

SELF-VALIDATION:
SOURCES THAT ABORIGINAL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS PURSUE

by

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Abstract

In order to successfully navigate the hurdles of academic life, it is vital that students have access to self-worth domains. Considering the impact of dislocation and/or failed pursuit of self-worth on a student's sense of purpose, motivation, and academic success, this research investigated Aboriginal students' sources of and access to self-validation while attending university away from their cultural context. A narrative inquiry research design was used, and participants (N = 6) orally shared a written account of their self-worth experiences. The design included the completion of the following: (a) validationgram exercise (Ishiyama, 1995), (b) written self-worth narrative, and (c) focus group sessions to yield data for thematic content analysis. This collaborative method of analysis, was used to identify themes across participants' self-validation narratives. This method was specifically chosen for its fit with the oral storytelling tradition used by Aboriginal Peoples to preserve and share their history, values, and practices. The results revealed Aboriginal university students' specific sources and methods of pursuing self-validation when attending university and related themes and addressed how relocating to attend a university can result in barriers in accessing traditional sources of validation (e.g., family, land-based medicines, Elder teachings). Alternative and/or modified sources of validation accessed by Aboriginal students, when attending university, were identified in this investigation. The study's theoretical, clinical, methodological and future research implications are discussed. It is recommended that researchers investigate Aboriginal students' preferred and accessed sources of self-validation while attending university needs to focus on programming that supports the role of culturally related sources of validation in Aboriginal students' well-being and cultural identity.

Lay Summary

This research investigated Aboriginal students' sources of and access to self-validation while attending university away from their cultural context. Study results addressed how relocation to attend a university can result in barriers in accessing traditional sources of validation (e.g., native medicine, protocol, land, elder, extended family). Alternative sources of validation accessed by Aboriginal students, when attending university, are presented. Study implications and recommendations in theory, methodological procedures, clinical and educational practice, and future research are presented. Results can be used to increase enrollment and retention rates for Aboriginal students, by providing programming that sustains and develops their self-worth sources, cultural identities, and values.

Preface

Inception of this research topic came from collaboration between the author and a local First Nations group, who identified these topics as problem areas for university students in their community. The research design for this study was developed in close consultation with Dr. I. Ishiyama, and Dr. M. Buchanan. My contribution to this research study included collaborating with the local First Nations group, design of study research questions, contacting and collaboration with the participating university students, data collection, data analysis, and primary writer of this doctoral dissertation. Ethics approval for this study was granted by the University of British Columbia: Behavioural Research Ethics Board, (Certificate Number H17-02279).

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Dedication

To my family

Chapter 1: Introduction

In Canada, 3.8% of the national population, or approximately one million people, self-identify as First Nations, Inuit, or Métis (Statistics Canada, 2006). Approximately half of this 3.8% are children and young adults under the age of 24. These ethnic classifications comprise the three main groups of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. The term Aboriginal is used when collectively referring to this diverse population (Reading & Wien, 2009). However, it is important to note that this population includes 614 band nations, each of which has its own form of self-governance, culture, and language or dialect. When the term culture is used in this paper it refers to the collective expression of individuals' representative of a particular group that changes as culture evolves.

Substantial education and health disparities exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Compared to their non-Aboriginal counterparts, Canadian Aboriginal students experience elevated rates of school difficulty (i.e., lower grades, conduct issues, and higher drop-out rates), and mental health problems (Beavon & Cooke, 2003). In part these disparities exist as a result of current and past colonial practices, racism, and intergenerational trauma (Kirmayer, Simpson, & Cargo, 2003). In 1844, the Bagot Commission Report stated that Canadian Aboriginal reserves were operating in a non-civilized manner. In order to achieve civility, the report suggested that Aboriginal people should be immersed in a formal British Canadian education system. This shift toward assimilation was reinforced by a confidential report, written by Nicholas Flood Davin, submitted to the Canadian Government and known as the Davin Report (Davin, 1879, p. 9). The report recommended "aggressive civilization."

Haig-Brown (1998) reported that following recommendations from the Davin Report, residential schools were created for Aboriginal children, in 1882. To achieve civilization,

Aboriginal children were separated from their parents, housed away from their families, and subjected to a foreign curriculum that encouraged thinking, acting, and speaking like British Canadians. Cultural expression (e.g., language, beliefs, food, dress) was actively discouraged through severe forms of punishment. While not the expressed intent of the residential school system, many pupils were subjected to neglect and emotional, physical, and sexual abuse (Haig-Brown, 1988). These practices of forced assimilation contributed to the development of internalised racism in many of the students (Milloy, 1999).

During a 104-year-period, over 10,000 Aboriginal children were exposed to the systematic and structural flaws of the residential school system (Elias, Mignone, Hall, Hong, Hart, & Sareen, 2012). The last residential school closed in 1996. The negative impact of the residential school system has been intergenerational (Milloy, 1999). As a result, Aboriginal Peoples are direct and intergenerational survivors of the residential school experience (Rosalyn, 2000). Aboriginal Peoples today are still affected at the community and individual level by practices instituted more than a century ago (Haig-Brown, 1988; Kirmayer, Simpson, & Cargo, 2003; Milloy, 1999). At the community and personal level, there is currently a loss of cultural identity (e.g., loss of tradition, protocol, language), which stems from engendered shame and/or punishment when associating with their ancestry, and disconnection between Aboriginal Peoples and their land (Anderson, 2016). Due to colonization processes, such as residential school, assimilation and acculturation has been forced onto Aboriginal people that has contributed to suppression, disconnection, and shame regarding their Aboriginal identity and culture.

Within this paper the operational definition of identity will change based on the assumption that a given theory of identity holds for independence, interrelation, or interconnection. A commonality across identity theories is that identity refers to the beliefs and

understanding that one holds for themselves through their cognitive representations of self (Robertson, 2014). Perception of one's self is influenced by: (a) self-validation, the process of recognizing and transcending one's perception of self and holding an appreciation of unconditional meaning and value for one's own existence (Ishiyama, 1995); (b) self-worth, the emotional evaluation that an individual makes of their own value (Crocker, 2002), and (c) self-efficacy, an individual's perception of their ability to succeed (Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2004). Perception of self impacts an individual's self-esteem, which is the satisfaction and confidence that they hold for themselves. Due to this relationship, self-esteem fluctuates based on performance in areas that self-validation (Ishiyama, 1995) and self-worth has been staked (Horberg & Chen, 2010). Ishiyama (1995a) postulated that across different cultures individuals were found to pursue self-validation in four domains of life (i.e., relationships, activities, objects, and place). These areas had the ability to act as sources of vulnerability as well as motivation. Ishiyama proposed that individuals pursue self-esteem through validation of their personal qualities and abilities, which provided them with a sense of self, self-worth, and reason for existence.

Stroink and DeCicc (2010) describe cognitive representations of the self, referred to as self-construal, as falling into three separate categories: independent self-construal, interdependent self-construal, and metapersonal self-construal. Independent self-construal is defined as a view of one's self that is unique, separate, and distinct from others. This definition of self is defined by characteristics and features that distinguish the self from others. Interdependent self-construal is illustrated as a view of one's self that is located within a social context. This description of self is demarcated by its relationship (i.e., relational interdependence) with others or ranking with a social group (i.e., collective interdependence).

Metapersonal self-construal is described as a view of one's self that is interconnected with all aspects of life. This definition of self extends beyond the individual, their in-group affiliations, and relationships with others; this characterization of self is defined by its connection with all elements of nature and humanity. Metapersonal self-construal is separate from an independent or interdependent self-construal. Its values reflect a tendency to structure one's life around protecting and appreciating all nature and humanity while seeking inner meaning and harmony.

The interconnection among Aboriginal people, nature, and humanity has been well documented when conceptualizing selfhood and identity from an Aboriginal perspective (Davidson-Hunt & Berkes, 2003; Hill, 2006; Schwarz, 1997). Research has found that increases in identification with Aboriginal identity, participation in Aboriginal culture, and engagement with traditional Aboriginal protocols results in stronger correlation with a metapersonal self-construal compared to other types of self-construal (Stroink & DeCicc, 2010).

Aboriginal people face a loss in confidence in articulating Aboriginal ways of understanding life that have been passed down through the generations in traditional teachings (Goodwill, 2003). For example, experience of a collective sense of identity is not often articulated due to contradiction with dominate individualistic western paradigms of identity. Traditional Aboriginal knowledge, language, values, and social practices however are often shared and facilitated through relationships with others, which lend themselves to a collective sense of identity that is relational. The distancing with traditional ways of identity conceptualization is further enabled by social policies and racial discrimination which discourage identification with traditional belief systems and engagement with spiritual practices. It is important for research to focus on understanding identity conceptualization from an Aboriginal perspective because attainment of identity is important to promoting healthy psychological

functioning for any ethnic group during a time of reconciliation and reclaiming of traditional knowledge (Anderson, 2000).

Due to educational and health disparities that exist between Aboriginal Peoples and their non-Aboriginal counterparts, and importance that understanding identity conceptualization from an Aboriginal perspective can have in supporting healthy psychological functioning, this research project investigated sources and access to self-worth specific to Aboriginal students, which contribute to their understanding of self. The next chapters of this paper are composed of a review of the literature and description of the intended study research method.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This chapter will begin with a brief review of the literature on contingencies of self-worth as they pertain to cross-cultural populations, university students, and Aboriginal Peoples. The second section discusses the conceptual framework of the self-validation model, followed by the impact of successful and failed pursuit of self-worth in relation to the four cross-cultural self-worth domains (i.e., relationships, activities, places, and objects). The final section describes the ramifications for overinvestment in one validation domain and influence of relationships on other self-worth domains.

Self-worth is an emotional evaluation of one's own value (Crocker, 2002). Self-esteem fluctuates based on performance in areas that self-worth has been staked, which is known as contingencies of self-worth (Horberg & Chen, 2010). This phenomenon views self-esteem as global feelings of value and worth for an individual's entire self (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001; Crocker, 2002). Self-esteem is then viewed as both a state and trait, whereby as a state, self-esteem is illustrated by the fluctuation of daily self-worth feelings, and as a trait, self-esteem is conceptualized as average feelings of self-worth, which are considered to be stable across situations over time.

Contingencies of Self-Worth

A contingency of self-worth is an area of life on which a person has staked his or her self-esteem, so that the person's view of his or her worth depends on perceived successes, failures, or maintenance of self-standards in that area (Crocker & Park, 2003). Self-esteem is therefore affected by ideals of self-worth (Crocker & Knight, 2005). Contingencies of self-worth can act as sources of vulnerability as well as motivation. Through the lens of contingent self-worth, individuals pursue self-esteem through validation of their personal qualities and abilities. This

occurs because people want to believe that they are worthy and valuable human beings, and this desire drives their behavior.

Cross-cultural contingencies of self-worth. Individuals are motivated to seek validating experiences through engagement with relationships, activities, places, and objects (Ishiyama, 1995). Access to these experiences affirms one's sense of self, self-worth, and reason for existence. Disconnection from these experiences can lead to aversive feelings of self-doubt, self-deprecation, disorientation, and stress. Research show that individuals differ in terms of the stake that they place in self-worth contingencies (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001). Self-worth has been vastly studied over the last 125 years, including William James's (1890) concept of pretensions, Rosenberg's (1979) concept of psychological centrality, Tesser's (1988) concept of relevance, and Marsh's (1993) concept of domain importance. To narrow this scope, this research will focus on self-worth that is contingent on relationships, activities, places, and objects.

University students. When self-worth was investigated among students, the following areas were identified within the cross-cultural domains: (a) within relationships, family support (Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, & Bouvrette, 2003; Harter, Marold, Whitesell, & Cobbs, 1996) and religious faith (Blaine & Crockers, 1995; Gallup and Bezilla, 1992); (b) within activities, academics (Crocker et al., 2003) and athletics (Reinboth & Duda, 2004); (c) within places, traditional land and nature (McCormick, 1997); and (d) within objects, material possessions (Ferraro, Escalas, & Bettman, 2011), and appearance (Patrick, Neighbors, & Knee, 2004).

Aboriginal students. British Columbia is home to approximately 200,000 Aboriginal Peoples including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (Province of British Columbia, 2017). This is a growing population seeking post-secondary training with 50% of the Aboriginal people in British Columbia, between the ages of 25 to 64, holding a diploma, certificate, or degree from a trade

school, college or university (Statistics Canada, 2016). Aboriginal enrollment continues to grow in Vancouver postsecondary schools, including enrollment at the University of British Columbia (Cole, 2013). In the 2013-2014 academic school-year there were 49,896 students enrolled at the University of British Columbia, of which 2% ($n = 881$) were Aboriginal (University of British Columbia, 2013).

Substantial health disparities exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. In part these disparities exist as a result of current and past colonial practices, racism, and intergenerational trauma (Kirmayer, Simpson, & Cargo, 2003). The negative impact of the residential school system has been intergenerational (Milloy, 1999). During a 104-year-period, over 10,000 aboriginal children were exposed to the systematic and structural flaws of the residential school system, of which the last residential school closed in 1996 (Elias, Mignone, Hall, Hong, Hart, & Sareen, 2012). Today, Aboriginal People are still affected at the community, family, and personal level by practices instituted more than a century ago (Haig-Brown, 1988; Kirmayer, Simpson, & Cargo, 2003; Milloy, 1999). At the community level, there is currently a loss of cultural identity (e.g., loss of tradition, protocol, language), which stems from a disconnection between Aboriginal people and their home community (Haig-Brown, 1988; Milloy, 1999). At the family level, neglectful and abusive parenting ideologies endure, learned first-hand through the residential school experience (Kirmayer, Simpson, & Cargo, 2003). At the personal level, identity formation has been negatively influenced by colonization, which stems from shame and punishment taught at residential school for association with one's Aboriginal cultural identity (Anderson, 2016).

Historically, Aboriginal students have been under-represented in post-secondary institutions in Canada (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001), and in the United States they show the

lowest retention rate of any ethnic or racial group (Shield, 2004). Research on Aboriginal student retention has identified that ruptures in one's sense of purpose and belonging in the academic community contributes to higher dropout rates (Krause, 2005). Research suggests when students gain perspective on their sense of purpose and self-worth they are more likely to be motivated and goal-oriented (Bandura & Locke, 2003). Motivation and goal-orientation are both factors that facilitate student success and increase student retention (Zepke & Leach, 2010).

