do you do for work?
9. When you first started working after college, how prepared do you think you were to do the kinds of writing your position required?

*Probe:* What kinds of feedback did you receive from your supervisor and co-workers about your writing?

*Probe:* Was there anything that surprised you about writing in your workplace?

*Probe:* When you write for work, what do you find most helpful or useful from what you learned about writing at Diné College?

*For all alumni:*

10. What kinds of writing do you do outside of work or school?
11. How satisfied are you with your ability to do these kinds of writing?
12. When you do these kinds of writing, what do you find most helpful or useful from what you learned about writing at Diné College?
13. What kinds of writing do you think you are strongest at right now?

*Probe:* Why do you think this is an area of strength for you?

*Probe for prior experiences, instructors, interests that have led students to this self-assessment.*

14. Looking back now, what do you think were the most important benefits of your writing education at Diné College?
15. Looking back now, is there anything you wish had been different about your writing education at Diné College?

Thank you very much for taking the time to talk with me today. It's been really helpful to hear about your experiences. If you're willing to stay involved in this research project, I would love to be able to contact you with follow-up questions, and also to get your input on how I'm interpreting what you've said today.

Appendix F: Poems from James's Lesson (Chapter Three)

Leda and the Cowboy  
by Luci Tapahonso

A few months back, when the night sky was darker than Leda had ever seen, she stepped through the worn door frame of the Q lounge.

The suddenness of thick smoky air left her slightly faint. After that, it was easy enough, Leda saw him across the damp just-wiped bar—she did nothing but hold the glance a second too long. Sure enough, as if she had called out his name, he walked over—a slight smile and a straw hat.

Even then, as they danced, the things he told her were fleeting. Leda smiled and a strange desperation engulfed him. “I have to leave,” she said, remembering the clean, empty air outside. He followed her, holding her shoulder lightly, and outside, he bent over: his body an arc in the street light, and it was clear he didn’t know the raw music she lived.

But for now, he is leaning across the table, smiling, and telling Leda things: he wants to take her on a picnic, it might rain tonight, and she can phone him anytime.

He thinks he is leaving for a rodeo 400 miles to the north in a few hours. His pickup is loaded with saddles, clothes, and a huge ice chest. Leda notices the parking lot outside is stained with oil, twisted cigarettes, and small bits of colored glass. He leans toward her, hat tilted, and in that low morning voice says he has been tracking her all night.

In this desert city of half a million people, he drove over cooled asphalt trails searching smoky dance halls, small Indian bars, the good Mexican place that serves until 11, and when he found her at a table near the dance floor, she was laughing. But Leda saw his straw hat and half-smile as he watched from the bar. When they danced, it was flawless. He thinks he has done this many times before. His shirt carried the scent of the hot night breezes outside.

East of here, above the dry fields of the Hoohookamki,

the stars are sparse, and as he follows Leda through  
the stark beauty of the old stories,  
he has already left his own life behind.

Leda and the Swan  
by William Butler Yeats

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still  
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed  
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,  
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

How can those terrified vague fingers push  
The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?  
And how can body, laid in that white rush,  
But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

A shudder in the loins engenders there  
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower  
And Agamemnon dead.

Being so caught up,  
So mastered by the brute blood of the air,  
Did she put on his knowledge with his power  
Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?

## Appendix G: Codebook with Descriptions and Examples

<b>1. Faculty Pedagogical Influences</b>			
<i>Categories</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>Example</i>
Personal background & experiences	Personal background and experiences that relate to faculty teaching theories, goals, and practices	Tribal/ethnic identities, spiritual/religious identities, languages, gender, class identity, parental education, K-12 educational experiences, geographical experiences, age/generation, (dis)ability, political commitments	“Anyway, I was drilled with grammar sheets, drilled, drilled, drilled. I mean, adjective, pronoun, adverb—I was like bombarded. I guess from there I didn’t want to—English was not my major just because I think of it as grammar only.”
Disciplinary background & knowledge	Academic preparation and disciplinary engagement that relate to faculty teaching theories, goals, and practices	Undergraduate study, masters study, doctoral study, academic/scholarly reading, conference attendance, professional development activities/mentorship, textbook	“Everybody knows Raymond Williams now. I’ve taken his entry on history in <i>Keywords</i> and I’ve adapted it to Navajo... I really want them to understand that formal history as Raymond Williams talks about it really interfaces with personal history and oral history, so that when a grandfather and elder tells the story, that’s history, too.”
Other professional experiences	Work and research experiences beyond Diné College that relate to faculty teaching theories, goals, and practices.	K-12 teaching, college-level teaching, academic research, professional writing/publishing, media communications, military service, other employment	“When I was at [a Hispanic-serving community college], I went in there with this very highly crafted syllabus for each of my classes. I discovered the first week of class that my students had no clue. They were just completely lost...I realized second semester, I’m going to have to fix this...I sat down and restructured the syllabus; second chance. I also changed a lot of the readings so that we were no longer reading excerpts from Darwin’s <i>The Origin of Species</i> , but we were reading Sandra Cisneros’ short stories. That’s what the students could read and that’s what they could relate to.”

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>Example</i>
Local knowledge & experiences	Knowledge of and experience on the Navajo Nation and/or at Diné College that inform faculty teaching theories, goals, and practices.	Childhood experiences, family connections, friendships, academic research on Navajo Nation, reading about Navajo Nation, teaching on Navajo Nation, teaching at Diné College, administration at Diné College, local training/professional development	"I think I understand where they're coming from...My familiarity with the issues, the conditions, the home problems...Some of these kids don't have access to a lot of things. That gets in the way of doing homework, for example. All those things, I think. The skills. They may have neglected something in their school, which is now affecting them. I was—it was like that for me too. I know—I don't claim to know all their problems, but I'm—I get an idea of what some of the issues they're facing.

<b>2. Student Dimensions of Diversity</b>			
<i>Categories</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>Example</i>
Intersecting identities	Identities that intersect with students' Diné/Native identities	Other tribal affiliations, age, gender, clans, family role(s), LGBT, (dis)ability, race, religious/spiritual identities, understanding of Diné identities	“‘Nobody’s going to just give it to you. It’s not going to just fall into your hand, but you have to work at it yourself no matter if you’re a single parent or if I’m a girl. Nobody’s going to feel sorry for you.’ That’s what [my father] says. He goes, ‘No matter if you have your husband there or your boyfriend there, just kind of don’t get on that side.’ He tells us, “No, no, no, yes.” He kind of like yes and no’s you. I have a lot of rules that we would go by, but I’m the one that kind of goes my own way. I’m doing it for my own happiness, too, but I’ve just kind of gotten to the point in my life where I guess they’re all right. I just cannot always have to have like a male figure right there with me. I’ve got my kids, too. Now they’re all coming and growing up being a man themselves, too.”
Geographical experiences	Students' place-related backgrounds and experiences	Childhood geographical experiences, adult geographical experiences, family home communities, living situation in Fall 2012	Christie: Can you tell me a little bit more about—it sounds like you were moving around a lot in high school. Student: Yeah. Christie: Why was that? Student: My parents told me that they wanted a better education for us. We started out at [urban high school]—mostly because that’s where my older brother graduated and went to school four years. Christie: Is that in Phoenix? Student: Yeah, that’s in Phoenix. I have two graduates from that school in my family and then one from [another urban high school]. Family problems pretty much during every high school, I guess, so we kept moving. [Florida Air Force base]—my sister that graduated from [urban high school] went into the Air Force. She got stationed in [Florida Air Force base]. She asked me to come and live with her and I couldn’t say no, so I moved in with my sister.