The research community has only recently begun to investigate sources that contribute to Aboriginal students' sense of self-worth (McCormick, 1997). Research on place-contingencies of self-worth reveals that physical access to traditional land serves as a strong source of self-worth and validation for Aboriginal People due to the significance that land, nature, and engagement with land-based resource has on the development and maintenance of identity, strength, relaxation, and purification.

An in-depth study of lived experiences, such as Aboriginal university students' sense of self-worth, can be understood through the use of interpretive research. Unlike quantitative research that seeks to test the relationship between variables, interpretive research focuses on individual meaning and understanding using social inquiry (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The process of understanding students' sense of self-worth must start with the exploration of their experiences, which is why an interpretive theoretical perspective has been selected to guide this research.

Self-Validation Model

To understand the experience of cross-cultural adjustment and transition, a model of self-validation was developed (Ishiyama, 1989). This model examines self-validation, the subjective experience of personal, social, physical, and spiritual well-being caused by affirmation of one's

sense of self, meaning, and purpose in life. The self-validation model proposes that individuals are motivated to seek validation and therefore have a need to be validated (Ishiyama, 1987).

Ishiyama's (1989) self-validation model has five interrelated thematic components (a) security, comfort, and support, (b) self-worth and self-acceptance, (c) competence and autonomy, (d) identity and belonging, and (e) love, fulfillment, and meaning in life. This model recognizes that different life events will contribute positively to one's sense of validation, while others will contribute to undervaluation or invalidation of the self.

The self-validation model (Ishiyama, 1989) recognizes that validation is elicited from multiple external and internal sources (e.g., family, nature, memories, self) that hold personal significance for each individual. When these validation sources are less accessible or inaccessible, individuals can experience undervaluation. This often results in an individual experiencing feelings of loss of desire to pursue an alternative means of validation. Therefore, if an individual is overly reliant on one source of validation they are opening themselves up to potential depression or devastation if the source no longer becomes available. Within the self-validation model, the self is viewed as multidimensional, comprised of five experiential levels of self: (a) transpersonal self (i.e., collective and spiritual), (b) transcultural-existential, (c) social-cultural, (d) familial; and (e) physical. Within this model, self-validation is viewed holistically, meaning that all aspects of the self are validated and respected with the goal of harmonious balance among the five levels of self,

To accompany this model, the validationgram exercise (Ishiyama, 1995) was created to facilitate non-threatening and effective exploration of self-worth sources. The validationgram examines four validation domains: relationships, places, activities, and objects. The validationgram exercise invites participants to indicate and freely discuss their sources of

validation within these domains. Akin to the self-validation model, the validationgram exercise invites participants to holistically examine these validation domains in relation to their self.

Research by Beck (1993) demonstrated that both the self-validation model and validationgram offered a culturally sensitive way of assisting international students in identifying sources of validation that caused them to feel confused, misunderstood, and uprooted. Additionally, these frameworks help students identify alternative sources of validation without dismissing the emotional pain associated with dislocation from previous validation sources. Due to the holistic theoretical formulation, cultural sensitivity, and practical application (i.e., validationgram), the self-validation model may be culturally appropriate for work with Aboriginal participants.

Successful Pursuit of Self-Worth

When the pursuit of self-esteem is successful, short-term emotional benefits such as decreased anxiety and increased happiness, and long-term emotional benefits such as self-regulation, mental and physical health, learning, and autonomy, can be achieved (Crocker, 2002; Crocker & Luhtanen, 2003; Crocker et al., 2003; Crocker & Wolfe, 2001).

The following four sections will describe the impact that successful pursuits of self-worth can have on the four cross-cultural contingency domains of self-worth as suggested by Ishiyama (1995): (a) relationships, (b) activities, (c) places, and (d) objects. These sections will be followed by a discussion of the effect that failed pursuits of self-worth can have on these same domains.

Relationships. Relational-contingencies of self-worth are common because caring relationships provide individuals with a sense of security (Sroufe & Waters, 1977) and protection (Collins & Feeney, 2000), which contribute to better physical and mental health, coping skills

(Cohen, Sherrod, & Clark, 1986), and overall longevity (Ryff, 1995). Success in a preferred contingency domain of a significant relationship is linked with higher levels of self-esteem, due to affection and approval from close relationships (Bartholomew, 1990).

To determine how social support system constructs mediate the development of false self-behavior (i.e., when an individual acts in a manner that is not consistent with their true self), Harter, Marold, Whitesell, and Cobbs (1996) studied peer and parental relationships for 179 adolescents. Participants were asked to complete the Approval Support Scale for Children (Harter & Robinson, 1988) and the True/False Self Questionnaire (Harter & Lee, 1989). A factor analytic study (Harter, Marold, Whitesell, & Cobbs, 1996) revealed that the perceived quality of support (i.e., conditional or unconditional nature of support) and level of support (i.e., degree of support) were predictive of hope about obtaining future support from a peer or parental relationship. Harter et al.'s study confirmed that individuals who had experienced these factors in their relationships with others reported elevated levels of self-worth, positive affect, knowledge of their true self, and feelings of hopefulness.

A spiritual relationship with a religious higher power, such as God, has been found to be an important source of self-worth for many individuals (Crocker et al., 2003). A national survey of American citizens revealed that 95% of Americans believe in God or an exalted being and 67% of the population believe that religion serves a pivotal role in their lives (Bishop, 1999; The Princeton Religious Research Center, 1996). Research by Gallup and Bezilla (1992) found that intrinsic or internal religiosity, which is the degree that an individual internalizes and conveys their devotion to their religious beliefs, is moderately associated with elevated levels of self-esteem and psychological well-being. Investigation of causes for these elevations revealed that personal religious beliefs, such as: God values, loves, and views each individual as unique,

account for the positive effect on self-esteem and psychological well-being (Blaine & Crocker, 1995; Crocker et al., 2003; Gallup & Bezilla, 1992). When students stake self-worth in a religious relationship with God or another supreme being, this relationship has been found to influence their engagement with other activities (Crocker et al., 2003). For example, engagement with a spiritual relationship is associated with increased engagement in spiritual activities, time spent studying, and athletic activities (Crocker et al., 2003).

Research on relational-contingencies of self-worth reveals that relationships can be viewed on a spectrum, whereby contingencies sources range from internal (e.g., intrinsic relationship with God or a supreme being) to external (e.g., relationship with a parent, peer, or teacher). Research suggests that relationships serve as strong sources of self-worth and validation for students due to the physical, mental, and spiritual support they provide to help cope with stressors associated with university (Cohen, Sherrod, & Clark, 1986; Crocker, et al, 2003).

Activities. A number of studies have supported the idea that many people stake self-worth in performance (i.e., performance competency) in a specific activity (Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, 2003). To determine the effect of activity performance on students' perception of self-worth, Crocker, Luhtanen, and Cooper (2003) studied seven self-worth domains (i.e., academic competence, athletic competition, appearance, others' approval, family support and love, being a moral and virtuous person, and God's love). In their first study, they asked 1,418 male and female to assess whether their self-worth was dependent upon performance in each of these contingency domains. Participants responded to 70 items on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with 3 indicating a neutral response. The majority of the items were positively worded so that a response of "agree" indicated more contingent self-worth, including

some reverse scored items. Exploratory factor analysis revealed that five items loaded onto each of the seven hypothesized contingency domains, indicating seven distinct self-worth contingency domains endorsed by students, resulting in Crocker, Luhtanen, and Cooper (2003) self-developed Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale (CSWS).

To determine if the seven self-worth contingency domains predicted the amount of time students would spend engaging in related activities (e.g., Does academic competence predict the amount of time students spend studying?), Crocker et al., (2003) asked 795 female and male undergraduates to completed the 70-item CSWS, at three intervals during the academic school year, and indicate how many hours they spent engaging in each activity during a typical week over the previous semester. Crocker et al. (2003) found that seven self-worth contingency domains affected the amount of time student spent engaging in activities related to performance in each domain. For example, academic competence predicted increased time spent studying and decreased time spent partying. Athletic competition predicted decreased time spent socializing. Appearance predicted increased time spent grooming, partying, shopping, and exercising; and decreased time engaging in spiritual or family activity. These results suggest that activities serve as strong sources of self-worth and validation for students, due to the increased duration of time and energy they devote to engaging in them (Crocker, 2003).

A study by Reinboth and Duda (2004) found further support for the effect that perception of ability competence has on individuals' perception of self-worth. To examine if perception of athletic ability had a moderating effect on the relationship between perception of motivational climate (i.e., situational factors related to one's sport) and psychological well-being (i.e., self-esteem, contingent self-worth), Reinboth and Duda (2004) studied 265 male adolescent soccer players. To evaluate perceived athletic ability, each participant completed five items from the

perceived ability subscale of the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (McAuley, Duncan, & Tammen, 1989). Perception of their respective team's motivational climate was evaluated through completion of the Perceived Motivational Climate in Sport Questionnaire-2 (PMCSQ-2; Newton et al., 2000). This questionnaire evaluated the perceived motivational climate of their sport team based on task-involving or ego-involving environmental characteristics. Tasks involving climates reflected environments where improvement/ effort was valued, cooperative learning was encouraged, and every player had an important role on their team. Ego-involving climates represented environments where mistakes were punished, intra-team rivalry was present, and coach recognition was reserved for only talented team members. Psychological well-being was evaluated through completion of the General Self subscale from the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire II (SDQ II; Marsh, Parker, & Barnes, 1985) to assess level of self-esteem, and Contingent Self-worth in Sport Scale (Reinboth & Duda, 2003) to examine the degree that participants based their self-worth upon their athletic performance. Reinboth and Duda (2004) found that participants with low perceived athletic ability in ego-involving environments reported the lowest levels of self-esteem and self-worth. When environments were perceived as task-involving, regardless of perception of athletic competence, participants reported higher levels of self-esteem and self-worth. These results indicate that the perception of athletic ability has the strongest negative effect on psychological well-being when motivational climates are based on ego-involving characteristics.

To examine if increasingly evaluative educational environments affect students' perception of academic ability and motivational orientation, Harter, Whitesell, and Kowalski (1992) studied 338 middle school students, with an approximately equal number of girls and boys. Four groups of students were examined longitudinally as they transitioned to a new grade.

There were 110 students in grade six, 111 students in grade seven, and 117 students in grade eight. Over a 2-day period, students completed measures of scholastic anxiety (School Concerns Scale; Burhmester, 1980), importance of scholastic success, motivational orientation (Motivational Orientation Measure; Harter, 1981), perceived competence (Self-Perception Profile for Children; Harter, 1985), and environmental change (Perceived Academic Environmental Change Scale; Harter, Whitesell, & Kowalsi, 1992). Harter, Whitesell, and Kowalski (1992) found that the majority of middle school students reported an increased emphasis on performance evaluations, grades, and competition when educational environments were focused on academic performance. These children reported greater focus on their own academic competence, higher levels of scholastic anxiety, and more extrinsic motivational orientation. These results indicate that the emphasis of educational environments can influence children's perception of academic ability and motivational orientation.

Places. Based on client interactions in his clinical practice, Ishiyama (1993) observed that places and physical environments could serve as a source of self-worth, and that interaction with meaningful places could foster validation. Ishiyama (1993) argued that physical and physiological elements can be associated with pleasant memories, images, and feelings. Ishiyama found that when individuals were unable to physically go to a validating place, they often tried to recreate the location. For example, when an individual felt homesick, they would recreate a familiar validating environment with characteristics representative of their desired location (e.g., cultural food, music, protocol).

Aboriginal People maintain a strong belief that caring for and having an association with their ancestral lands is a vital determinant of self-worth (McCormick, 1997). A qualitative study was conducted to identify what sources facilitate healing for First Nations People in British

Columbia. Establishing a connection with nature was a main identified theme. This theme described how being with or in nature was a method of self-healing. Experiences with nature ranged from being in the forest among trees to the use of water in healing. Participants described how nature served as a medium for spiritual connection, and that through engagement with a specific place they felt more engaged with the Creator. Research on place-contingencies of self-worth revealed that connection with place is primarily external, through physical access to land-based resources (McCormick, 1997), with a minimal level of connection achieved through internal access of pleasant memories of a place (Ishiyama, 1993). Research suggests that places serve as strong sources of self-worth and validation for Aboriginal People due to the significance that a place, land, and/ or nature and engagement with associated land-based resources can have on their development and maintenance for feelings of strength, relaxation, and purification (McCormick, 1997).

Objects. Research has demonstrated that object contingencies of self-worth are important because they can serve as an extension of our self, whereby loss and/or destruction of an object subtracts from our self-identity (Ferraro, Escalas, & Bettman, 2011). A quantitative study by Ferraro, Escalas, and Bettman (2011) was conducted to demonstrate the relationships between self-worth, possession-self link, and grief. In this study, participants were asked to recall a time when they had lost a special possession and imagine the loss of their possession. They predicted that by having participants imagine their loss it would lead them to have an anticipatory grief reaction similar to what they would have experienced during their actual loss. They found that the strength of the possession-self link affected the degree of negative emotions and separation distress experienced when a possession was lost, demonstrating a relationship between the self and reactions to loss (i.e., grieving for possessions that were linked to self).

Ferraro et al.'s (2011) study suggested that objects are able to represent the self and that object attachment can affect how individuals respond to possession loss. Through the examination of how individuals responded to their loss of possessions, Ferraro et al. (2011) found that possession–self linkages were made when individuals derived self-worth and important values from their possessions.

Ferraro et al.'s (2011) study suggests that the types of objects people use for self-extension will vary depending on how they derive their self-worth. For example, if someone values family relationships more than personal achievement they may grieve the loss of a family portrait, but not the loss of a medal they received. Ferraro et al. (2011) found that objects were a contingency of self-worth when they represent a positive meaningful experience (e.g., college diploma, engagement ring, running shoes). This finding indicates that the attachment of an experience to an object is what aids the object in becoming part of an individual's self-worth.

Many cultures use sacred objects for ceremonial purposes (Derlon, Mauzé, 2010). Engagement with these objects can be part of an individual's cultural identity. Research on sources that facilitate healing for First Nations People in British Columbia identified that sacred objects used for ceremonial connection were an important source of healing (McCormick, 1997). For example, an abalone shell, tobacco, and an eagle feather are all sacred objects used for smudging, a First Nations healing practice. These findings illustrate how engagement with a sacred self-worth object can contribute to feelings of cultural identity and healing.

Richins (1994) found that individuals' most important possessions provided a glimpse into their personal values, specifically materialism. Though a mixed method study he asked individuals to identify and describe their most important possessions. Participants described the significance of their possessions through the completion of a short-answer qualitative

questionnaire. Participants' association with materialism was evaluated through the completion of a quantitative questionnaire. Possessions in this study were categorized by the following object type category: (a) sentimental objects associated with important others (e.g., photo albums), (b) assets (e.g., money, house), (c) transportation (e.g., car), (d) practical objects (e.g., appliances), (e) activity-related objects (e.g., athletic equipment), (f) objects related to personal appearance (e.g., jewelry, clothing), (g) extensions of self (e.g., awards), and (h) aesthetic objects (e.g., painting). Richins found that high-materialism individuals were more likely to describe an object that could be visible to others (i.e., could be displayed on a person or visible in a public place versus used in private place). Whereas low-materialism individuals were more likely to report objects that would be used in a private space. Both groups were found to list objects that involved interpersonal associations with low-materialistic individuals reporting more sentimental objects. These results suggest that material values can be represented in the type objects we associate with our self-worth and in the public and private meanings objects represent.

Exploration of research on object-related contingencies of self-worth has revealed that self-objectification, the process by which individuals treat themselves as an object to be viewed and evaluated by their appearance, also has an impact on individuals' evaluation of their self-worth (Overstreet & Quinn, 2012) beyond studies examining the influence of external objects related to self-worth (Richins, 1994). Overstreet and Quinn (2012), examined if staking self-worth in appearance influenced an individual's level of body surveillance and appearance satisfaction. Through a qualitative research design, they had 337 female college students, of whom 115 identified as African American and 222 identified as Caucasian, complete the Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale. This 35-item measure assessed the following seven

domains: (a) academic competence, (b) approval from others, (c) competition, (d) family support, (e) God's love, and (f) virtue, on which an individual can base their self-worth. All items were rated on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Multiple-group analysis revealed that when individuals based their self-worth in appearance and approval from others their body surveillance behavior increased, and their appearance satisfaction decreased. Whereas when these same individuals based their self-worth in their academic competence, family support, or love from God, their body surveillance decreased, and appearance satisfaction increased. These results suggest that appearance can serve as a strong source of self-validation. When Overstreet and Quinn (2012) tested racial differences, their model operated similarly across race. However, appearance contingency to body surveillance showed a stronger correlation for Caucasian female students compared to African American female students.

Harter's (1985) Self-Perception Profile for Children is one of the most widely used self-perception measures by developmental psychologists. Harter's (1985) scale measures a child's perception of their own competence and adequacy. The domains within this scale, were scholastic competence, social acceptance, athletic competence, physical appearance, behavior conduct, and global self-worth; the selection of these domains were based on the existing scale, observations, and interviews with children in an elementary school setting (Harter, 1982). Faria (2001) re-examined this measure and adapted it for use in a qualitative study with Portuguese students. The Portuguese version of the measure was completed by 260 adolescent Portuguese students. Factor analysis revealed that physical appearance was identified as an important domain related to self-worth for students in Grade 7. The importance of physical appearance correlated with acceptance with one's peers and one's overall sense of self-worth. These results confirmed findings in Harter's results (Harter, 1985).

Faria (2001) found that there was a moderate relationship between global self-worth and each of the individual self-worth domains (i.e., scholastic competence, social acceptance, athletic competence, physical appearance, and behavior conduct). This suggests that global self-worth is not merely the summation of all domains of self-concept but instead, “a personal synthesis of self-concept” (Faria, 2001).

Physical appearance was also found to significantly influence college students’ perception of their own self-worth (Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, & Bouvrette, 2003). Crocker et al.’s (2003), which has been previously outlined above, found that compared to the other self-worth domains, college students rated physical appearance as the most superficial and dependent on others source of self-worth. Crocker et al. found that self-worth based on appearance significantly correlated with narcissism and neuroticism and highly correlated with public self-consciousness. This suggests that when individuals based their self-worth on appearance, they are likely during social interactions to focus on how they appear to others. This type of self-worth pursuit could equate to a dependency on approval and validation from others, which could result in higher social stress and pressure.

Failed Pursuit of Self-Worth

Failure can have the reverse effect on self-worth, and can lead to ruptures in self-regulation, mental and physical health, relationships, learning, autonomy, and self-esteem (Crocker, 2002). Due to the impact that failure can have on one’s self-esteem, individuals are very selective about what domains of contingent self-worth affect their self-esteem, allowing contingencies of self-worth to regulate people’s behavior (Crocker, 2002). To determine how self-worth-contingencies influence students’ behavior, Crocker et al. (2003) tracked 677 college students. Students were assessed prior to the beginning of their freshman year, at the beginning

of their second semester, and at the end of their second semester. During each assessment, students were asked about organizations (i.e., fraternity or sorority, religious organizations, and/or community service organizations) they had joined, as well as, how much time they spent in various activities each semester. It was found that after controlling for the level of trait self-esteem, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, contingencies of self-worth identified prior to the start of the freshman year predicted which organizations the students joined in during college as well as how much time they spent engaging in related behaviors activities. Binary logistic regressions showed that when students based their self-worth on appearance and less on virtue that they were more likely to join fraternity or sorority. Even after controlling for the type of organizations that the students joined, contingencies of self-worth were also found to predict how long students spent engaging in related activities. For example, students who based their self-worth on their academic competence were found to spend more time studying.

Since contingencies of self-worth mold our short-term and long-term goals, domain based self-validation goals are created to provide opportunities to be successful, valuable, and worthy. Self-validation goals are strongly linked to contingencies of self-worth, and individuals report spending more time on activities that promote their self-worth (Crocker & Park, 2004).

Due to the negative ramifications that failed pursuit of self-worth can have on individuals, research suggests that while successful pursuit of self-worth can lead to emotional benefits (e.g., increased happiness, decreased anxiety, self-regulation), overinvestment in any one cross-cultural domain can become maladaptive.

When Overinvestment Becomes Maladaptive

Overinvestment of self-worth in one domain can contribute to a fragile sense of self. Successes and failures have been found to influence self-esteem that is contingent on areas that

self-worth is based on (Crocker, Sommers, & Luhtanen, 2002). Through a quantitative study of 32 students applying to graduate program, Crocker et al. (2002) assessed how self-esteem is influenced by notice of acceptance and rejection from graduate programs. They had each student complete the contingencies of self-worth measure, a depression scale, and create an order of preference list for the graduate programs they applied for. Participants were instructed throughout the study to access a Web page to complete two measures twice a week, as well as, on the day of receiving notice from the graduate schools that they had applied to. These weekly measures included a self-esteem scale and affect scale. At the completion of the study, participants were again asked to complete the contingencies of self-worth scale and depression measure. Not surprisingly, university students in this study had self-worth that was highly dependent on academic competence. They found that that student's self-esteem was higher on days that they were notified of acceptance at graduate program and lower on days when they were rejected.

In a theoretical review of literature that analyzed compartmentalization of self (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001; Jordan et al., 2003; Kernis, 1993), Thomas, Ditzfeld, and Showers (2013) proposed that this occurrence of compartmentalization of self can occur when an individual has a compartmentalized self-structure, which is when a person's negative and positive self-beliefs are separated into distinct self-aspect categories. For example, Joe has an "academic self" and "athletic self": the academic self is seen as strong, competent, and organized, whereas the athletic self is seen as weak, slow, and worthless. When individuals think of themselves in a compartmentalized fashion they view themselves in either negative or positive terms depending on the importance they place on each self-aspect.

Compartmentalization makes individual's vulnerable to threats in areas of negative self-belief. For example, during a basketball game, Joe's negative athletic self-beliefs become activated. He is unable to access positive self-beliefs because they are associated with a different aspect of himself (i.e., his academic self), which is not relevant to the current situation.

The following four sections will describe the impact that compartmentalization of positive self-aspects into only one cross-cultural contingency domain (i.e., relationships, activities, places, or objects) can have. These sections will be followed by a discussion of how relationships influence all cross-cultural domains, as opposed to being a restricted domain.

Relationships

Contingent self-esteem theory suggests that relational selves, a specific set of self-attributes, are associated with significant relationships (Horberg & Chen, 2010). This theory was supported by an experimental study (Horberg & Chen, 2010) in which university students were asked to rate the degree to which someone else would care about their success in a particular domain area. More specifically, in their study, students completed seven subscales of from the Contingencies of Self-Worth (CSW) Scale before and after they were either primed to think of their father or a mailman, of which the latter was the control condition. Results revealed that when participants desired greater closeness with their father, they would put greater self-worth stake in areas that their father deemed important (i.e., they reported relationship-specific contingencies of self-worth). Whereas, when the individual was primed with the mailman or desired limited closeness with their father, their contingencies of self-worth were not relationship-specific. Thus, relationally contextualized self-worth which is influenced by significant individuals in life seems to play an impactful role.

Research demonstrates that failure in domains preferred by a significant relationship negatively impacted feelings of acceptance and closeness within that relationship, as well as personal feelings of self-worth (Baumeister, Twenge, & Nuss, 2002; DeWall & Baumeister, 2006; Horberg & Chen, 2010; Leary et al., 2003; Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, & Stucke, 2001; Twenge, Catanese, & Baumeister, 2003). Individuals with relationally contingent self-worth were found to respond to interpersonal rejection (i.e., ego threat) from significant others more than those who staked self-worth in different domains (Thomas, Ditzfeld, & Showers, 2013). Therefore, overinvestment in relational contingencies of self-worth can be dangerous because success in this domain (i.e., approval and validation from the significant other) is: (a) based on performance in a domain selected by the significant other, as opposed to the self, and (b) conditional on positive performance in that preferred domain. This can serve as a problem for students when they stake all their self-worth in a domain selected by another person. For example, if a student solely relies on self-worth from a parental relationship following a negative academic evaluation (a domain prized by the parent), the student's self-worth will be threatened even if they have accomplished success in another domain (e.g., athletic activities).

Activities

Common self-worth areas researched in university populations include other's approval, family support, religious faith or God's love, academics, outperforming others, appearance, and virtue (Crocker, Luhtanen, & Cooper, 2003; Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, & Bouvrette, 2003; Crocker & Knight, 2005; Overstreet & Quinn, 2012). Since universities encourage students to focus on their academic studies and/or co-required university athletic commitments it is common for many students to base a portion of their self-worth and self-validation goals on activities related to academic or athletic competence (Crocker, 2002).

For example, when pursuing academic competence, academic assignments serve as an opportunity to demonstrate how intelligent students are (Crocker, 2002). In order to decrease chances of failure in this domain, students will increase their efforts or alternatively abandon their academic self-validation goal. The former behavior may contribute to heightened anxiety and exhaustion, and the latter behavior to a loss of motivation and direction. It should be noted that literature on activities related to self-worth tends to focus on academic and athletic competence. However, it does not speak to self-worth activities that cultural minority groups may additionally deem important to their self-worth.

As previously mentioned in the Crocker, Sommers and Luhtanen (2000) study, self-esteem was rated higher for undergraduate students on days that they were given graduate school acceptance. These results showed that students whose self-worth was contingent on academic success reported higher self-esteem on days that they were accepted and lower self-esteem on days when they were rejected. Therefore, overinvestment in activity-related contingencies of self-worth can be dangerous because success in this domain (i.e., competence or success in chosen activity) can be: (a) dependent on a positive evaluation of performance by an external evaluator (e.g., graduate school acceptance board, professor, coach) as opposed to internal evaluation; and (b) determined by comparison of their performance to their peers (e.g., bell curve grading) versus criterion-referenced evaluation (i.e., when competence is based off quality of performance). This can serve as a problem for students when they stake all their self-worth in academic competence. For example, if a student solely relies on self-worth from academics, following a negative academic evaluation their self-worth can be depleted even if they have achieved success in another domain (e.g., developed a new friendship). Ishiyama and Kitayama (1994) examined the consequences of overinvestment in career-centered self-validation. They

proposed that when work becomes an individual's dominant source of validation, non-work activities and relationships recede into the background. They argued that over-dependence on one's work context as their primary source of validation can be dangerous. This type of reliance is problematic because an individuals' validation network can be negatively affected by external factors related to their work context.

Places

When students come to university, they often move away from their home community, which includes their family or community support network (Cummings, Lee, & Kraut, 2006) and healing resources (Bartlett, 2003). Due to relocation, students may be unable to connect with self-validating relationships, activities, or objects, which would normally provide them with support and care during times of change and stress (Barlett, 2003). Due to failed pursuit of place-related contingencies of self-worth, an individual's mental and physical health can suffer (Wagner, 2002).

Crocker, Karpinski, Quinn, and Chase (2003) suggest that mental health can be affected by anxiety and stress associated with contingent self-esteem. In a quantitative study, 122 male and female students majoring in either engineering or psychology completed measures of global self-esteem, contingencies of self-worth, and depression. Participants were asked to complete these measures three times a week online as well as on days that they took an exam or received a grade for a paper or exam. Crocker et al. (2003) found that students' affect, self-esteem, and identification with their major increased on days that they received good grades and decreased on the days that poor grades were received. Results revealed that self-esteem can be negatively affected by bad grades when students based their self-esteem on academic competence. When students experienced negative and positive experiences in their domains of self-worth

contingency, their self-esteem fluctuated over time, and those fluctuations in self-esteem predicted an increase in depressive symptoms.

In the previously outlined Crocker et al. (2003) study examining contingencies of self-worth trait self-esteem, students who were found to base their self-worth on self-objectification (i.e., evaluation of their physical appearance) reported greater association with self-destructive behaviors, such as greater engagement with alcohol, drugs, and unsafe sexual practices. Other negative health consequences have been linked to changes in self-esteem levels related to self-worth pursuit. In a theoretical review of the results of a study by Crocker, Karpinski, Quinn, and Chase (2003) results, Crocker and Knight (2005) hypothesized that the fluctuations in self-esteem may be accompanied by heightened cortisol levels generated by the stress response. Elevated cortisol levels are a feature in depression-like symptomatology, which is caused by dysregulation of the hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenocortical (HPA) axis (Foster & MacQueen, 2008). Parinante and Lightman (2008) found that many depressed individuals will display enhanced cortisol secretion as a result of an overactive HPA axis. Other physical health concerns have also been associated with contingencies of self-worth.