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>Example</i>
Social networks	The roles of students' family members, family responsibilities, and friendships in their educational experiences	Family history, family members' education/employment, family/partner role in education, friends/peers role in education, marital/relationship status, parenthood, siblings, sharing learning with social network	<p>Student: When I have conversations with my sisters, like they're starting to tell me like, "Where, wow, what does that word mean?" I'm like, "I don't know. I just look up in the dictionary, and I'm doing it cause of class." They're like, "Wow, maybe we should start carrying dictionary on us." It's like helping us through the family, and they're seeing me read and have a dictionary, my younger brothers that are having a hard time with English too, so I'm helping them out too so that I can refresh my memory. I'm trying to help them as best because no one helped me when I was in high school. It was kind of hard, and then plus that my mom is like really Navajo. She doesn't understand like how our teachers have to have it in a certain way. She would just tell us to do it that way, but explain it to the teacher, and to know that we still get it. That's what I know, but I'm helping my little siblings with their homework. Like what they're doing now, my younger brother, [name], they're doing sentence structure on how to break them up. Remember the <i>Grammar to Go</i>, it has the subject and verb and it has those lines in there?</p> <p>Christie: Yeah, the diagramming?</p> <p>Student: Yeah, diagramming. I'm like, "Cool, we're doing this too."</p>
Languages	Students' language backgrounds and ideologies	English as a first language, English as a second language, language-related attitudes/ideologies, Navajo proficiency	"When I went to school in primary, I kind of would just rather play with the boys. Everything on the boys' side was Navajo. They didn't laugh about me talking Navajo or somebody saying anything in Navajo. When you get on the girls' side—when you play with girls they kind of act different again. They wear different kind of clothes and they have all this fashion and whatever, fingernail polish and they always try to not talk Navajo. Again, that's one thing that kind of—something that I wasn't ashamed of and I'm not ashamed of today is that I talk Navajo. I always talked Navajo at school, too. The people that talked Navajo were just only the guys. How you say something bad in Navajo—that's why they want to understand it."

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>Example</i>
Literacies practices/experiences	Students' experiences with and attitudes toward reading and writing	Attitudes toward reading, attitudes toward writing, current out-of-school literacy practices, spiritual/religious literacy experiences, digital/online literacy practices, work-related literacy experiences, high school academic literacy experiences, high school extracurricular literacy experiences, prior postsecondary literacy experiences, other Diné College English course experiences, other Diné College literacy experiences, literacy experiences related to Diné heritage knowledge, literacy in Navajo language	"I was like totally like, 'Whoa.' It just went over my head... I'm like, 'What is it talking about?' I had a hard time. Then I forgot that sometimes the [Mormon] elders came over from church. I asked them, 'Are you guys good at poems?' They're like, 'Yeah. What is it?' I go, 'Shakespeare's sonnet. I have no clue what it's saying'... They just told me that it was about, just like how [James] says, that the main clause is about everything growing. I was like, 'Oh, okay,' and then I started reading. I was like, 'Well, why is it talking about the stars right here? And why is it talking about the man, and the flower growing?' Then an elder told me, 'Well, everything grows, so it's like men, they're putting men, like the man is like the flower. It grows. Then it suddenly fades away, like dies.' I was like, 'Oh, okay.' Then they were like telling me what this and this meant, and I was like, 'Okay.' Because I looked it up in a dictionary. They were telling me that there's a poem dictionary. They didn't tell me what the title was on the book, but they're going to give me that information later when they come over again, or they can call me about it... They were just telling me, 'Just put the poem and put it as like you're reading the Bible.' How you have to look up the guide and stuff like that."
Prior schooling experiences	Students' experiences with formal education prior to Fall 2012	K-12 schooling experiences, prior postsecondary experiences, breaks/disruptions in schooling, reasons for attending Diné College, experiences at Diné College	"Then when I was in high school over there, my senior year I got into—what is it called? Like the high school was paying for some of my college. Then I was doing fire science. Then what they basically did was they had a bus, will gather like students—like if they're interested in culinary arts, crime, automotive, and mine was fire science. They took us all the way to a local community college and that's basically how I got into college. Then when I graduated from high school I got my college credits."

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>Example</i>
Goals & motivations	The goals and aspirations that motivate students to attend, persist, and exert effort in college	Anticipated role of writing, being a role model, career goals, degree aspirations, desire to support/ contribute to family, financial aid/ scholarships, geographical aspirations, personal goals/ aspirations, political/activist/ community goals, prior work experience, self-concept/self-beliefs, self-expression/having a voice, self-presentation/desire for respect	Christie: How do you plan to use your education from here? Student: Mostly—probably come back and try to teach, maybe like Art or—either that or, what I was trying to do is, like I said, test the waters and then depending on how it goes, I might end up just taking it easy in the fall and spring, and then stack all my classes during the summer for—try to pull a double-major for Psychology—so maybe like either some type of Art Therapy or Art Teaching. Nothing too fancy.
Challenges	The difficulties and barriers that sometimes undermine students' success in college	Academic, college knowledge, family, financial, health, housing, race, study skills/time management, technology, transportation, employment	Christie: Have you ever gone to talk to [Barb] during office hours? Student: No, I never did. Never, never have. Christie: Any particular reason why not? Student: Mainly, doing other assignments. Usually just trying to get my other homework done. Yeah, because I got—mainly, I got a lot of homework in math. It usually takes my whole day sometimes. Just sitting at the computer. Because it's all in the Internet and stuff. I have to always use the Internet... Christie: Yeah. Mm-hmm. Do you have good—do you have Internet at home? Student: Uh-uh. No, no. I have to [laughs] do it here, yeah. Yeah, pretty much, a couple times I got to a point where I'm doing my tests and stuff. Then, here I can't do it that day, so I have to do it the next day. Because the lights probably keep coming off and stuff. I had that problem one time, so I had to do my homework—or I had to do—I almost got it done, too,

the test. It just shut down, and oh—  
Christie: Oh, no! What? Power outages here?  
Student: Yeah...Usually, when you come in here [to the library computers], there's always—it's always packed, everyone in here. You probably have to wait until the next person's done.  
Christie: Yeah. Are there any other computer labs on campus?  
Student: Yeah, the Learning Center, but I don't really like going there because I always have to have my phone. Because I usually have a ride, too, that picks me up. Usually, when I'm here, some plans changed, too. They'll be, "Oh, we're going to go over here, and we'll have to go home. I don't know how—who's going pick you up. I might have to just stop over there and just pick you up right then."...Yeah, it's my only ride, too. Yeah.  
Christie: In the Learning Center, you can't have your phone?  
Student: I don't catch service there.  
Christie: It doesn't get a signal. Yeah.  
Student: When people call, but—it rings, but you got to go up to the fifth floor, the top floor. Then, you finally answer right there, and then—[laughs]...It's just tough sometimes, but other than that, it's just you're just trying to keep your work.

<b>3. Faculty Pedagogical Orientations</b>			
<i>Categories</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>Example</i>
Teaching/ learning goals	Key learning goals/ concepts that instructors seek to impart to Diné College students	Approaching writing as a process, mastering Standard Written English, building student confidence/self-belief/intrinsic motivation, challenging students, fostering critical thinking, setting/maintaining standards, cultivating students' voices, understanding rhetorical principles/audience awareness/ argumentation, developing genre/discourse knowledge, developing computer/digital literacies, developing information literacy/research skills, understanding plagiarism/academic honesty, developing study skills/time management/persistence, fostering learning transfer/long-term writing development, improving reading comprehension/connecting reading and writing, valorizing/maintaining Diné heritage knowledge, understanding other cultures/places	"I want them to stop being intimidated by print, you know? The nicest compliment I've gotten was from a student who took a course from me a few years ago who said that I was able to show her how to read, you know? I want them to be, I want them to stop thinking that Standard Written English is something that they can't do, and that it's the enemy...I just want them to be comfortable with print. More comfortable than they initially were."
Teaching strategies	Key teaching strategies/ approaches that instructors believe facilitate Diné College student learning	Accommodating individual student needs/abilities/issues, creating opportunities for reflection, collaborative/group learning, cultivating individual relationships with students, using humor/joking/teasing, making expectations/processes explicit, tapping/priming prior knowledge, continuously adjusting/fine-tuning course design/teaching	"The models are really good. I try to give models. I try to give as—I guess my biggest—the positive outcome in all my classes, and even 100B, is to give step-by-step guide. It's so important. It's so important because I don't want them to be lost and then not know what the expectation is. I really give objective, what we're doing. I think you need to lay that out first, and that has worked for me...To me, when I say that, 'Okay, today this is what we're going to work on and these are the reasons,' it really works and they really respond."