Traditional land is a fundamental component of Aboriginal People's culture, vital to their health and wellness (King, Smith, & Gracey, 2009). To review the underlying causes of health disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, King, Smith and Gracey (2009) designed an analytical framework that aligned with key themes that were identified at the Social Determinants of Indigenous Health Symposium held in Adelaide, Australia, in April, 2007. This framework address how the colonization of Indigenous Peoples and disruption of ties for Indigenous Peoples to their land has weakened and, in some cases, destroyed Indigenous Peoples cultural practices and participation in traditional economy, which were essential to their well-

being and overall health. For example, land can serve as a medium for spiritual connection (e.g., relationship with Creator) and as a gathering place for exchange of cultural knowledge (e.g., relationship with elders, who provide guidance and support).

King et al. (2009) argued that research involving Indigenous Peoples has historically tended to focus on non-Indigenous notions of health (e.g., disease, treatment). Whereas, Indigenous Peoples conceptualize wellbeing differently in terms of balance with areas that are important to their identity. For example, Indigenous Peoples who identify with the medicine wheel evaluate health in terms of balance between the four elements of life (i.e., emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical).

For Indigenous Peoples, land, health, and food are vital components to well-being (King et al, 2009). Since cultural identity is often tied to land, language, and cultural interaction, being separated from aspects of this identity is widely understood to contribute to Indigenous health problems. Many Indigenous Peoples conceptualize themselves in terms of their connection with their community, which includes connection to the land and animals that are part of that community. The land therefore becomes part of the self and when an Indigenous person's bond with the land becomes disrupted their sense of self, well-being, and indigeneity is at stake.

King et al. (2009) describes that land is associated with resilience and social capital for Indigenous Peoples. Resilience, referring to the ability that enables people to be strong in the face of stress and adversity, is facilitated by land connection in that it serves as a place for community, spiritual connection, historical and cultural continuity, and ties with family and nature. Social capital, defined as social support and social networks that enable an individual to function in society effectively, is provided through community and civic engagement that is tied to community that traditional land is associated with.

What is unique about this type of self-worth contingency is that access to place and related land-based resources are often dependent on physical access to a particular geographical location. Therefore, overinvestment in place-related contingencies of self-worth could be a problem for students when they stake all their self-worth in place-related contingencies of self-worth. For example, if a student solely relies on self-worth from place, following a geographical relocation to attend university they may be unable to access land-based healing resources that facilitate connection to their cultural identity and/or spirituality, which can decrease feelings of self-worth.

Objects

Research by Burris and Rempel (2004) suggests that the loss of a treasured object is associated with negative reactions because the treasured object served as an identity marker, and the loss of the object is a symbolic loss of part of the self. Research on objects lost due to robberies (Belk, 2017) or lost on occasion of natural disasters (Sayre & Horne, 1996) revealed that individuals experience grief, feelings of violation, and anger. To examine the relationship between self-worth, grief, and objects related to self, Ferraro, Escalas, and Bettman, (2011) conducted a mixed methods study that included 137 participants. Each participant was asked to recall the loss of a special possession and the circumstance that lead to the loss. Participants then completed a grief measures and then rated how well the lost possession helped them achieve self-worth in the following self-worth domains: competencies, competition, approval from others, appearance, family support, God's love, and virtue. Lastly, participants completed positive emotion items, an importance measure, and a possession–self link measure for the lost possession. Ferraro et al. (2011) found that object's ability to represent the important self-worth domains on which a person based their self-worth in moderated the possession–self link. This

meant that the higher the link was between the object and individual's view of self including self-worth was, the greater the reported grief was when the object was lost. These results suggest that loss of objects linked to self-worth represents not only the loss of a tangible object but a metaphysical part of the self (Ferraro, Escalas, & Bettman, 2011).

Increased body surveillance, monitoring of one's body's appearance, and use of objects that benefit physical appearance can negatively impact psychological and physical well-being (Overstreet, & Quinn, 2012). As outlined in the previously reported study by Overstreet and Quinn (2012), self-validation goals related to approval from others and appearance were associated with reduced appearance satisfaction and increased body surveillance. Whereas, when self-validation goals were based on other areas of self-worth (e.g., activities, relationships), individuals had greater satisfaction with their appearance and surveyed their bodies less. Overstreet and Quinn (2012) acknowledge that self-worth based on objectification of one's appearance can be dangerous when success in this type of object-related self-worth domain is dependent on either retention of a particular appearance (i.e., self-objectification state) or conditional approval from another person. This could serve as a problem for students when they stake all their self-worth in object-related contingencies of self-worth. For example, if a student solely relies on self-worth from objects, following the loss or destruction of a prized object (Ferraro, Escalas, & Bettman, 2011), or negative appearance evaluation by another person, (Overstreet, & Quinn, 2012) their self-worth and/or sense of self could be threatened.

Overall research findings on overinvestment in one particular cross-cultural domain (i.e., relationships, activities, places, or objects) suggest that compartmentalization of positive self-aspects into one domain is dangerous because it contributes to a fragile self, which can be very reactive to failure (Thomas, Ditzfeld, & Showers, 2013). Without representation of positive self-

aspects in multiple domains an individual's self-worth can be vulnerable to: conditional approval of others, performance in an activity, physical access to land-based resources, or retention of an important object.

Due to the reported influence that relationships can have on successful pursuit of self-worth in other cross-cultural contingencies domains, the influence of relationships will now be discussed in relation to its influence on all self-worth domain versus as a restricted domain.

Relationships Permeate All Self-Worth Domains

Even though some individuals claim to not to base their self-worth on others' approval (Crocker et al., 2003), research suggests that social disapproval affects everyone's self-esteem (Leary et al., 2003) and can lead to emotional withdrawal and feelings of numbness (Baumeister et al., 2006; Twenge et al., 2001; Twenge et al., 2003).

Influence of relationships on selection of contingencies of self-worth. As described in the abovementioned Horberg and Chen (2010) study, when individuals were primed to think of a significant other (i.e., their father), they showed a high contingency for the domain that their significant other supported especially when they desired greater closeness with that person. They were found to put greater self-worth stake in areas that their significant other deemed important (i.e., they reported relationship-specific contingencies of self-worth). Horberg and Chen (2010) argued that this occurs due to mental representation. When a mental representation of a significant relationship (e.g., parent, romantic partner, friend) is activated, the associated relational self is also activated thereby defining, who the individual is during that activation. Relational self-framework theory suggests that mental representation occurs because rich descriptions of significant others (i.e., people whom the individual is emotionally invested in and are highly influenced by) are stored in long-term memory (Andersen & Chen, 2002). These

descriptions include knowledge about psychological, physical, and behavioral features, which include goals, standards, and beliefs held for the self. When the relational self is activated, individuals base their self-esteem in domains that their significant other(s) prefer and want them to achieve in.

Influence of relationship on successful pursuit of other domains. Extensive research outlines the importance of relationships and illustrates how failure in relational-contingencies of self-worth can create a negative domino effect of failure in pursuit of other self-worth domains (Baumeister et al., 2006; Horberg & Chen, 2010; Twenge et al., 2001, 2003). For example, negative evaluation of an individual's academic performance (Crocker, 2002) or physical appearance (Overstreet & Quinn, 2012) from another person can decrease an individual's perception of their self-worth in academic competence or appearance, respectively.

Alternative validation sources. Due to the dramatic effect that successful and unsuccessful pursuits of contingencies of self-worth can have on short-term and long-term emotional benefit, many researchers have investigated alternative validation sources in the areas of: internal self-validation (Crocker et al. 2003; Pyszczynski, Greenberg & Goldenberg, 2003; Sherman, Bunyan, Creswell, & Jaremka, 2009; Thomas, Ditzfeld, & Showers, 2013), group membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), culturally responsive relationships (Cholewa et al., 2014), and goals which benefit others (Crocker & Knight, 2005; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991).

Internal sources of self-validation. Research by Pyszczynski, Greenberg, and Goldenberg (2003) suggests that when individuals base their self-worth on external sources, and depend on conditional approval from others, they are prone to lower levels of self-esteem, narcissism, and/ or neuroticism. Whereas, when individuals base their self-worth on internal sources, it creates a buffer against low self-esteem and anxiety. According to self-affirmation

theory, when individuals can reflect on personally relevant values, they will be less likely to react defensively when they are presented with information that threatens or contradicts their sense of self (Sherman, Bunyan, Creswell, & Jaremka, 2009).

To demonstrate that practicing self-affirmation can attenuate stress caused by academic examination, Sherman, Bunyan, Creswell, and Jaremka, (2009) had a mixed-race group of 54 undergraduate students practice self-affirmations through the completion of two essays outlining important personal values two weeks prior to an academic examination. To measure stress levels, they collected urinary catecholamine excretion samples from the students fourteen days prior to the examination (i.e., baseline) and on the morning of the examination, in order to identify if epinephrine and norepinephrine (indicators of sympathetic nervous system activation) were present. Results revealed that cumulative epinephrine, from urinary samples, increased from baseline to academic examination for participants in the control group, whereas baseline to academic examination epinephrine levels did not change for participants in the self-affirmation condition. These results supported the belief that practice of self-affirmation can attenuate sympathetic nervous system responses to natural stressors.

Research on self-structure (i.e., the organization of self-knowledge) suggests that when individuals hold positive and negative attributes to each of their self-aspects they are less prone to vulnerability of negative attributes (Thomas, Ditzfeld, & Showers, 2013). For example, Joe has “myself at school” and “myself at the gym.” He uses attributes of being competent and tardy to describe himself at school, and attributes of being lovable and slow to describe himself at the gym. In this integrated version, Joe’s self-aspects contain both positive and negative attributes. Therefore, regardless of which of Joe’s self-aspects is activated, he will be able to access both positive and negative self-belief.

Group membership. In social identity theory, an alternative theory to contingencies of self-worth, a person's sense of self is impacted by their perception of group membership and that in order for an individual to increase their self-image they will enhance the status of the group they belong to, creating an "us" (i.e. in-group) versus "them" (i.e., out-group) social categorization (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Through this organization in order to enhance their own self-image, individuals will discriminate against the out-group. Social identity theory believes that there are three mental processes used to evaluate this "us" versus "them" comparison, which include categorization, social identification, and social comparison. Categorization, entails creating and using social labels in order to classify and conceptualize individuals and groups (e.g., Caucasian, Christian, student). Through this process, one learns behaviors associated with norms from social groups. Social identification includes personal identification with a particular social group (i.e., a group that you belong to). Through this process, one begins to act in mannerisms that are characteristic of their social group (i.e., conform to the norms of the selected social group). Social comparison involves comparison of your social group to other social groups. Through these mental processes, self-esteem is elevated when social comparison of one's aligned social group is viewed as favorable compared to a rival group, while self-esteem is reduced when one's social group is viewed as inferior.

Culturally responsive relationships. Currently, there is a dearth of research on how culturally responsive education is being implemented at the university level; however, research has investigated the impact of culturally responsive relationships on levels of self-worth at the elementary school level. Through a qualitative study Cholewa, Goodman, West-Olatunji, and Amatea (2014) investigated how culturally responsive relationships were established between an African American, grade five teacher and students of African American decent. This study was

examined through the perspective of relational cultural theory (RCT; Cholewa, Goodman, West-Olatunji, & Amatea, 2014). RCT is a theory of counselling and development that addresses the relational experiences of women and individuals in other devalued cultural groups. RCT supports multicultural and social justice movements by providing an alternative theoretical framework to examine issues related to marginalization, power, sex role socialization that affect the relational development and mental health of all people. Within the RCT theoretical framework, relationships are viewed as a key necessity for growth and healing. When a culturally responsive relationship is established, it is believed that an individual will experience the following elements: (a) a sense of self-worth, whereby they see value in themselves; (b) feelings of connection, whereby they desire to be connected with others outside their immediate relationship; (c) clarity, whereby they obtain an accurate understanding of themselves; and (d) empowerment, whereby they feel confident in their ability to act, which enables them to take action. It is believed that disconnection or inability to develop a culturally responsive relationship occur due to cultural oppression, racism, and other social injustices. Results revealed that when the teacher incorporated skills and knowledge from the students' lived experiences (i.e., protocol, music and dance) and familiar communication styles into educational curriculum, it aligned with culturally responsive features required in RCT interventions (Cholewa, Goodman, West-Olatunji, & Amatea, 2014). Analysis of the teacher's behavior indicated that incorporating the following aided in developing a culturally responsive relationship: (a) respecting and understanding student's values and worldviews (e.g., actively paying attention and listening to students feeling states), (b) incorporating students' opinions into school curriculum, and (c) sharing personal life experiences promoted validating experiences for students. Through the development of these relationships the researchers found

reduced psychological distress and enhanced psychological well-being (i.e., self-worth, connection, clarity, and empowerment).

Goals that benefits others. Crocker and Knight (2005) suggest that another alternative to contingent self-esteem is to adopt goals that serve yourself as well as others. They suggest that by pursuing goals that are good for the self as well as others, you can project good intentions towards others and create trust, which promotes respect, reciprocity, relevance, and responsibility. These values are principles that are also used in Aboriginal communities and teachings (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). Kirkness and Barnhart are two renowned Indigenous scholar who originally described the research framework known as the Four R's (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). This framework is used for understanding and engaging in Aboriginal research ethics and includes adherence to the following principles: respect, reciprocity, relevance, and responsibility. For example, respect can be demonstrated through validation goals when a goal is chosen that brings honour to another person. Reciprocity can be upheld when you engage in a goal that allows a two-way exchange of knowledge or resources. Relevance can be achieved when you choose a goal that serves a specific purpose for another individual or community. Lastly, responsibility can be maintained when you are accountable for the goals you chose to pursue. These four research principles have been recognized by main government research funding agency in Canada, such as the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, who use these principles as key concepts in the merit review of Indigenous research (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 2018).

This chapter has provided a brief review of the literature on contingencies of self-worth as they pertain to cross-cultural populations, university students, and Aboriginal Peoples. In relation to the four cross-cultural validation domains (i.e., relationships, activities, places, and

objects) successful and failed pursuit of self-worth was discussed. Lastly, the ramifications for overinvestment in one validation domain and influence of relationships on other self-worth domains were covered in this chapter.

Chapter 3: Method

This chapter begins with a description of the ontological and epistemological assumptions that support the research method used in this study. The second section discusses the relevancy of this study and proposed research questions. The third section outlines the methodological procedures used in this study, including description of the sample, procedures for data collection, and procedures for data analysis. The fourth section describes my own subjectivity in how I situated myself as a researcher. The fifth section discusses how the research findings were represented, including participant representation, the relationship between the researcher and participants, and the form of representing the results. The final section outlines issues of validity and the criteria used to evaluate the study's results.

Research Design

Critical realism, is an ontology that links ontological realism and epistemological social constructionism (Maxwell, 2012), and it has guided the narrative inquiry conducted in this study. Critical realism rejects characteristic positivist theoretical concepts (e.g., construction of theoretical terms and concepts based solely on, and described by, observational data) and believes in cause in both the social and natural sciences. The cultural context of intergenerational trauma needs to be taken into consideration when conducting research with Indigenous Peoples. Critical realism well aligns with this study because it views Indigenous Peoples' experiences of oppression, violence, and exclusion as truths (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Report (2015) outlined how Indigenous Peoples experienced cultural genocide when the Canadian government tried to assimilate Indigenous Peoples through residential schools. Residential schools were created to separate Indigenous children from their families in order to weaken and

minimize cultural and family ties and to indoctrinate Indigenous children into a Euro-Christian Canadian society. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada listened to stories from more than 6,000 witnesses, of which the majority were survivors of the residential school experience. These witnesses' reports are treated as truth claims of the oppression, violence, and exclusion that many Indigenous Peoples have experienced.

Social constructionism is an epistemology that assumes that individuals actively construct their reality through social interaction (i.e., experience) with others, culture, and history (Burr, 2003). This theory of knowledge contrasts positivist and post-positivist epistemologies that assumes there is an external objective reality that can be known. Social constructionism assumes that language provides the basis for thought, in that it produces and constructs our experiences of others and ourselves, and therefore is central to the construction process. Based on their theoretical assumptions regarding of the role that language has, social constructionist researchers analyze the language used in interview transcripts, written texts, and research interactions (e.g., recruitment screening, informed consent procedures, member checking conversations).

Assumptions of social constructionism have implications for how research may be conducted (Crotty, 1998). Knowledge, from a social constructionist perspective, is constructed as individuals engage with the world. As a result, researchers use open-ended questions to elicit participants to share their views and generate knowledge through social interaction. Additionally, since individuals make sense of the world through their cultural and historical perspectives, it is important to understand the setting and context of both ourselves and our participants as research is conducted. Finally, meaning is understood through interaction with others, so the process of interpretive research is primarily inductive with the researcher

extrapolating meaning from data collected, such as written texts or transcripts generated from in-depth interviews. The former will be used as the primary data source in this study.

Critical realism and social constructionism share the goal of seeking to understand multiple realities created through social interaction and work together to guide the research pursuit. On an ontological level, critical realism is used to describe how reality is conceptualized (i.e., reality is socially constructed). On an epistemological level, social constructionism is referenced to describe how knowledge is perceived (i.e., knowledge is generated through interaction with the social world).

Narrative inquiry. The research questions of a study should guide the researcher's choice of methodology and associated research methods used to study the participants' experiences (Polkinghorne, 2005). Additionally, epistemological assumptions held by the researcher guide the narrative methodology used to explore those research questions (Arvay, 2002). Two assumptions held for the purposed research include a belief that all human experience is storied and that Aboriginal Peoples' experience of meaning making occurs through oral storytelling in a social context. These beliefs fit with the assumptions held by narrative inquiry and social constructionism.

Narrative inquiry is built upon the following eight assumptions. First, within subjective human experience no objective truth can be known (Clandinin, 2006). Second, interior reality is subjective and contextualized (Wang & Geale, 2015). Third, through storytelling humans make their and other's life experiences known (Kramp, 2003). Fourth, the stories we tell provide continuity and coherence to our experiences (Huber, Caine, Huber, & Steeves, 2013). Fifth, no universal reader or singular interpretation of a text exists (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Sixth, all stories are situated within a cultural discourse (Green, 2013). Seventh, stories reflect recollection

of experience (Kramp, 2003). Eighth, stories reflect the intentions and purposes of human beings (Clandinin, 2006). These narrative assumptions regarding storytelling fit with the cultural practices of Aboriginal Peoples (Anderson, 2000). Aboriginal people use oral storytelling as a method for preserving and sharing their history as well as teaching Aboriginal values and practices.

An assumption of narrative inquiry is that individuals participate in the construction of their own identities (Hiles & Cermak, 2008; Murray, 2003), which can be shared with the researcher through the intentional telling of story (Riessman, 2002). Narrative inquiry allows the researcher to learn about the personal construction of past experiences, which may not be directly observable (Josselson & Lieblich, 2003). Exploration of an experience requires the participant to reflect and communicate the story of their experiences through language (Polkinghorne, 2005).

Stories serve as a medium by which researchers can enter a participant's world and learn about the participant's experience of the world (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). These narratives, however, are unique in that they are created for a particular purpose and audience, and are created in a particular setting (Chase, 2005). Within these narratives there is no objective true account of the participant's self-worth experience to reveal. Instead, their story generated through the interview process represents one instance of their life story that is affected by the context in which it is created. Narrative inquiry follows from social constructionism in that it assumes there is neither a single absolute truth in reality nor one correct interpretation of a text.

Narrative inquiry fit with my intention to understand sources of self-worth that Aboriginal university students sought to experience, which were experiences that could be expressed through the telling of story. Through the telling of story the participants were able to

structure their experiences and present social interaction from their perspective. Using narrative inquiry was useful in several ways. First, this methodology provided access into the unique lives of the participants and revealed how their social context and personal meaning of being an Aboriginal person contributed to their pursuit of self-worth. Second, it allowed me to understand how the participants attended to and understood their experience, constructed their self in a narrative manner, and how this was communicated (Riessman, 2002). Third, it enabled access to different areas of self-worth and examination of the influences that the environment had on self-worth (Cresswell, 2009).

Research Problem

Higher educational institutions provide multiple opportunities for personal development and learning (Pope, & Fermin, 2003); however it also subjects students to intrapersonal, interpersonal, environmental, and academic sources of stress (Ross, Niebling, & Heckert, 1999). In order to successfully navigate these hurdles of academic life, it is vital that students have access to self-worth domains (Crocker, 2002; Crocker & Luhtanen, 2003; Crocker et al., 2003; Crocker & Wolfe, 2001) and effective domain-specific coping skills (Struthers, Perry, & Menec, 2000) which are considered to enhance their sense of self-efficacy (Bandura & Locke, 2003), motivation, academic success, and academic retention (Zepke & Leach, 2010).

Access to sources of self-worth can be impaired for Aboriginal students who relocate from their traditional community (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, Coholic, Enosse, Peltier, & Pheasant, 2014). Relocation can contribute to a failed pursuit of self-worth which will leave them ill-equipped in their academic pursuits. When students come to university, they often move away from their home community, which encompassed their family and/or community support networks (Cummings, Lee, & Kraut, 2006), which may have served as a healing resource

(Bartlett, 2003). This is the case for many Aboriginal students who describe their experience of relocating to university from their close-knit home community as isolating (Kippen, Ward, & Warren, 2006). When an interdependent self-construal framework was used to explore areas that positively influence Aboriginal Peoples' conceptualization of an Aboriginal self-concept, the following areas were identified: family, culture, and spirituality (Goodwill & McCormick, 2012).

In a mixed methods study, Janelle, Lalibert, and Ottawa (2009) assessed the process and effects of traditional activities on self-esteem levels for a group of First-Nation youth. The goal of this study was to analyze how traditional cultural activities influenced the adolescents' management of social problems. Six male adolescents participated in the study. Participants spent five-weeks on an isolated forest site located on traditional land during difficult winter conditions with the research team. The study aimed to increase the participants' self-esteem by exposing them to demanding situations on the land whereby they would need to mentally and physically perform. The participants were first tasked with building a basecamp which required engagement in traditional activities (e.g., trapping, hunting, game preparation, story-telling). Participants were supervised by three Atikamek community workers during the study who had experience in crisis intervention and social work. To assess self-esteem, a situational self-esteem scale and a dispositional self-esteem scale were adapted to the Atikamek culture and the context of the study. An observational grid was used to assess implementation, pro-social behavior, cultural pride, community mobilization, and cultural promotion. Analysis of the systematic observation revealed that the participants were highly motivated, demonstrated pro-social behavior and cooperation, as well as, pride as a result of participating in the traditional activities. This study demonstrated that engagement in traditional activity can be an innovative tool for

managing physically and mentally demanding tasks and increasing pro-social behavior and cultural pride for First-Nation youth.

In a qualitative design, Goodwill and McCormick (2012) explored events that hinder and facilitate Aboriginal identity attainment and development. They interviewed twelve adult Aboriginal participants using the critical incident technique. Participants were asked to describe events that significantly hindered or helped their Aboriginal identity. Results by Goodwill & McCormick (2012) illustrated the interconnection between the individual, family, cultural, and community when conceptualizing self-concept for Aboriginal people. Participants described that at times each of these experiences could be dependent on access to traditional land, therefore engagement in these multidimensional aspects of Aboriginal life may require access to traditional land. Areas identified to hinder association with an Aboriginal self-concept included: disconnection from culture and community, misinformation/misrepresentations about Aboriginal peoples and culture, and experiences of racism (Bodkin-Andrews, Densen, & Bansel, 2013; Goodwill & McCormick, 2012) and negative representations of Aboriginal people. These findings indicate that promoting higher levels of inter-cultural respect would be beneficial for Aboriginal people who identify with an Aboriginal self-concept.

As a result of relocation, Aboriginal students may be unable to access sources of self-worth (i.e., relationships, activities, objects, and places) that would normally provide them with support and care during times of change and stress. For example, within relationships, students may be unable to access elders or extended family in their home community. Within activities, they may be unable to perform or engage in cultural protocols or spiritual connection. Within objects and places, they may be unable to obtain physical connection with land-based resources, such as native medicines.

Due to the impact that a failed pursuit of self-worth can have on a student's self-regulation, mental and physical health, relationships, autonomy, and learning (Crocker, 2002), alternative or modified sources of self-worth may need to be sought after and accessed while attending university in order to provide positive emotional evaluation of one's own value. However, prior to creation of alternative or modified sources of self-worth, exploration of current self-worth pursuits (i.e., successful and unsuccessful) needs to occur which is currently lacking in the scientific literature.

Rationale for the study. A limitation of the current literature is the dearth of information on successful or failed pursuit of self-worth for Aboriginal university students. As a result, information on self-worth pursuit by university students primarily relates to the experiences reported by Caucasian, African American, and Asian American students (Crocker et al., 2003; Ferraro, Escalas, & Bettman, 2011) and Hispanic students (Patrick, Neighbors, & Knee, 2004), which may not represent the belief and value systems of Aboriginal students. Without empirical documentation of this experience I defer to anecdotal self-reports of the Aboriginal students whom I have encountered. Aboriginal students reported difficulty in accessing sources of self-worth while attending university. In order to conceptualize alternative or modified sources of self-worth for Aboriginal students, preferred sources of self-worth need to be identified and then explored for their accessibility in a university environment.

Significance of current study. This study is unique in that it is the first to explore the pursuit of sources of self-worth that are specific to Aboriginal university students. This contributes to the research field of cross-cultural knowledge of self-worth by providing information on similarities and differences between Aboriginal Peoples and other cultural minority groups. This research gives a voice to how self-worth is defined and experienced by

Aboriginal Peoples when attending university and provides insight into the need to develop alternative or modified sources of self-worth when living away from one's traditional community. As a result, this research has educational, clinical, and social contributions. At the educational level university administrators can foster self-worth opportunities (e.g., cultural practices, Aboriginal student community on campus, land-based teachings) that are specific to Aboriginal students, which will support their educational pursuits. At the clinical level counsellors can use this knowledge when exploring contingencies of self-worth with their Aboriginal clients in order to gain awareness about of the emotional ramification associated with self-worth pursuit. At a social level, knowledge from this research can be used to support positive actions that Aboriginal people take to promote their self-worth and will provide testament of the benefits associated with these behaviors.

Personal significance and background. Relevant to this study is the current position I hold as an Aboriginal youth mentor. My role is to help bridge the gap between traditional community life and academia. Students I work with report that their expectations for community, care for the land, and healing practices are often not met or supported in academic environments. This incongruence creates culture shock, a feeling of disorientation experienced when one is subjected to an unfamiliar culture (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2005), which may paralyze and discourage their full engagement with the academic community, contributing to attrition and retention problems. It was hoped that analysis of self-worth themes from this study, would not only inform the mentorship practice I provide but also provide university institutions with information on what type of opportunities to offer Aboriginal students to facilitate their academic success and retention. This research speaks to and provides direction to university initiatives targeting Aboriginal students, such as those held by the University of British

Columbia which strives to promote a campus environment in which Aboriginal Peoples' perceptions and experiences are represented and promoted on campus and in the classroom (University of British Columbia, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

Given the need to empirically identify sources of self-worth specific to Aboriginal students, the main objective of this dissertation was to develop an understanding of what sources of self-worth Aboriginal students seek to experience to affirm their sense of self, self-worth, and purpose. A secondary objective was to assess how accessible these sources of validation are when living away from their home community to attend university.

Due to educational disparities that exist between Aboriginal people and their non-Aboriginal counterparts (i.e., underrepresentation and low retention rates of Aboriginal students in university), limited empirical understanding of sources of self-worth for Aboriginal people, and the impact that dislocation and/or failed pursuit of self-worth can have on a student's sense of purpose, motivation, academic success, and academic retention, this research project investigated Aboriginal students' sources and access to self-worth.

Research Questions

This research investigated the following two questions:

- 1) What are the sources of self-worth that Aboriginal university students seek to experience?
- 2) How do Aboriginal students seek to experience self-worth when attending university?

Methodological Procedures

Research context. In 2013-2014, there were 49,896 students enrolled at the University of British Columbia, of which 1.8% ($n = 881$) were Aboriginal (University of British Columbia,

2013). The Aboriginal sample from this university was sufficient to conduct this research, which is why participants were recruited from the University of British Columbia (UBC).