<b>4. Faculty Dimensions of Instruction</b>		
<i>Codes</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Example</i>
Course materials	Documents used in and/or produced for the observed course (e.g. syllabi, readings/textbooks, supplementary handouts, online resources)	"I like controversial figure, Native American figure, or like Malcolm X. I like Sherman Alexie. I like Winona LaDuke. I like controversial reading. I also bring in contemporary ideas. I like to use <i>Huffington Post</i> , some blogging... There was an article, a blog, by Russell Simmons, this hip-hop mogul. The students seem to understand these contemporary voices."
Assignments	Formally assessed writing tasks/projects, other tasks turned in for points/grades	"For this argument essay assignment coming up. Today's the 19th, and you'll have eight days to put together a 1000-1100 word essay about the significance of community college as it relates to various ethnic, racial, or gender group. You can look at your own experience, and do research to find out how your experience compares to those of similar students... Basically, what I'm hoping you can spend some time doing is reflecting on how going to community college has influenced how you think, do things, how you're planning for your life ahead. Compare your ideas, experience, with research that has been done with others."
In-class activities	Use of class time (e.g. lecture, full-group discussion, small-group activities, workshops, in-class assignments/ assessments, guest speakers, fieldtrips)	"Research papers are due at the end of each class. I will give you the whole class period to work on your papers... Come prepared. I teach class like a workshop: I want to hear hammer and saws. When we meet, you'll be working. Don't waste your time looking out the window. Do a lot of work outside of class, and use our class period also to do the papers."
Individual communication	Individual communication between instructors and students (e.g. individual conversations before/during/after class, email/phone communication, office hour meetings, individual conferences)	"My door is always open. It doesn't matter if it's during office hours. I'm here a lot of times... During my writing process I make sure that they come visit me. That's part of their grade, and I make time to see if they have any questions. Anything, just come see me and you'll get some points for seeing me."

<i>Codes</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Example</i>
Assessment	Formative or summative feedback/ evaluation of student performance (e.g. oral or written feedback from instructor, oral or written feedback from peers, rubric-based evaluations, assignment grades, quizzes/tests, portfolio review)	"I have a rubric that I use for evaluating essays. Along with that rubric, I use a key. The key has about 60 items on it. It covers everything from organization to thesis to support to mechanics to citations and documentation. All I do—where there is a problem in a student's paper—is write the number that correlates with the problem. The student can look at that key and say okay, this is a spelling issue. I don't correct the student's paper anymore, but I ask the student to go ahead and make that connection—number 28, for example, is a spelling issue—so that the student knows that that word is not spelled correctly."
Course policies	Instructor rules/polices (e.g. attendance/tardiness policies, late work policies, assignment submission guidelines, technology requirements)	"Please be thoughtful. Some people make a really big deal about it. Some people don't accept late work. They mark it down. I'm not inclined to do that. If something comes up, you call...Really responsible students will call before and turn in their paper the next day, right away."

<b>5. Faculty Perceptions of Local Context</b>		
<i>Codes</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Example</i>
Perceptions of observed section	Faculty understandings/constructions of the particular course section observed in Fall 2012	“You know, this is a good group. Today was a little atypical as you were saying because there’s usually more chatter. I think it’s going well. I’m concerned about the fact that attendance characteristically isn’t good. I’m also concerned about the fact that they’re coming late, as late as they’re coming...To be honest with you, that bothers me a lot. Particularly right now because right now I’m really trying hard to establish continuity in what we’re doing, with the sonnets and the sequence of passages from history books, and I’m really afraid that that’s not taking as much as I want it to. There’s enough repetition I think in what I do so that we can overcome that, but my outlook today starting out was not positive because they were so late. Other than that, it’s a small group. They’re doing pretty well. With this group, I like them, but I wish I had three or four more to liven things up.”
Perceptions of Diné College students	Faculty understandings/constructions of Diné College students’ backgrounds, needs, abilities, interests, and/or preferences	“When I started teaching, I was very—it was impressed on me over and over again that I was teaching Navajo students, Native American students, and that they were different and I needed to be aware that I was teaching them. At this point, I’m not sure that they are different than any other group.”
Perceptions of institution	Faculty understandings/constructions of Diné College’s history, mission, strengths, and/or challenges	“I think that’s really important here, that we’re able to bring that into the teaching, really about promoting identity, promoting our voices, promoting our pride. I think it creates some sort of comfortable experience here, than go from a small—that’s the uniqueness of a small tribal college. Really tap into their identity.”
Perceptions of local community/ Navajo Nation	Faculty understandings/constructions of the history, culture, politics, and/or current needs/interests of the Navajo Nation, its communities, and its citizens	“But in Navajo discourse, the generalization comes at the end, not the beginning. When you listen to Navajos speak, like [Diné Studies lecturer], you don’t really have a general idea of what he’s talking about. He’s going to make the point, and it won’t dawn on you until the end. Last night was a real classic example. Sometimes you think, “Where’s this guy going?” The metaphor I like to use—maybe you’ve heard me use it before—that you knock at the front door with a question and you listen and you discover that the answer has come around the back door and it’s tapping you on the shoulder.”

<i>Codes</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Example</i>
Perceptions of Native Americans	Faculty understandings/constructions of the history, cultures, politics, and/or current needs/interests of Native Americans as a whole	“There really is, Navajo culture—I don’t think it’s just Navajo culture. I think Native American culture does not promote writing in general in our society. Everything is oral. We speak and we interact through speaking. That’s it. We sort of retain that information in here, even at home. When you visit students’ home, it could be anybody, you don’t see a collection of books. You don’t. That’s not really important. Even from when a child is born, from infancy, toddler, they don’t, book culture is not important. That’s not our way. It’s really about interaction.”
Perceptions of US context	Faculty understandings/constructions of the histories, cultures/norms, politics, and/or current needs/interest of the United States	“One of the biggest obstacles that I have to try and get them to do, because they’re beginning the semesters, change their thinking again and have them take a position on an issue, which they’re always afraid to do. I’m sure if you ask a student at the University of Michigan, it would be no problem ‘cause, no offense, white folks are taught from day one to be individuals and have an opinion. You grow up your whole life having an opinion on something... You’re familiar with, when someone says, ‘I want to know your opinion.’ Our students don’t—it’s foreign to them. ‘What do you mean, opinion? I thought I was giving?’ That kind of stuff. ‘You’re just describing something to me. You’re not giving me an opinion.’ That also, to me, is a big hurdle.”
Perceived parallels/contrasts in other contexts	Comparisons/analogies faculty draw between Diné College, its students, and/or the Navajo Nation and other institutions, student populations, and/or tribal/ethnic groups	“In some ways you can sort of chuckle and say that’s charming, and in other ways it’s, you know, I’ve seen things like that in Appalachia, too. You’re dealing with, whatever else you’re dealing with, you’re dealing with a rural population where blood kinship is strong and pervasive, and you know there’s a clan system, either really formally established like it is with Navajo or a less formalized clan system like you find in places like West Virginia, the Cumberland Mountains in Kentucky, and southwest Pennsylvania.”

<b>6. Faculty Pedagogical Responses to Students</b>		
<i>Codes</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Example</i>
Individual students	Faculty responses to individual students' perceived needs, abilities, and/or circumstances	"She has a lot of issues with writing, which is a result of background, her life. This is her third time. What I did is, I sent her to [branch campus]...I required her to work with the learning center coordinator at [branch campus] because she needed a lot of personal attention as far as writing goes."
Diné identities	Faculty responses to aspects of students' Diné/Native identities (e.g. clan identity, Diné/Native pride, Diné-specific gender/family roles, interest in/appreciation for Diné heritage knowledge)	"[Tapahonso] writes about her Navajo experience...I want them to relate to what she sees, because she has something significant to talk about. She's talking about family, you know, she's talking about the everyday things that are very much a part of Navajo life...Uh, so, I just want them to learn to celebrate their own culture, you know?"
Languages	Faculty responses to perceived student language backgrounds (e.g. Navajo proficiency, multilingual status, spoken English varieties)	"Language. I encourage them to use the Navajo language in their writing. I said I can find somebody that can read this in Navajo. I will, and I've encouraged that."
Epistemology	Faculty responses to perceived student epistemological orientations (e.g. synthesis/holistic thinking, circular thinking, SNBH/DEP, storytelling)	"We'll be talking about other strategies of thinking—compare/contrast, cause and effect, synthesis and analysis. Analysis is a way of taking things apart. Synthesis is putting things together. This is a distinction in the way Navajos and other Native people think and how Western people think."
Learning styles	Faculty responses to perceived student learning styles (e.g. preferences for visual learning, hands-on learning)	"I prefer to teach grammar in groups. I assigned individual work from book, and they bring it here. This way they have time to absorb the idea...We're visual learners. We're group learners. That's why it works."
Interpersonal communication norms	Faculty responses to perceived student interpersonal communication norms (e.g. humor-teasing, teamwork/collaboration, avoiding individual competition, encouraging students to ask questions)	"That's one of the things that's so great because humor is always effective. It's always effective, and I can give as well as I get, as you can see."