Participants. With the goal of exploring sources of self-worth that Aboriginal students seek, six Aboriginal university students were recruited to participate in the study. Table 1. displays the demographics for the six Aboriginal student participants. Narrative inquiry does not predetermine the number of participants required for research (Josselson & Lieblich, 2003). Instead the richness and diversity of the data influences what a researcher can understand and report on a phenomenon (Butina, 2015). Due to the labor-intensive and intricate analytical procedures used in narrative inquiry, large sample sizes are not used in most narrative studies (Jones, 2003). The usual sample size in narrative inquiry is between five to eight participants according to Butina (2015) and Jones (2003). The use of six participants for the current investigation was justified by the labour intensive nature of the inquiry involving data collection from written narratives, focus group, and thematic content analysis review in this study.

Inclusion criteria. The participants selected for this study meet all of the following inclusion criteria: (a) that they identified themselves as an Aboriginal person (i.e., First Nations, Inuit, or Métis); (b) that they were students enrolled at UBC; (c) that they had completed a minimum of three months of university study; and (d) that they were willing to participate in all data collection procedures (i.e., written narrative, focus group, and thematic content analysis review). These inclusion criteria of identification as an Aboriginal person and enrollment at a university were selected so that study results could speak to sources of self-worth that are sought after by Aboriginal university students. The criterion of being currently enrollment at UBC was included to provide sufficient access to Aboriginal university student populations in the Greater Vancouver (GV) area. In addition, UBC has a formalized Aboriginal student organization,

which the researcher had access to for the purpose of recruitment. The inclusion of availability to participate in all stages of data collection procedures was incorporated to ensure that each participant's voice and opinion were included at both the data collection and data analysis stages in order to increase the robustness of the study's results. Students who met the following exclusion criteria did not participate in this study: (a) that they had not completed three months of university education; (b) did not consent to being videotaped; and (c) could not conduct the written narrative and focus group in English. The exclusion criterion of having less than three months of university education was adopted in order to select participants who had experienced at least one semester of university and could report on how that experience of university has influenced their pursuit of self-worth.

Summative Participant Profile						
Participant	Vanessa Adams	Brooke Carillon	Sydney Smith	Sandi	Rose-Mary Willows	Brittany
Community/ cultural affiliation (e.g., Nation, Band, Clan)	Haida Nation, Haida Gwaii	Haudenosaunee, Kanyen'keha Nation	Saddle Lake Cree Nation	Saulteaux	Interior Salish	Tahltan and Tsimshian, Kitselas Nation
Age	24	25	20	56	29	24
Sex and gender	Female, woman	Female, woman	Female, woman	Female, woman	Female, woman	Female, woman
Current degree program, and year of study	Master of Science, 1 st year	Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum Studies, 1 st year	Bachelor of Science in Nutrition, 3 rd year	Bachelor of Humanities, 2 nd year	Master of Arts in Education, 2 nd year	Bachelor of Education, 1 st year
Number of years in post- secondary education	7	7	3	5	6	4
Fluent in English	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 1. Summative participant profile demographics for six study participants.

Recruitment. Access to a research sample ($N = 6$) of Aboriginal students at UBC who meet the above inclusion criteria were sought through collaboration with the Aboriginal affairs offices located at UBC, as well as the SAGE (Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement) network. Following ethical approval from UBC Ethics Board, all Aboriginal students at UBC were offered an opportunity to participate in the study through an electronic mailing list and paper advertisements of the study (see Appendix H for Study Advertisement), as well as exponential non-discriminative snowball sampling. Through this form of snowball sampling, third-party recruiters distributed study recruitment information to potential participants. Potential participants were then given the opportunity to directly contact the research team if they wished to participate in the study. Note, that the contact information for potential participants were not obtained unless the third-party recruiter had obtained consent from potential participants. An electronic study advertisement was sent to Aboriginal affairs offices and the SAGE network, which was then distributed on the Aboriginal student electronic mailing lists (see Appendix I for Study Advertisement Request). Connection to Aboriginal student electronic mailing list was arranged through a relationship with Aboriginal affairs offices located at UBC, as well as the SAGE network. Additionally, the Aboriginal affairs office was given a paper study advertisement that was displayed in their Aboriginal student gathering space (i.e., University of British Columbia First Nations Longhouse).

Ethical recruitment considerations. Conducting research with Aboriginal populations demanded attention to cultural norms for consent procedures, data collection, and the dissemination of results (Castellano, 2004). Particular consideration was made to Aboriginal principles of ethical research and practice (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). To begin to engage and understand Aboriginal research ethics the following principles needed to be adhered to: (a)

reciprocity, (b) relevance, (c) respect, and (d) responsibility. Reciprocity was upheld through a two-way exchange of learning and research knowledge, which means that both the Aboriginal persons and academia benefited from effective research relationships and ethical training. Relevance was achieved when culture and community needs were the catalyst for research, which ensured the success of Aboriginal research and training. Respect was fostered when Aboriginal Peoples' diverse knowledge was valued. Responsibility, a necessary requirement for empowerment, was maintained when active and rigorous engagement and participation was sought from Aboriginal People and the Aboriginal community.

Email contact to prospective participants. Prospective participants responding to the electronic and/or paper study advertisement were initially contacted by email by the researcher. Eligible participants were scheduled for an in-person meeting to review and collect informed consent. During this initial email contact, the participants were provided with the informed consent form and were provided an opportunity to ask questions about the study purpose and procedures.

Informed consent. Participants met with the researcher in-person to review and collect informed consent. A consent form with an explanation of study research procedures, level of confidentiality, means of recording data, right to withdraw, benefits and potential risks, and approval of the study by the UBC research ethics board was presented to the participants (see Appendix G). During the consent process, participants were notified that they would be given \$25 for their submission of the written narrative portion of the study and an additional \$25 at the beginning of the study focus group. After submitting the consent form, each participant was provided with instructions for completing the validationgram exercise and plans for email follow-up regarding the written narrative.

Validationgram. Research suggests that experienced meaning is not always accessible in an individual's awareness and that a researcher can help facilitate this process by providing the participant with a space and time for reflection (Polkinghorne, 2007). To utilize this method, following the obtainment of study consent, the validationgram activity (Ishiyama, 1995; see Appendix A) was given to study participants to facilitate awareness of self-worth domains prior to construction of their written narrative. Figure 1. illustrates an example of a participant's completed validationgram for this study.



Figure 1. Example of a participant's completed validationgram.

The validationgram exercise has been shown to be effective in facilitating reflection of previous experiences (Ishiyama, 1995). The validationgram is a semi-structured idiographic counselling tool which facilitates non-threatening and effective exploration of self-worth sources. The validationgram examines four validation domains: relationships, places, activities, and objects. The validationgram exercise invites participants to indicate and freely discuss their sources of validation within these domains. Following completion, participants were asked to reflect on their validationgram and use it in constructing their written narrative. After completing the validationgram exercise, each participant was provided with emailed instructions for constructing a written narrative (see Appendix B for Written Narrative instructions), details regarding the focus group, and plans for email follow-up after the focus group.

Types and sources of data. Narrative research analyzes stories or descriptions of event sequences and assumes that the story is a fundamental unit that describes human experience (Riessman, 2002). For employment of this methodology in the current study, a participant's written narrative (i.e., four- to six-page description of their self-worth experiences at university) became the primary data for analysis. The participants' written account of their self-worth experiences was used as the primary source of data to understand the participants' subjective experiences presented in their own words. Focus group dialogue (e.g., oral sharing of written narratives, group thematic content analysis, member checking) provided by participants and the researcher served as a secondary source of data (i.e., dialogue excerpts from the focus group were used to illustrate the group thematic content analysis themes). This secondary data source emerged as a result of sharing and analyzing the participants' written narratives. This secondary data source was used to illustrate how the participants and the researcher collectively constructed self-worth themes based off of the participants' shared self-worth experiences.

Role of participants, researcher, and committee expert reviewers. Each member of the study served a vital role in the exploration and reporting of the sources of self-worth that Aboriginal post-secondary students seek to experience. The participants were active in the data collection and data analysis for this study. First, participants had the ownership of their personal stories and were free to describe their experience as an Aboriginal university student and how it had contributed to their sense of self-worth from their own subjective perspective, in a written and oral format. Second, participants were responsible for identifying cross-participant themes in their experiences of self-worth. Third, participants were responsible for reviewing and providing feedback when necessary on the results section of this dissertation, which summarized the findings of the focus group thematic content analysis. During the data collection phase, the researcher had a facilitative role in the collection of study data (i.e., written narratives and focus group dialogue). During the data analysis phase, the researcher first conducted an independent thematic content analysis of the participants' written narratives. Second, during the focus group the researcher led the participants in a group thematic content analysis of their shared oral stories. Third, through the employment of the Listening Guide method (Brown & Gilligan, 1992) the researcher reviewed the recorded conversations made during the focus group to identify dialogue excerpts that supported the themes created during the group thematic content analysis. The committee expert reviewers each offered their expertise throughout the dissertation process as their area of expertise dictated. For example, the researcher's independent thematic content analysis was reviewed by a committee member who has expertise in applying Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic content analysis (see Appendix D).

Procedures for data collection. Data was collected from each participant through the use of a written narrative and subsequent focus group discussion. Data collection occurred from

January to March, 2018. This time frame enabled access to students while they resided in the Greater Vancouver (GV) area during the second semester of the school calendar for UBC. Data collection for the written narrative and focus group occurred electronically and in-person, respectively. Written narratives were completed individually by each participant and sent to the researcher electronically. The focus groups included all study participants and took place at the University of British Columbia. Prior to data collection, participants were contacted by email and in-person to screen for study inclusion and exclusion criteria as well as provide informed consent for study participation in-person. Eligible participants were scheduled a written narrative submission time (e.g., two-week completion period following completion of study consent process), and the date for the focus group was scheduled once all participants had submitted their written narrative. Upon completion of the results section for this dissertation, all participants received a copy of the results section (including excerpts from the focus group dialogue) for review. Written feedback from the participants on the group thematic content analysis were incorporated into the final results section.

Written narrative. Participants were asked to complete a four to six-page written narrative. Through the written narrative, participants were asked to share their experience of being an Aboriginal university student and how it had contributed to their sense of self-worth and utilization of self-worth domains. The participants' experiences of self-worth were expressed through their written narrative, with the inclusion of responses to specific questions prepared by the researcher (see Appendix B). Participants were reminded upon email submission of their written narrative that they would be contacted by email on two more occasions, first, for a focus group to orally share written narratives with other study participants and identify cross-participant themes, and second, to provide input on final study results.

Focus group. In order to accommodate participants' schedules, two focus groups were conducted separately. All participants were present at one of the two focus groups and met together with the researcher for the purpose of witnessing the oral reading of other participant's written narratives (A procedure recommended by M. Buchanan, personal communication, 2017).

Figure 2. displays the visual sequencing of focus group steps.

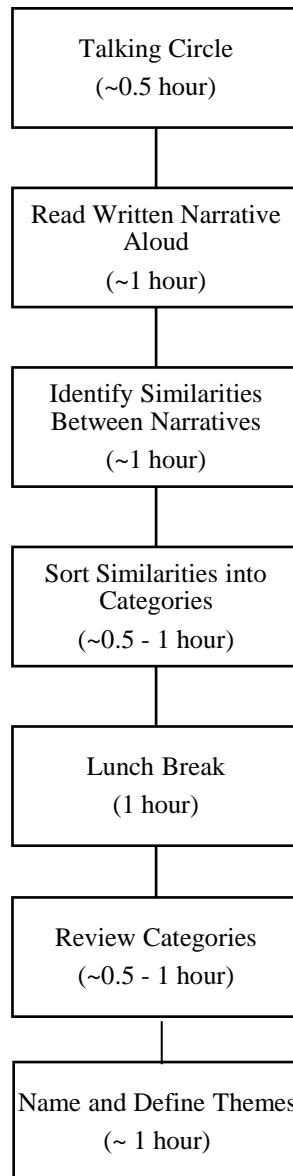


Figure 2. Visual sequencing of focus group steps

Each focus group began with a talking circle where an eagle feather was used to signify the speaker and each participant was given the opportunity to introduce themselves and explain their connection to the land. Participants were then asked to read their written narrative aloud. After the reading of each narrative, participants shared how their own story was similar or different to other stories that were shared. Participants were provided with pen, paper, and sticky-notes to aid in the creating of codes, categories, and themes during the focus group. Photo 1 and 2 displays the audio recording and talking circle layout used at each focus group.



Photo 1. Focus group audio recording layout.
Copyright 2018 by N. Wawrykow



Photo 2. Focus group talking circle layout.
Copyright 2018 by N. Wawrykow

The researcher wrote out the similarities identified by participants on a white board and the participants then sorted the commonalities into categories (see example in Photo 3.). Participants were then given a one-hour lunch break with provided lunch and refreshments. After the lunch break the participants were given time to review and refine the categories that they created. Finally, participants were asked to name/label shared experiences that represented each category to identify themes across participant's written narratives (see example in Photo 4.). Participants' dialogue guided the conversation during each step of the focus group with inclusion of facilitation questions provided by the researcher (see Appendix C).