<i>Codes</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Example</i>
Personal interests	Faculty responses to students' personal interests (e.g. popular culture, music, athletics, activism)	"You have four writing prompts to choose from: 1) Why did you choose to attend Dine' College? 2) Music: Why do you listen to music? What does it do for you? 3) What are some of the adjustment that students must undergo when making transition to college? 4) Reality television: Why are reality TV shows popular?"
Personal/family experiences	Faculty responses to students' personal and family histories (i.e. major life or family events)	Instructor: Can you think of something you did over the weekend where you explained how to do something or how something worked? Student: I had to show [name] how to build teepee. Instructor: How did you do it? Student: We started out by laying out poles, east side and west side, lay them out. We had four helpers to brace bottom. We left someone in charge of rope, started adding poles as someone was walking around rope. Instructor: Did you talk while you did this? Student: We yelled [laughter] Instructor: Did everyone know what to do? Student: Mostly, it was just the people who didn't know what to do that were yelling [laughter]
Geographical experiences	Faculty responses to landmarks, communities, and social geographies familiar to students (e.g. local communities/chapters, bordertowns, regional cities, regional landscapes/ecologies, other places visited/lived)	Instructor: When Hardy says, "Yet this will go onward the same though dynasties pass," what does this mean?...What does "this" refer to? Student: Plowing? Instructor: Yes! Does that remind you of anything when you drive in from Smith Lake? There are things that have been happening for generations... Think of this next time you're driving past Chaco Wash or Little Water. You can see things you could have seen a hundred years ago, two hundred years ago: grazing sheep, old grandmas herding.

<i>Codes</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Example</i>
Academic preparation	Faculty responses to students' academic preparation (e.g. study skills, understanding of higher education, attitudes toward reading/writing, confidence as readers/writers, familiarity with academic genres, critical thinking, proficiency with Edited American English)	"I know that our kids are smart. They have a lot in the ball. What they need is skills. I think most faculty who come here first time have maybe a little unrealistic idea about some of the skills that they have, writing, for example, skills in communication, or whatever the topic that's being taught. I think sometimes they have to go through it with them, like that old saying, "Teach it to me like I'm a two-year-old." You kind of have to do things like that, the idea that they know more than they actually do."
Socioeconomics	Faculty responses to students' socioeconomic status (e.g. financial challenges, issues with housing, transportation, and child/eldercare, poverty-related health problems, family educational attainment)	"Late work is the biggest problem... But then again, it's very understandable. Whatever's going on with [student], she can't control herself... And [student], she is a good steady student, but she has babysitting problems. A couple of times she brought [child] in with her and she was told well, you can't bring him in the classroom. It's okay with me; he's a very well-behaved kid. But that's part of life at a tribal college. You just have to work around it."
Goals & motivations	Faculty responses to students' motivations for attending college (e.g. degree aspirations, career goals, family- and/or community-related motivations, geographical aspirations, and desire for personal growth/ development)	"I see a theme of survival, a theme of hope, the possibility. I see that. They're very, they're hungry to be part of this successful world. They want to be part of that success. They want to have success in their own world. Every one of them understand the importance of education, higher education... The thing is, but they have to start believing, and the belief happens—I know, in my classroom, it happened. There's this hope and belief that yeah, they can do it. They have that possibility. It's reachable, if you can apply, understand."

<b>7. Faculty Pedagogical Responses to Institution</b>		
<i>Codes</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Example</i>
Mission: Diné Educational Philosophy	Faculty responses to institutional mandates to integrate the Diné Educational Philosophy across the curriculum	<p>Instructor: Nitsáhákéés is thinking—my pronunciation is not good. It's things going on in your head. Even when you sleep, your mind is busy, dreaming. Then come up with a plan that includes a thesis statement. Plan for writing that: nahat'á. Execute your plan by composing a draft. Some people think you just go get a pen or sit at a keyboard and start going. Writing doesn't work that way. That's what makes it different from talking. Some people say they can't write. I can't write either if I don't think and plan. Don't feel bad if that busy mind doesn't get it all out right away. Ever say something you wish you hadn't?</p> <p>Student: Yes</p> <p>Instructor: With writing, it doesn't have to be that way. Siihasin is perfecting. This is the way traditional Navajo people approach everything. Ask your grandparents. When you learn in a Navajo setting, there isn't all the blah blah blah like there is in a bilagáana classroom.</p>
Mission: Teaching Diné history and heritage knowledge	Faculty responses to the institutional mission to further student learning through the teaching of Diné language, history, and culture (e.g. Diné oral tradition, spiritual practices, cosmology, kinship/clan, gender roles, values, economic activities, pedagogical practices, rhetorical practices, contemporary Diné literature and arts)	“So you should have a works cited. You don't have to use a book. You can use a personal interview to gather info. For example, ‘My grandmother and uncle have strong opinion that it is against the Navajo culture to have an abortion.’”

<i>Codes</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Example</i>
Mission: Preparing for transfer/multicultural knowledge	Faculty responses to institutional mission to prepare Diné students to transfer to off-reservation institutions and succeed in multicultural environments (e.g. teaching Edited American English, principles of argumentation, academic genres, study skills, technology, providing opportunities to learn about other cultural perspectives)	"There's an implication there that they have to leave the community in order to come back to it. That's what I'm trying to do by exposing them to those things outside the community now so that when they are ready to go—whether they go to Tempe or whether they go to Tucson or whether they go to Albuquerque to finish their bachelor's degree—that it's not going to be such a big shock to them to go oh, wow, Anglo people don't really function the same way that Navajos do or Hispanic people don't really function the same way that Navajos do. My intention is to give them some exposure so that they're not totally unprepared to interact in that world, even if their ultimate goal is to go out and come back."
Mission: Social responsibility/community service	Faculty responses to institutional mission to foster social responsibility, community service, and scholarship contributing to the well-being of tribal, state, national, and global communities (e.g. community-based/service learning, researching/reading about social/political/environmental issues, writing about social/political/environmental issues)	Instructor: Who voted? [a few students raise hands]. Who's voting tomorrow? [most raise hands] Student: where do we vote? Instructor: Chapter house. Is this your first presidential election? Student: Yes Another student: What if we're registered at another chapter house? Instructor: I think you have to go to your local chapter. I'll go home to [community], pick up my parents and go. Another student: Is it the whole reservation? Instructor: The whole nation! President, Navajo Nation, Congress, Senate. It's so important. As Native Americans, we only recently got the right to vote. We've been here many, many years, but only recently, the 1950s, were we given the right to vote. How old is the constitution? 200! People started to vote 200 years ago, but Native Americans, African Americans just got the right to vote. I know some of you think it's none of anyone's business, politics, but it's important.

<i>Codes</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Example</i>
Accreditation/ articulation agreements	Faculty responses to regional accreditation requirements, articulation agreements with other colleges/universities	"In the beginning, when I first started doing it, the 102 was literature. Mostly, they would read stuff and then kind of like descriptive analysis. That's what they used to do, which they have an easier time with. Somewhere along the way, [former department chair] said—in one of his trips to these meetings that I went yesterday—'The three universities now want us to teach kids how to write arguments.' That's what he said. That's when it changed. They took the literature part out and it became more the research topic, gather the material and then they learn how to take a stand on an issue, whatever that might be."
Institutional/ departmental policies/structures/ culture	Faculty responses to institutional and departmental requirements, policies, and norms (e.g. enrollment policies, placement/assessment procedures, syllabus requirements, textbook requirements, course sequence/learning goals, administrative culture, departmental culture)	"Students are required to write five papers in the course of the semester. These are kind of like what's required format, how they need to do it. What the portfolio people do is, they choose from the beginning of the semester to midterm, they—the first three is what students usually do. Persuasive letter, research argument, and a process paper...They do a norming session. What's the baseline, what we're looking for. Usually, the baseline are, like, MLA format. They have to meet that. They have to have a thesis—argument-based thesis...Then they look—when we bring the papers and we usually bring a pile, and then we don't read our own papers. Some other instructor reads....Then they would decide whether it's high pass, pass, low pass, and fail. That's the grading system that they use. The portfolio grading supersedes my grading. I pretty much have to go along with the—what the portfolio decide would be."
Institutional facilities/resources	Faculty responses to institutional services, resources, and facilities (e.g. learning center, library, computer labs, Diné Policy Institute and Land Grant Office, professional development/trainings, advisers/retention specialists)	Class gathers in the library computer lab. Instructor gives students and librarian a handout with the research assignment. Instructor [to students]: Take a few minutes to read through this [assignment handout], and then we'll talk about it, and then [librarian] will give you overview of tools for researching things.

<i>Codes</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Example</i>
Institution/class size	Faculty responses to the size of the institution, enrollments in their courses	"There are few students, and I can establish relationships with them, and they can confide in me, and by and large they trust me."
Workload	Faculty responses to their teaching load, number of course preparations, grading load	Christie: Can I just ask you really quick what you think has been most challenging about teaching the course so far? Instructor: Time. Too large. I wish to spend more time with students that really need it. Sometime students that already got it, they take up my time. You know?...So I think this is what I'm going to do. I sort of have a plan...I'm going to match up the good writers and students that still need to—I'm going to do that...That's one thing that I'm thinking about after midterm: match up these students.

8. Faculty Pedagogical Responses to Communities		
<i>Codes</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Example</i>
Immediate community	History, culture, and current events/issues in community/chapter in which campus is situated, nearby communities /chapters	<p>Instructor: Let's go into nitsáhákees. Let's brainstorm. What do you want to write about? To whom do you want to write this letter?</p> <p>Student: ...What about our chapter, our chapter president, an area that needs running water?</p> <p>Instructor: Water infrastructure, bringing in water infrastructure. Who's responsible?</p> <p>Student: The chapter house? Chapter council?</p> <p>Instructor: Who does that? Who's responsible for that on the Navajo Nation?</p> <p>Student: NTUA [Navajo Tribal Utilities Authority]?...Maybe the chapter president?</p> <p>Instructor: Be specific. Don't just blow hot air. Is that enough?</p> <p>Another student: The dirt roads. There are potholes too big for cars. People can't get through.</p> <p>Instructor: Do you mean you want it paved?</p> <p>Student: At the chapter meeting, they said those roads belonged to [another chapter] authority.</p> <p>Instructor: Who's responsible for roads on the Navajo Nation?</p> <p>Student: For county roads, it's the county superintendent. For [Bureau of Indian Affairs] roads, it's the BIA superintendent.</p> <p>Another student: What about feral dogs? Feral horses, feral cows.</p> <p>Instructor: Is that a good topic? Who's responsible for that?</p> <p>Student: The landholders. Those who hold grazing permits—the livestock owners.</p>
Navajo Nation	History, culture, and current events/issues across reservation, Diné diaspora	<p>Henry [Navajo Nation district attorney that instructor invited to class as a guest speaker]: Today I'm involved in coming up with law on Navajo Nation—land jurisdiction, electronic privacy, veterans' and employee rights, etc. Most of my writing has to be objective because of court's role in society. It has a neutral position. Be objective, look at both sides: that's the cornerstone of objective writing, considering both arguments. Know when to reject arguments or take them. This comes into play with sentencing, etc. Appealing to traditional ideas of mercy. Our judges are students of Fundamental Law. They look at k'é. When people ask for leniency because of the Navajo way of thinking, judges say, "You should have been thinking of k'é in first place, respecting other people."</p>

<i>Codes</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Example</i>
State	History, culture, and current events/issues in Arizona/New Mexico	“‘The state legislature of Arizona makes crazy laws with regards to immigration.’ When we use word ‘legislature,’ we’re referring to the people, not the laws themselves.”
Region	History, culture, and current events/issues in Southwestern US	“They researched the water rights issue...which has to do with Senator McCain and some of his buddies, they’re trying to pass a legislation, Congress-level—something about bypassing Navajo sovereignty to get at the water table in this area because they’re going to let companies tap directly—I think into the water table, so they can—slurries—coal slush to Vegas or something like that from Black Mesa. Yeah, those, I think, relates to the future Navajo people. Social issues that the kids need to be aware of, like what they can do as individuals in dealing with that or bringing attention to that.”
Native America	History, culture, and current events/issues of other Native American groups/nations, for Native Americans as a whole	Instructor [in class discussion of Ella Deloria’s <i>Waterlilly</i> ]: When the story starts, the Lakota didn’t live in one place like the Navajos, Pueblos. The story opens when they’re moving to a new place, the whole band. There’s woman by the name of Bluebird who’s ready to give birth. While the group is moving, she stops, goes down to a stream, gives birth to a child, then comes back up and rejoins the group and keeps going. We have the book in the library, and sometimes I’m tempted to use that in [the developmental reading course] instead of <i>Laughing Boy</i> . It’s a book I’d encourage you to read it, it’s the only novel that describes firsthand what life was like for Native American people before Americans arrived. It’s very vivid. Anyway, Bluebird gives birth to Waterlilly. As she does, she sees lilies on the water, and she’s so taken with them that she gives her the name. She’s in a bad marriage. She’s already split up with husband. He gets up in front of a bunch of people and says he doesn’t want her any more. They go along, and then group of Crows comes and kills everyone but Waterlilly, Bluebird, and the grandmother. They have nowhere to go. One of themes is that it’s important to have extended family or you’re alone. They go to a cousin’s village, and they take her in, treat her as one of their own. They’re adopted sisters. Bluebird reminds Waterlilly that these people took her in, trying to make her decision about arranged marriage clear to her. The whole theme is family life in Lakota. Just before this scene, there’s a powerful passage where they have to move for a while to go to a sun dance, when Waterlilly is in puberty, like when a Navajo woman would have kinaaldá. I don’t know how much you know about the sun dance. There’s a lot of self-torture. She sneaks some water to him. I probably shouldn’t give this away, but the man she ends up marrying turns out to be that guy.

<i>Codes</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Example</i>
United States	History, culture, and current events/issues for other US racial/ethnic groups, for US as a whole	“We have presidential candidates debating tonight. The candidates have different topics, different issues they’re trying to share with voters. Mitt Romney has his own issues that he wants people to know, wants to get elected. They have a strong stand on certain issues, and they should be clear. For example, Obama worked so hard on providing healthcare to everyone, so if you listen to his speech or pick up a newspaper or magazine, that’s one issue he really stands strong on—that’s his argument, his claim. On the other hand, Mitt Romney, he’s focusing on a specific group of people. He wants to lower the tax for the wealthy people. They have a thesis statement, a point.”
Global	History, culture, and current events/issues in non-US countries and regions, for the global community as a whole	“I’m always changing [my English 101 course]. There are some pivotal things. ‘Leda and the Swan,’ because I can use that as an entrée into Western tradition. It plays so nicely into—this is when I get to tell them about Homer and about Greek tradition...I don’t know if, I probably told you, but I used to teach ‘Beowulf’ in English [101]. I went from ‘Beowulf’ to [Longfellow’s] ‘Evangeline’ to the Long Walk.”