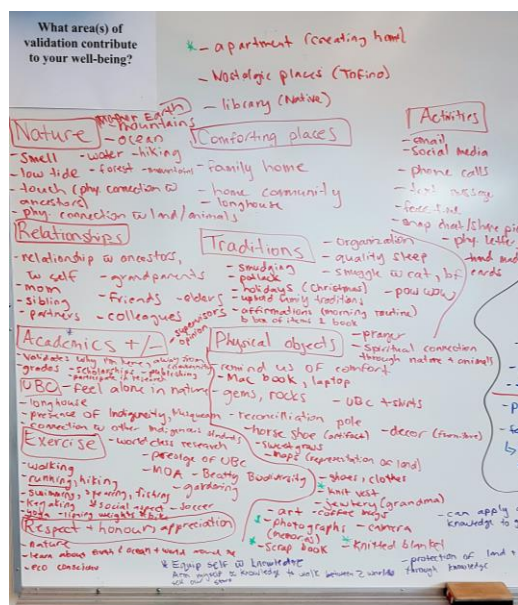


Photo 3. Group thematic content analysis: sorting similarities into categories. Copyright 2018 by N. Wawrykow

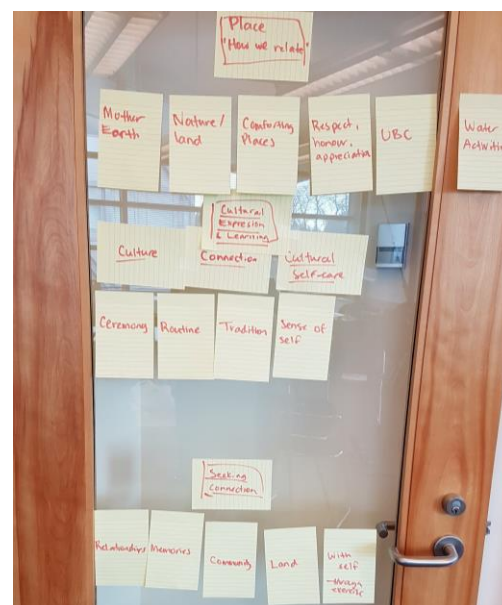


Photo 4. Group thematic content analysis: reviewing categories and naming themes. Copyright 2018 by N. Wawrykow

Procedure for data analysis. Participants' written narratives were the primary source of data analyzed in this study. This data was analyzed through a group thematic content analysis, during each focus group, to generate validation themes. Dialogue excerpts from each focus group were used as a secondary source of data to illustrate the group thematic content analysis themes. Dialogue excerpts from the focus group were selected through the use of the listening guide method (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). The listening guide method and procedure used to transcribe dialogue excerpts is described below in the section entitled researcher's role in analysis.

Two dimensions were considered when determining the type of narrative analysis that was used in this study to examine the participants' written narratives. The first dimension considered was the unit of analysis (i.e., holistic or categorical), and the second was the focus of analysis (i.e., content or form). Holistic analysis involves examining the entire text, whereas

categorical analysis involves analyzing sections of the entire text (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998).

Content-oriented analysis explores the narrative from the viewpoint of the participant, by inquiring about the meaning and details of their narrative. Form-oriented analysis examines the structure of the narrative, including but not limited to the narrative's plot, event sequence in relation to time, narrative style, coherence, emotions evoked, and complexity. A holistic-content approach was used for this study. Thematic content analysis was conducted first by the researcher independently of the research participants, and second by the researcher and research participants in a collaborative manner (see Appendix E for visual sequencing of a data analysis) referred to as a group thematic content analysis in this study.

Researcher's role in analysis. Once participants completed their written narrative, the data were subjected to a modified version of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic content analysis (M. Buchanan, personal communication, 2017) by the researcher. This was done to conceptualize themes across participants' narratives, which were used to facilitate conversation and exploration of themes during the focus group stage of data analysis. Following this independent thematic analysis, a group thematic content analysis was conducted by both the researcher and study participants. A description of the thematic content analysis process is described below.

Thematic content analysis. To understand themes across participants' narratives the data in this study was subjected to a modified version of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic content analysis. This analysis involved six steps, including: familiarization with the data, creation of initial codes, a search for categories, review of categories, naming and definition of themes, and translation of the themes into a report.

Familiarization with the data involved actively reading and taking notes of the data multiple times for meaning, possible codes, and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This step was then followed by the creation of initial codes. The creation of codes required identification of features of the data and organization of the data into meaningful groups. Data is coded in its entirety for as many patterns as possible, situated with relevant surrounding data, and when needed, coded with multiple codes. The third step involved a search for categories. This step involved considering how many different codes could be combined together to create overarching categories (M. Buchanan, personal communication, 2017). During this step, visual representations of the codes and categories were made through construction of an initial thematic map, which was later used to create category themes. The fourth step included a review of the created categories and involved refinement of categories. To begin this step, codes within each theme were re-read to evaluate coherency. Then, revisions of themes were made with the potential creation of new themes until consistency was achieved. Lastly, the themes were reviewed holistically to determine if they represented the data set as a whole. During this step, the development of the thematic map was used to facilitate the refinement of categories. The fifth step required the naming and definition of study themes. This step involved identifying the crux of each theme and assigning it a name. The assigned definition is meant to operationalize each theme and identify how it relates to the study's main and sub research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The final step involved the translation of themes into the study report. This sixth step involved reporting the data in a coherent, non-repetitive, and interesting manner, which conveyed the value of the analysis process, responded to the research questions, and provided data extracts that reflected the themes.

Conversations made during the focus group were video recorded and then reviewed by the researcher using the Listening Guide method (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). The focus group dialogue was reviewed by the author to identify dialogue excerpts that illustrated the self-worth themes generated through the group thematic content analysis. Upon completion of the results section for this dissertation, the results section (including excerpts from the focus group dialogue) was sent to each of the participants for review. Each participant was thanked for their participation in the study and was asked to share feedback they had on the study results. Participants were told that all feedback would be welcomed, and that the writer would incorporate revisions, additions, and/or suggestion that they had. Once each participant had revised and/or approved the content of the results section the researcher combined each participants' revisions into the final results section. Below is an example of how a participant's feedback was incorporated into the final results section. The participant (Vanessa) was responding to the following results section passage sent by the author: "These relationships were described as pivotal to the development and maintenance of their cultural identity because the majority of Aboriginal cultural teachings, described by the participants, were specific to each band and/or nation; due to cultural privacy protocols these teachings are only taught and practiced within their home community."

This [passage] is not true for the Haida Nation. We had a traditional pole raising on UBC last year, we had one in Alberta, we celebrate many events in the city in a traditional way and we do not hold practices secret because we gather our strength and resilience through sharing our culture and being inclusive. You do mention that the teachings are specific to

each band but I would feel more comfortable and represented if this said “in most cases”.

(Vanessa)

In response to the participant’s feedback the former results section passage was revised to the following:

These relationships were described as pivotal to the development and maintenance of their cultural identity, because many of the Aboriginal cultural teachings, described by the participants, were specific in most cases to each band and/or nation; due to cultural privacy protocols some teachings were only taught and practiced within their home community (as cited in Wawrykow, 2020, p. 98).

Listening guide method. The Listening Guide method requires the researcher to conduct multiple and successive reviews of a conversations, whereby the researcher reviews the dialogue content in a different way during each listening (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). I followed the four different ways of reviewing according to the Listening Guide method (Brown & Gilligan, 1992), including: (a) a reflexive review; (b) the tracing of narrated subjects; (c) a review for relational narrated subjects; and (d) a review for structured subjects (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008). During the reflexive review I asked myself what was occurring in the dialogue and paid interest to recurring themes, plots, words, characters, and events. While tracing the narrated subjects I paid attention to particular subjects in the dialogue to understand how the participants spoke about their perception of the social world. During the review for relational narrated subjects I identified social, intimate, and close relations expressed by the speaker in order to understand the narrated self-in-relation. In the fourth review I identified the structured subjects mentioned by

the participants in order to understand the power relations and ideologies expressed in their narrative.

Transcription of focus group excerpts. Verbatim excerpts of dialogue from the focus group were used to support themes generated from the group thematic content analysis. The excerpts were transcribed using a method of transcription that reflected the complexity and diversity of the verbal and non-verbal communication associated with each phrase and word used by the participants and researcher (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999). Salient non-verbal gestures, such as body language and facial expressions, were included in the transcript through the use of notations (see Appendix F for transcription coding key). The purpose of transcribing the dialogue excerpts was not to provide an objective representation of the focus group conversation but instead to illustrate the themes that the focus group identifies during the group thematic content analysis. This transcription reflects my theoretical assumptions and purposes for the study data. The transcribing of selected focus group excerpts serves as the second stage of data analysis for the focus group data.

Researcher's and participants' collaborative roles in analysis. As outlined in the focus group section, participants identified similarities between the stories shared by each participant. During this process, the researcher wrote out on a white board the shared experiences reported by the participants and facilitated their conversation on generating labels (i.e., codes) for those shared experiences. As the conversation progressed, the researcher led the participants through the task of collapsing similar labels into overarching categories. Next, the participants reviewed the categories with the researcher and refined them as needed. Finally, the participants created and named the overarching themes that pertained to their identified categories to identify themes across participant's written narratives. Since it was a collaborative process, each members'

perspective in the focus group (i.e., researcher and participants) was taken into consideration when conducting the analysis. If a disagreement on the labeling of a category or theme occurred, then the researcher made a note of the discrepancy in the reporting of identified self-worth themes. Upon completion of the results section for this dissertation, all participants were sent a copy of the results section (including excerpts from the focus group dialogue) for review. Participants were given an opportunity to make revisions to the results section and these revisions were incorporated into the final report of self-worth themes.

Triangulation. Triangulation, the process of bringing together multiple sources of data to understand the research in question (Marshall & Rossman, 2016), was built into the study's research design. I was able to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' subjective self-worth experiences by using multiple sources of data (i.e., written narrative, focus group, and note taking). As a result of participants serving as study analysts who helped in the identification and review of research themes, analyst triangulation was part of the study's research design. Triangulation of data, through the use of triangulation of sources and analyst triangulation, strengthened the robustness of the research findings.

Member checks. Member checks refers to activities wherein the research findings (i.e., data, themes, interpretations, and conclusions) are evaluated by the members of the group from whom the data was originally obtained (Creswell, 2012). As a result of participant participation in the focus group thematic content analysis of the study, member checks occurred simultaneously with their thematic content analysis (i.e., identification, labeling, and review of study themes).

Researcher Subjectivity

An assumption that I held as a researcher is the view that knowledge is co-constructed through the social interaction among individuals in a cultural, historical, and political context, which is why a social constructionist epistemology was selected to guide this research. Due to this social interaction my goal in creating the research findings of this study was to incorporate the subjective accounts of myself and the study participants in a non-hierarchical fashion. As a multicultural individual (i.e., First Nations, Ukrainian, and Canadian) I am aware that I brought cultural aspects of myself in addition to the roles I hold (e.g., mother, wife, daughter, sister, student, counsellor) and life experiences I have had to the research I conducted. Additionally, I identify with the Aboriginal research ethics principles that have been referenced in the recruitment section of this paper and therefore adhered to the assumptions of reciprocity, relevance, respect, and responsibility throughout the conduction of this research. To aid in maintaining researcher subjectivity I consulted with my research supervisor, Dr. Ishu Ishiyama, on an as-needed basis throughout this study. His research knowledge was used as a sounding board for evaluating my own researcher subjectivity throughout the research process.

To position myself in the research process as the interviewer I engaged in my own reflective inquiry to illustrate my relation to the research phenomenon. This was accomplished by journaling my experience of the research process and keeping notes of my reactions (e.g., emotions, agreements, disagreements) to participants' narratives. This was useful, given my experience of being an Aboriginal student and developing my own sense of self-worth.

To gain and maintain access to the research process I continued to learn about interpretive research through continual review of associated literature. To maintain my relationship with the urban Aboriginal community in the GV area I continued to participate in

Aboriginal events and protocol and engaged in reciprocity by continuing to volunteer with one of the local First Nations communities.

Representation of the Research Findings

When articulating the stories and experiences of participants in a research project it is important to include their voices in the representation of the research findings (Riessman, 2002). In order to evoke the participants' experiences while making my influence explicit I represented the researching findings in my dissertation through the inclusion of a thematic content analysis (based off of participants' written narratives and collective focus group thematic content analysis) and transcript excerpts from focus group dialogue.

Through the inclusion of a thematic content analysis I aimed to honour the stories, voices, and shared experiences of the study participants. As previously mentioned, my decision to involve the participant's in the group thematic content analysis was to provide a more robust exploration of study data. My intention of including dialogue excerpts from this focus group discussion was done to illustrate that the participants' voices and views were similar to my own.

Upon completion of this dissertation, I plan to share research findings with audiences in multiples settings (e.g., academic conferences, Aboriginal community presentations, conversations with Aboriginal students that I mentor) in order to honour the participants that participated in this study as well as enable their experiences to facilitate change at the university level (e.g., academia can create access to or modifications of the identified sources of self-worth specific to Aboriginal students, which will fuel their sense of identity and purpose).

Criteria for Evaluating Study Validity

In order to strengthen the quality and validity of research findings it is vital to demonstrate trustworthiness (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The following criteria were used to

evaluate the trustworthiness of the research findings of this narrative inquiry: comprehensiveness, verisimilitude, resonance, and pragmatic value.

Both the triangulation of sources and analyst triangulation, as well as member checks, were used to support the comprehensiveness, verisimilitude, and resonance of research findings. Evaluation of the results section by the research, study participants, and committee members were used to assess the pragmatic value of the research findings.

Comprehensiveness refers to the extent that the research findings are complete and comprehensive in covering all aspects of study's research questions (Buchanan, personal communication, 2017). The use of triangulation of sources enabled examination of the degree of consistency across data sources and provided continuity and coherence to the shared experiences of the participants. Additionally, analyst triangulation allowed for identification of multiple ways of understanding the data and generation of research findings. As outlined above in the participant's role in analysis, both the triangulation of sources and analyst triangulation, as well as member checks, were used to support the credibility of research findings. In narrative inquiry it is believed that no objective truth can be known, therefore the use of triangulation of sources enables examination of the degree of consistency across data sources and provides continuity and coherence to the shared experiences of the participants. Additionally, analyst triangulation allowed for identification of multiple ways of understanding the data and generated research findings. The employment of member checks allowed participants to describe their actions and responses, correct errors and challenge incorrect interpretations, and confirm the adequacy of study findings (i.e., establish the validity of the participants' account). This allowed for participants to evaluate the robustness of study findings. It allowed for inclusion of additional data or changes that needed to be made to the research findings.

Verisimilitude refers to the sense of authenticity that can be associated with a text when depicting the narratives of study participants (Schwandt, 2014). When the researcher makes the world of the participants real to the reader; verisimilitude of the study results is upheld. To demonstrate verisimilitude, excerpts from the focus group dialogue were included in order to illustrate the themes generated during the group thematic content analysis.

Resonance refers to the ability to affect, influence, or move a reader through evocative or aesthetic representations (Tracy, 2010). Resonance was upheld by including thick descriptions and detailed accounts of studied experiences for each of the participants' stories when describing the research findings (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The following quote of Rose-Mary (pseudonym) offers an example of how holistic connection and balance is associated with her experience of self-worth.