9. Process of Pedagogical Responsiveness		
<i>Codes</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Example</i>
Attempted	New/revised practices tried out in the classroom	"I'm always updating. What are the latest—okay, like I'm going to do process writing, description. The first thing I'm going to do is on my—I think this is what I'm going to do, that I never did. 'YouTube.' I thought. 'That would be great.' I'm thinking YouTube. I'm going to have them look up YouTube, just look through what writing process is so when we come in they'll have discussion. I'm going to group—I'm going to have a group of pre-writing. I'm going to have a group of planning. I'm going to have a group of drafting. I'm going to have a group of revising."
Adopted	New/revised practices deemed successful and included/planned to be included in future classes	"On Wednesday, we did a compare/contrast discussion... There were two different types of whiteboard erasers up on the tray of the whiteboard, and so we spent probably about 40 minutes comparing and contrasting the felt eraser with the wet wipe. Identifying the similarities, identifying the differences, identifying the significance of those similarities and differences and then identifying the significance of contrasting them. By the end of the class, the students understood and were contributing...[That exercise] will forever live in these students' minds as—at least I think it will—as this is a nonacademic reason for writing this kind of essay. It does—what we do in this classroom is—in English class—does have application outside. I think that particular demonstration and discussion and development of an idea in an essay structure really helped them see that this whole process of learning how to write isn't environmentally exclusive... When we come to class Monday, I will have them do a compare/contrast exercise. I'll bring stuff for them to do where they have to compare and contrast and try and figure out where this would have a practical application."
Adjusted	New/revised practices adjusted/planned to be adjusted in future classes	Christie: If you could go back and do this semester over again, what would you do differently? Instructor:...I would find readings that are perhaps not as academic, not as literary, and I would pull the vocabulary words from those readings so that the students could not only read something new, read something about a different aspect of the world, but also see that vocabulary in context so that they understand how it's used rather than it just being a random word and definition written on the board.

<i>Codes</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Example</i>
Abandoned	New practices deemed unsuccessful and not adopted/adapted in future classes	Christie: Which of those assignments do you think was least successful? Instructor: ...Probably the last one too, the pathos. Most people chose to do that out of ethos, pathos. That's something new I wanted to try and see what would happen there...I don't think, for spring, I'm going to give that assignment again. I'm just going have them stick to having them research a topic and they can argue around that.
Perceived indicators of instructional effectiveness	Instructors' evidence for gauging the effectiveness/success of specific teaching practices (e.g. assessment of student writing, student feedback/reflection, in-class engagement, out-of-class communication, absences/punctuality, timely submission of assignments, course drops/withdrawals, course grades/pass rates, student re-enrollment, student success in subsequent courses/after transfer)	“When I think about where I started with them six weeks ago where we were both kind of not sure who we were, and what we were about and so on, to see the participation in that discussion and the laughing, and the volunteering, and the questions and just the much improved communication was great...By seeing them so engaged and involved in the process on Wednesday, I’m confident that when they come to class on Monday that they will pick up where they left off with that engagement about that discussion.”

<b>10. Student Experiences of Writing Pedagogies</b>			
<i>Categories</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>Example</i>
Evaluation of instruction	Students' general evaluation of pedagogical practices	Positive evaluation, negative evaluation	Christie: Well, what kinds of things were you hoping to learn in this class that you haven't yet? Student: He's really taught me a lot of things. I'm not really disappointed. I think it's awesome the way he's explaining things. I don't really think he's doing anything wrong. It's just taking the time out of your day to see him and talk to him.
Response to dimensions of instruction	Student responses to specific dimensions of instruction	Response to assessment, response to assignment, response to course materials, response to course policies, response to in-class activities, response to individual communication	Christie: What do you think about the assignments that she's given so far, like the actual writing assignments? Student: Well, we've just been working on small paragraphs actually. We've never had a real, a real essay to turn in, which I'm like, "It's almost halfway in the semester, when are we going to really write?" We're just working on the little paragraphs, like different type of paragraphs. I want to actually turn in a whole essay, type of thing.
Student academic self-descriptions	Students' descriptions of their own academic abilities, performance, and learning in Fall 2012 and their beliefs about the learning needs of Diné College students	Self-assessment, self-reported learning, self-described learning transfer, student perceptions of Diné College peers, effects of participating in the study, anticipated learning/outcomes	Christie: Is there anything else that you think you didn't know that you now have coming out of 100B? Student: Just pretty much giving a structure to everything that I write now, instead of just—I don't know. I never really knew the writing process anyway, so it was just pretty much everything that I learned now is just pretty helpful. Christie: All right. Well, maybe this relates to that, but how do you think that you've grown as a writer this semester? Student: It's a little easier to go about trying to write something, instead of just waiting for that spur of the moment to write something, and inspired by something to write. It's just more easier to start something with a rough draft and then you can go over it, or reedit everything, and just going through the different steps to make sure that you got a better paper in the end.

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>Example</i>
Valued pedagogical practices	Pedagogical practices and orientations that students indicated they enjoyed, found useful/ helpful, and/or believed the instructor should continue to employ	Affirming/supportive feedback, taking a stance/position, challenging assignments/high standards, clarity of expectations/explanations, collaborative/group learning, connections to contemporary issues/needs of Navajo Nation, connections to Diné/Native identity/heritage, connections to educational/career goals, connections to experiences/issues in other times/places/ peoples, connections to personal experiences/ interests, encouraging students to ask question/seek feedback, instructor flexibility/accommodating logistical challenges, fostering student self-reliance/ personal responsibility, freedom to choose topics, hands-on/active learning, individual communication/interpersonal relationships, instructor cultural competence/ knowledge of Diné heritage, process orientation toward writing, repetition and review, scaffolding/ building up to challenging work, instructor understanding of student learning styles	"I think he's been around the Navajos for a long time. He wrote that book and stuff. He understands 'us,' or whatever. He knows we're going to be quiet or shy and all that stuff. He understands who his students are, here at Diné College. He teases, too. He teases. He jokes, which makes everybody kind of comfortable with him. He makes it easy for you to talk to him. Communication: he opens up. I think that's the main thing. He's not intimidating...He just jokes around. He's easy to get along with. Then everything he teaches is just that much more fun. He makes the class fun for me, at least. I'm always paying attention."

## Appendix H: Code Development Example

This appendix provides an example of the code development process used to analyze the study data, beginning with the descriptive Excel spreadsheets used to develop preliminary categories and codes (Steps 1 and 2), followed by the application and refinement of the codes to these data using qualitative coding software.

### Step 1: Generating Preliminary Codes and Categories

In this step, I developed an initial set of categories and codes by reading through the instructor interview transcripts. I created short descriptions of the content of the transcripts by instructor, which I organized thematically. The following example is a selection from the preliminary description for what became the code “socioeconomics” under what ultimately became the category *faculty pedagogical responses to students*.

	Class	Economic activity	Transportation	Housing	Child/family care issues
James: Interviews		uses metaphors/analogies to horsemanship/rodeo; providing examples/exercises relating to livestock; being flexible with turning in work/absences when students are managing livestock issues	refers to pickup trucks in class/writing assignments; gives students rides; catches students up individually if they stop by or call		always accepts late work; no penalty for absence (drops after three consecutive absences with no communication); is aware of who's making excuses; catches students up individually if they stop by or call
Barb: Interviews		assigns writings about addressing challenges in their lives (e.g. balancing school and childcare); informs students of consequences of dropping out/prioritizing family over school; is flexible with due dates/number of drafts for students who need it	assigns readings about work life; assigns readings about military experiences; connecting in-class activities to concrete applications in the work world (e.g. dry erase marker discussion)	attempts to reinstate student who was dropped for missing classes due to transportation issue	assigns readings about familiar aspects of homes/housing (e.g. woodstove); provides flexibility around absences/due dates on a case-by-case basis
Patrick: Interviews			allows student with transportation problems to switch informally to another section he's teaching closer to her home		

## Step 2: Refining Categories and Codes

In this step, I further refined the categories and codes by adding short descriptions of the contents of the course observations and then the course documents in the Excel spreadsheet from Step 1. The following example is a selection from the refined description for the code “socioeconomics” under what ultimately became the category *faculty pedagogical responses to students*.

Students: Socioeconomics					
	Class	Parental education	Economic activity	Transportation	Child/family care issues
<i>Interviews</i>	allows students to write about their plans for getting out of poverty through education	help first-generation college students see that they can be successful	allows students to writing about livestock/ranching;		
<i>Observations</i>	acknowledges that they all have relatives who are struggling; assigns readings addressing poverty-related issues; guest speaker talks about importance of education for getting a good job;	acknowledges that there may not be a lot of reading and writing in their families; talks about being first-generation college student as a responsibility; talks about her difficulties	painting as analogy for writing; references to shopping in bordertowns; references to local businesses (Basha's);	analogy of having enough gas to get from one point to the next; allows students to write about vehicle maintenance; compares MLA guide to car manual;	talks about her own challenges being a single-parent in college; assigns readings about single parenthood
Lily	Course docs	sample essay about marital relationship-- financial aspects;		invites students to write about their reasons for attending DC, includes transportation among the example reasons	

### Step 3: Creating Preliminary Codebook in HyperResearch

After developing and refining the initial codes and categories in Excel, I loaded those codes into HyperResearch, organizing them into what HyperResearch calls “groups” that reflected the categories. The following example is a selection from this preliminary codebook. The highlighted code “responding to student socioeconomic” was developed in through the examples in Step 1 and 2.

- ▼ Faculty Pedagogical Responses: Communities
  - Responding to global context
  - Responding to global Indigenous context
  - Responding to local community/chapters
  - Responding to Native American context
  - Responding to Navajo Nation context
  - Responding to regional Southwest context
  - Responding to state context
  - Responding to US context
- ▼ Faculty Pedagogical Responses: Institution
  - Accreditation
  - Articulation agreements
  - Curriculum
  - Departmental/institutional assessment
  - Departmental/institutional structures/culture
  - Institution facilities
  - Institution size
  - Institutional resources
  - Mission: Dine Educational Philosophy
  - Mission: Social responsibility/nation-building
  - Mission: Succeeding in a multicultural world/transfer
  - Mission: Teaching Dine language history and culture
- ▼ Faculty Pedagogical Responses: Students
  - Responding to perceived learning styles
  - Responding to student geographical experiences
  - Responding to student goals/motivations
  - Responding to student languages/rhetorics
  - Responding to student personal interests
  - Responding to student prior schooling experiences/preparation
  - Responding to student sociocultural context
  - Responding to student socioeconomic

#### Step 4: Refining Codebook through Coding Process

In Step 4, I applied the codes to the data in HyperResearch: first to the interview transcripts, then to the course observation fieldnotes. I then applied the codes to the course documents using a separate Excel spreadsheet because most of the document files could not be imported into the HyperResearch software (see Appendix I). Through this process, I continued to refine code names, descriptions, and parameters (see Chapter 2). The following example is a selection from the final HyperResearch codebook. The highlighted code “socioeconomics” was developed in through the examples in Step 1 and 2.

- ▼ Faculty pedagogical responses to communities
  - Global context
  - Global Indigenous
  - Immediate community/chapters
  - Native America
  - Navajo Nation
  - Southwest region
  - State
  - United States
- ▼ Faculty pedagogical responses to institution
  - Accreditation/articulation agreements
  - Departmental/institutional policies/structures/culture
  - Institution facilities/resources
  - Institution/class size
  - Mission: Dine Educational Philosophy
  - Mission: Preparing for transfer/multicultural knowledge
  - Mission: Social responsibility/community service
  - Mission: Teaching Dine history and heritage knowledge
  - Workload
- ▼ Faculty pedagogical responses to students
  - Academic preparation
  - Dine identities
  - Epistemologies
  - Geographical experiences
  - Goals/motivations
  - Individual student needs/abilities/issues
  - Interpersonal communication norms/preferences
  - Languages
  - Learning styles
  - Personal interests
  - Personal/family experiences
  - Socioeconomics

## Appendix I: Coding Examples

This appendix provides examples of coding across the three types of data analyzed in this study: interview transcripts, course observation fieldnotes, and course documents.

- 1. Interview transcript.** This screenshot illustrates the unit of analysis for coding interview transcripts in HyperResearch, as well as the application of multiple codes to single sections of transcript.

The screenshot shows a window from HyperResearch with the title bar "Source: William Interview 1.txt". On the left, there's a sidebar with "Font Settings..." and "Related Media" buttons. The main area contains a transcript with two columns: "Interviewee:" and "Interviewer:". To the left of the transcript, several categories are listed with arrows pointing to specific parts of the text:

- "Being a role model" points to the Interviewee's response about writing.
- "Personal goals/aspirations" points to the Interviewer's question about learning goals.
- "Spiritual/religious literacy practices" points to the Interviewee's response about James's class.
- "Degree aspirations" points to the Interviewer's response about writing goals.
- "Self-concept/self-beliefs" points to the Interviewee's response about writing.
- "Family/partner role in education" points to the Interviewer's response about writing.
- "Anticipated learning/outcomes/actions" points to the Interviewee's response about what they think they'll learn.

**Transcript Content:**

Interviewee: Right, mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's really interesting. What is it that you wanna learn about writing this semester?

Interviewee: In James's class?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Well—oh, probably learn more, deeper, sentence structures, making sure that I make sense with my writing. I think basically that's the main thing I want to learn. That's—of course, you know, achieving a degree is good. My main purpose for going back to school, like I said, is to prove not only to my family but to myself that I can make something out of it.

With writing, I would probably say what I want to get out of James's class is to be a better writer. Not only with my work but also—you know, I'm also a licensed minister. I do—I won't say a lot of preaching. I do some preaching. I do a lot of my notes and when I do that, after I'm done with it, I give it out to whoever was in attendance, then they have something to look at. When I give those notes out, I want them to understand what I was talking about. That's where I want to learn how to not only express it verbally but also on paper.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Yeah, no, it seems like you have a lot of areas in your life that you're bringing what you're learning into—your work and then your work with your faith and then your kids.

Interviewee: Yeah. My work, my kids, my faith—I guess every area of my life, I'm using it.

Interviewer: Yeah. That's great. Based on your experiences in the class so far, what kinds of things do you think you're gonna learn this semester?

Interviewee: Well, again, becoming a better writer, and of course, maybe kinda more in depth on different types of writing. He said he's gonna be doing a lot of—he said that, if I recall correctly, he said we're gonna be doing about 10 essays. Probably just mostly a lot of learning about different types of writing, and of course, polishing up on a lot of my grammar and a lot of my sentence structures and putting a whole sentence together, expressing an idea with a topic sentence and of course with a conclusion. Making that all fit together is what I wanna learn, yeah.

2. **Fieldnote.** This screenshot illustrates the unit of analysis for coding course observation fieldnotes in HyperResearch, as well as the application of multiple codes to single fieldnote sections.

Source: Lily Observation 09102012.txt

Font Settings... ► Related Media ?

**Assessment**

- Course materials
- Approaching writing as a process
- Mastering Standard Written English
- Developing genre/discourse knowledge
- Developing computer/digital literacies
- Making expectations/steps explicit

I'm handing out a rubric, a guide for what I will be looking for on your paper.

[looks out at class] It's a monday. [laughs] We just had too much fun this long weekend.

Okay, so this rubric will be on top, second, underneath the rubric will be your final paper, and then the rest, your draft, whatever. I want to see the whole process. On this paper, I want to you for the title of work to put paragraph #1, and somewhere on this paper write English 100b, and staple on these papers together.

I'm going to explain this rubric. There are boxes on this rubric. On the top are the criteria. These are the things you need in this paragraph, in the column there are points. On the side, in the boxes, there are 5 boxes. In paragraph, you should have a topic sentence, a main sentence that says what you're writing about. Then, what are the supporting points. Did you provide elaboration, examples? Legibility-- I hope I made it clear that this needs to be typed. And format: needs to be double-spaced, first line in a paragraph needs to be indented. Mechanics and grammar-- did you look at your sentence structure, do you have punctuation, spelling, is beginning of sentence capitalized? For each criteria, there is 1, 2, 3, 4-- four is the highest mark. Your topic sentence and concluding sentence. Are they related? If you did this you will probably get a 4. If you did topic sentence but no concluding sentence, you will probably get a 3 or 2. If you have three supporting details, you get a four, if you only had 2, a three or a two. I don't think nobody in this class, there should be a one, because you did webbing. Unless you only have three sentences, then oh, no, you need to come talk to me.

I hope you're not turning in a handwritten paper.

Grammar-- if you think this is good American English, but someone else says they don't understand, subject verb agreement.

This rubric helps me grade your paper-- this is my guide. So I don't just say A, B, or C, it's not about do I like you. This is my guide. Okay, let's turn this in.

My gosh this is looking good [holding up big stack of paper]. It makes me so proud of you guys, it shows you're learning something, you're making something. Do you guys feel good about turning this in? [some yeses, some nod]. How does it feel? You're turning in your first paper, it's an academic paper. You should all visualize where you're at? Do you think you've got a 3 or 4. If you've got everything listed here, you should feel good. And if you get a 2 or a three you should ask me, Ms. [Lily's last name], why did I get this grade? Because sometimes you need to defend your paper. Teachers sometimes grade a lot of papers.

Okay, remember the first day of class I asked you to write a paper. Now you're going to look at that, after everything you've learned about this process.

The screenshot shows a window titled 'Source: Lily Observation 09102012.txt'. The interface includes standard window controls (minimize, maximize, close) and a toolbar with 'Font Settings...', 'Related Media', and a help icon. The left sidebar contains several code categories: 'Assessment' (with sub-options like 'Course materials', 'Approaching writing as a process', etc.); 'Academic preparation'; 'Interpersonal communication norms/preferences'; 'Individual communication'; 'Mission: Preparing for transfer/multicultural knowledge'; and another 'Assessment' section. The right pane displays a transcribed conversation. Several lines of text are highlighted with colored boxes, indicating they have been coded. For example, the first few lines ('I'm handing out a rubric, a guide for what I will be looking for on your paper.' and '[looks out at class] It's a monday. [laughs] We just had too much fun this long weekend.') are highlighted in blue. Other lines, such as the explanation of the rubric structure and the comment about turning in a handwritten paper, are highlighted in red. The bottom part of the conversation, about turning in the first academic paper, is highlighted in green. The entire screenshot is framed by a light gray border.

3. **Course documents.** This screenshot illustrates the process by which I coded course documents, most of which were not in a format that could be imported to HyperResearch for coding. This analysis was then combined for triangulation into a single spreadsheet with code counts generated by HyperResearch for the interview transcripts and course observation fieldnotes (see Appendix J).

Instructor	Document	Type	Dimensions of instruction					Faculty pedagogical responses to students					Faculty pedagogical responses to institution													
			Course materials	Assignments	In-class activities	Individual communication	Assessment	Course policies	Individual student needs/abilities/issu	Diane identities	Languages	Epistemologies	Learning styles	Interpersonal communication norms/	Personal interests	Personal/family experiences	Geographical experiences	Academic preparation	Socioeconomics	Goals and motivations	Mission: DEP	Mission: Teaching Diane history and her	Mission: Preparation for transfer/multi	Mission: Social responsibility/commun	Institution/facilities/resources	Institution/class size
Barb	Barb Writing Rubric Fall 2012-08	Rubric	X			X										X	X	X								
Barb	Critical Thinking Cards.pdf	In-class Activity	X	X																						
Barb	Syllabus-ENG100B-F12-082312	Syllabus	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Barb	FrankenSentence Parts of Spec	In-class Activity	X	X												X	X	X	X	X	X					
Barb	Barbara 100B Assignment Hand	Assignment	X	X			X										X	X	X	X						
Barb	Barbara 100B MLA Guidelines	Supplemental	X																							
Barb	Barbara 100B Reflective Comm	Reflection	X			X	X		X								X	X	X	X	X	X			X	
Barb	Barbara Research Essay Organiz	Supplemental	X	X													X		X							
Barb	Barbara Sample Research Paper,	Supplemental	X		X											X	X		X							
Barb	Barbara Wood Stove In-Class Re	Supplemental	X		X												X	X	X	X						
Barb	Barbara Essay Type Grid.pdf	Supplemental	X		X											X		X								
Barb	Sanders_-_Beneath_the_smooth	Reading	X	X												X				X			X	X		
Barb	Leopold_-_Chihuahua_and_Sonc	Reading	X	X												X								X	X	
Barb	Kincaid_-_A_small_place.pdf	Reading	X	X																						
Barb	Borges-TheOther.pdf	Reading	X	X																						
Barb	Tapahonso-TheMotionofSongsR	Reading	X	X												X	X	X					X			
Barb	Silko_-_Ceremony.pdf	Reading	X	X												X	X									
Barb	Houston_-_Best_girlfriend_you	Reading	X	X													X									
Barb	Along These Lines	Textbook	X	X	X														X					X		X
Barb	Best Class Ever Website	Website	X	X												X			X	X	X		X	X		
Barb	Anastasia brainstorming.pdf	Feedback	X		X	X	X											X	X							
Barb	Anastasia Process Essay.pdf	Feedback	X		X	X	X											X								
Barb	Madison Lane Descriptive Parag	Feedback	X		X	X										X	X	X								
Barb	Madison Land Reading Response	Feedback	X		X	X										X				X						

## Appendix J: Data Triangulation Spreadsheet Example

This screenshot illustrates how I triangulated codes across multiple cases and types of data. The green cells indicate codes that appeared across all three types of data (interviews, observations, and course documents) for an individual instructor. The yellow cells indicate codes that appeared across two types of data, and the yellow cells indicate codes that were applied only one type of data associated with an individual instructor.

		Dimensions of instruction							Faculty pedagogical responses to students							Faculty pedagogical responses to institutions							Faculty pedagogical responses to communities																																															
Instructor	Type	Course materials			Assessments		In-class activities		Individual communication		Course policies		Individual student needs/abilities/issues		Dine identities		Languages		Epistemologies		Learning styles		Interpersonal communication norms/preferences		Personal interests		Personal/family experiences		Geographical experiences		Academic preparation		Socioeconomics		Goals/motivations		Mission: DEP		Mission: Teaching Dine history and heritage		Mission: Preparation for transfer/multicultural		Mission: Social responsibility/community service		Institution/facilities/resources		Institution/class size		Departmental/institutional policies/structure		Accreditation/articulation agreements		Workload		Immediate community/chapters		Navajo Nation		State		Southwest Region		Native America		US		Global Indigenous		Global	
Barb	Course docs	20	22	7	1	14	2	11	7	3	6	6	1	8	14	10	14	6	5	1	5	25	3	2	0	3	0	1	0	7	0	4	3	13	0	8																																		
Lily	Course docs	18	12	4	1	12	3	7	4	1	2	5	0	10	3	10	1	6	1	1	18	3	0	0	3	0	0	1	3	0	2	1	3	0	2																																			
James	Course docs	12	14	8	2	9	1	9	12	9	10	0	5	5	13	7	10	7	4	5	9	20	0	0	0	0	0	2	11	1	9	8	7	1	6																																			
Patrick	Course docs	4	6	0	2	5	3	4	5	4	5	0	1	3	1	1	6	1	2	4	5	8	2	2	0	5	0	0	0	4	0	2	1	3	0	2																																		
Barb	Observations	25	28	47	12	38	12	2	7	2	1	9	27	7	26	7	19	16	15	1	1	19	3	11	0	9	0	0	1	6	1	0	4	10	0	2																																		
Lily	Observations	38	23	54	21	42	2	6	28	18	10	15	29	15	37	13	41	14	18	2	19	42	10	3	6	4	0	0	3	26	2	0	7	15	0	5																																		
James	Observations	82	42	66	24	33	9	3	53	21	31	1	27	9	55	24	52	16	9	17	51	60	1	3	0	8	0	2	3	48	0	14	9	21	1	24																																		
Patrick	Observations	28	21	58	45	57	29	10	33	21	9	0	35	12	14	8	29	11	7	9	18	32	17	25	0	11	0	0	1	28	0	4	0	4	0	5																																		
Barb	Interviews	27	29	23	14	32	8	7	5	1	2	2	17	10	26	10	29	15	12	2	3	21	3	5	5	8	0	0	1	14	0	3	3	9	0	3																																		
Lily	Interviews	16	31	33	24	32	4	9	17	8	5	0	21	17	9	3	34	5	16	2	8	15	3	3	3	10	0	2	2	16	0	1	3	6	0	1																																		
James	Interviews	26	23	19	7	11	2	8	37	12	10	8	16	11	10	7	19	20	11	12	29	24	2	1	6	5	0	5	8	37	0	4	11	11	0	13																																		
Patrick	Interviews	9	13	4	3	13	2	17	5	1	1	4	2	1	3	4	21	15	10	3	1	2	1	4	0	24	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	3	0	0																																		
Barb	Triangulation	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	3	3	0	3																															
Lily	Triangulation	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	0	1	2	3	1	3	3	0	3	3	0	3																															
James	Triangulation	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	1	2	0	2	3	3	1	3	3	2	3																																
Patrick	Triangulation	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	0	3	1	1	2	3	1	2	1	3	0	2																																	

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