You know the more we talk about this it's so clear that everything is connected. It's holistic you know. I honestly feel the most balanced, the most validated when I can access things in each area. When I connect with important relationships (like my aunts and cousins), when I am on the land, in ceremony, and can access the medicines from home. Balance. It is so important. Really, if I lose connection with one area it ends up having a domino effect on the rest. **(Rose-Mary)**

Resonance describes how the research findings resonate and are critiqued by the study members. Through member checks of the research findings with the study participants, the researcher asks each participant, "Do these findings resonate with the story as you told it?"

Pragmatic value refers to the usefulness of the research (Buchanan, personal communication, 2017). As previously mentioned, the study results were examined by the researcher, study participants, and committee members. They each evaluated the relevance, timeliness, significance, and interest of the research findings in relation to the contribution that they will make to the fields of research, education, and social practice. Through this evaluative step, the researcher asks themselves, “How are these findings useful? Are they compelling enough to evoke action?” Here are two examples, from study participants, as to how the research from this study is useful.

Brittany: We need more groups like this, who meet and support each other. I know that’s not the point of this group but it’s good to hear other people’s stories and take time for ourselves. ... Take part in this has actually made me want to connect more with my culture. I’m going to try and go to more [Indigenous student] lunches and set more time aside for the things that I now realize are really important to me.

Brooke: I feel the same way. I’m going to tell other [Indigenous students] about this. We need to support each other. If the university could really incorporate these kinds of programs imagine how strong we would be. It would really help us get through the stress of school.

This chapter provided a description of the ontological and epistemological assumptions that support the research method used in this study. It also addressed the relevancy of this study, proposed research questions, and methodological procedures used. In addition, it described my own subjectivity in how I situated myself as a researcher and how I represented the research findings. Finally, the issues of validity and the criteria used to evaluate the study’s results were

elucidated. The next chapter describes the results of the study. It will begin with a discussion of the identified validation themes related to Aboriginal students' well-being; sense of self, identity, and purpose; cultural identity; and handling of academic setbacks.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter begins with a summary of study results, including study validation themes and dialogue excerpts that relate to Aboriginal students': (a) well-being; (b) sense of self, identity, and purpose; (c) cultural identity; and (d) handling academic setbacks. This is followed by themes associated with inaccessible and alternative sources of validation for Aboriginal students when attending university. The last section presents themes associated with reasons that prevent Aboriginal students from accessing sources of validation and discusses desired future Aboriginal student university programming.

The group thematic content analysis resulted in the creation of the following nine areas of discussion for this dissertation: (a) sources of validation that contribute to Aboriginal students' well-being; (b) sources of validation that affirm Aboriginal students' sense of self, identity, and purpose; (c) how Aboriginal students pursue sources of validation when attending university; (d) sources of validation that contribute to Aboriginal students' cultural identity; (e) sources of validation that Aboriginal students pursue when they have an academic setback; (f) sources of validation that Aboriginal students are unable to access while attending university; (g) alternative sources of validation that Aboriginal students access while attending university; (h) reasons that prevent Aboriginal students from accessing sources of validation; and (i) desire for future Aboriginal university student programming. The results of the group thematic content analysis of the identified validation experiences are presented in Figures 4-11 shown below. Within these areas there were: (a) four main themes that relate to sources of validation that contribute to Aboriginal students' well-being; (b) three validation themes that relate to their sense of self, identity, and purpose; (c) five validation themes that relate to their cultural identity; and (d) three themes that relate to handling academic setbacks. In relation to inaccessible and alternative

sources of validation when attending university, one main theme was derived for inaccessible sources, and two main themes for alternative sources of validation. Five themes relating to reasons preventing access to sources of validation, and three themes relating to desired future programming for Aboriginal students were also identified. Each of these areas and corresponding themes are discussed below with the inclusion of focus group dialogue excerpts.

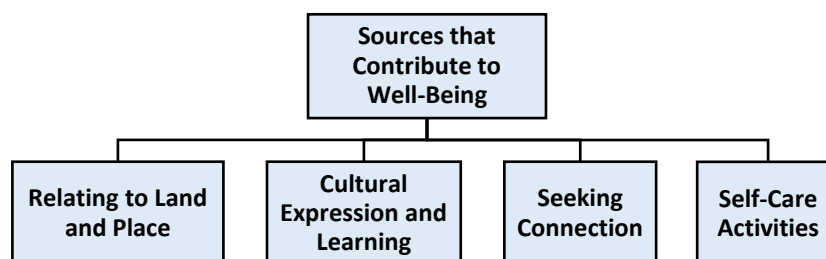


Figure 3. Four validation themes related to well-being.

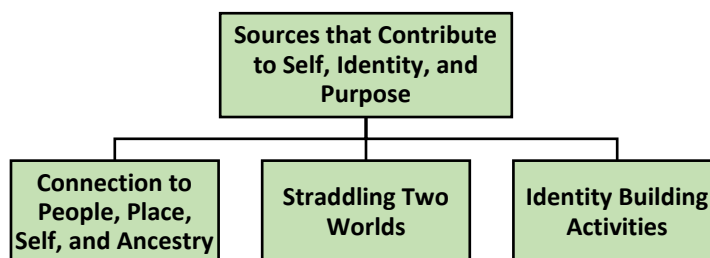


Figure 4. Three validation themes related to self, identity, and purpose.

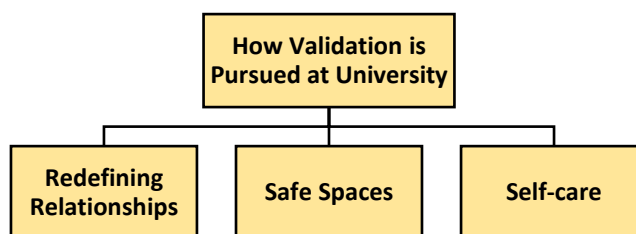


Figure 5. Three themes related to validation pursuit at university.

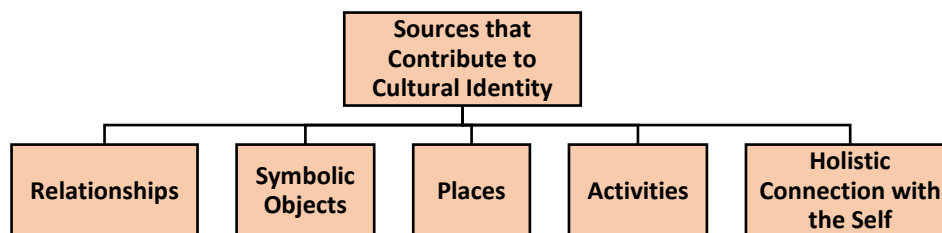


Figure 6. Five validation themes related to cultural identity.

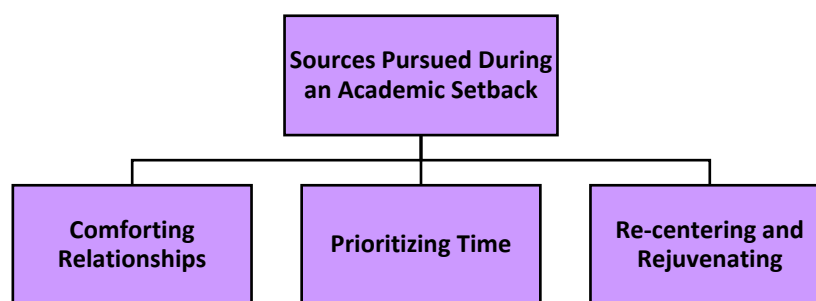


Figure 7. Three validation themes related to handling academic setbacks.

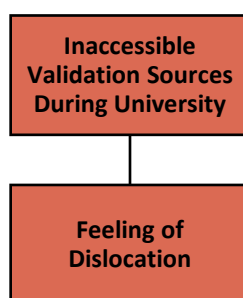


Figure 8. Inaccessible sources of validation theme.

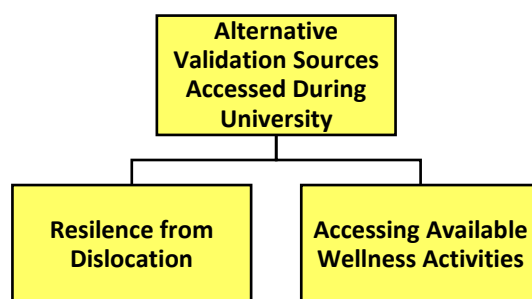


Figure 9. Accessible alternative sources of validation themes.

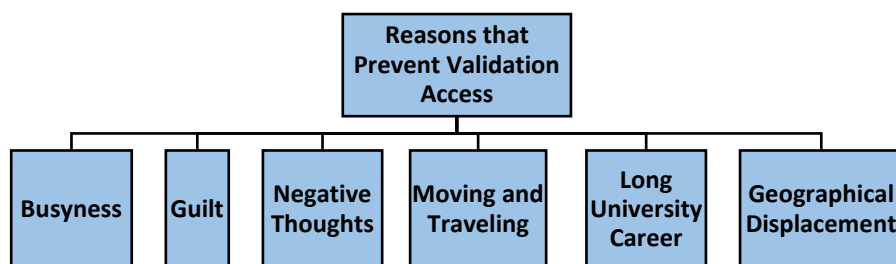


Figure 10. Six themes related to reasons that prevent validation access.

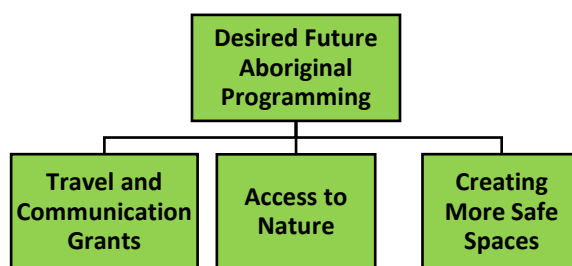


Figure 11. Three themes related to future programming.

Due to the similarities in themes created independently across the two focus groups, in response to the abovementioned nine areas of discussion, the narrative data were collapsed into one pool of data for the thematic content analysis across the two focus groups. To illustrate the extracted themes presented in each area of discussion, dialogue excerpts from the study focus groups have been included.

Sources of Validation that Contribute to Aboriginal Students' Well-Being

Four themes emerged through discussion of sources of validation that contribute to Aboriginal student participants' well-being (i.e., their positive state of existence).

How we relate to land and place. Connection to land and place was a hallmark source of validation across all participants. All participants articulated how connection with their traditional ancestral land, nature, and/or mother earth provided them with a sense of comfort, respect, honour, and appreciation that validated their sense of well-being. They described how comforting places (e.g., home community, cedar forests; ocean, traditional, ancestral, and the unceded territory of the Musqueam people that the University of British Columbia is on) were identified as meaningful sources of rejuvenation, a medium for reflecting on their past actions and ancestors, grounding in the present, and introspection for planning for the future. Participants expressed how relating to land is essential when expressing who they are as an Aboriginal person and how they relate to other Aboriginal Peoples.

When I am in the natural environment of my home, I can feel my ancestors' presence and they help bring me strength and purpose within the world around me. ... Specific areas where I've found a deep connection to the Earth have been the historical village sites of where my family originated from, remote and secluded waterfalls, naturally sourced hot springs, and the beach by my house. As well as the forests with moss beds to lay on and stare up through the trees to feel amazed at the beauty and serenity of it all and historical village sites where 200 plus year old totem poles are standing in their original sites, degraded by the elements where they will eventually return to the Earth, rather than being restored or kept in a museum. The metaphor of those poles is so beautiful, that they are

exactly where they are meant to be and they will live out their natural life, fulfill their purpose and one day re-enter the world from which they came and be replaced by the next generation of poles. It teaches me not to hang onto things too tightly but enjoy everything I can while it is still here and that meaning is found in the temporary nature of life. (Vanessa)

Cultural expression and learning. Topics of culture, community connection, and knowledge of traditional sources of healing were described by all participants. While the degree and adherence to traditional ceremony and protocol varied for each participant, they each described the significance of expressing themselves through cultural ceremony and learning about cultural practices. Participants expressed how Aboriginal teachings common to all Aboriginal groups across Canada (e.g., respect, reciprocity, relevance, responsibility) are present in their daily and weekly routines and contribute to their sense of self and balance in the world. All the participants expressed that sharing their cultural identity with other people in their life, especially their peers and professors at university, was important for teaching others about the history and current status of Aboriginal Peoples' in Canada. They shared that engaging in cultural expression and ongoing learning of their culture would equip them with knowledge that facilitated them to walk between the Aboriginal and Western world. In addition, participants reported that actively expressing their culture in the classroom allowed them to disseminate knowledge on Aboriginal teachings. Multiple participants also shared that incorporating their cultural into their academic projects (e.g., papers, research projects, tasks forces) allowed them to give back to Aboriginal communities (e.g., defend Aboriginal Peoples' right, protect natural land and water resources, promote positive health and living conditions for Aboriginal Peoples).

Because my research and teaching are grounded in Indigenous education, I find the expression of my Indigeneity is often found in teaching about Indigenous protocol, identity, and history in Canada. ... With my work in Indigenous education, I enjoy reading the work of other Indigenous scholars in Canada, United States, New Zealand and Australia, which give me a sense of interconnectedness with my research and lifestyle. **(Brooke)**

I was lucky enough to take a very fun course on how to improve presenting skills and we were given the opportunity to choose a non-scientific topic and I chose my people's art forms. Normally, I am incredibly shaky and nervous while presenting but telling my close peers about how our art relates to our culture and way of life while I wore my regalia and taught them the unofficial anthem of our people, by singing, dancing and drumming along, it was possibly the most rewarding, validating and confidence building experience of my entire academic career! **(Vanessa)**

Seeking connection. All participants expressed the value of seeking connection with support systems (e.g., family, community, friends), land (e.g., traditional community, nature, UBC First Nations Longhouse), personal memories, and one's self. Among these sources of connections, participants shared that support systems were paramount to their well-being. They shared that physical connection with these relationships provided the most validation to their well-being, followed by technological connection (e.g., phone conversations, live video conversations, video and text messaging, social media), and then material-based communications (e.g., care-packages, letters, photographs).

Of most significance to my well-being are the relationships in my life. My immediate relationships of validation are my mom, my older brother, and my husband. My mom and I are incredibly close, and since I moved to Vancouver for my PhD in August this is the farthest we have ever lived apart from one another, the furthest prior to our move was 45 minutes away from each other. ... My husband is more than my cliché “rock,” but rather nurtures and uplifts everything that I do. **(Brooke)**

It’s always better when I see my family in-person but when I’m away at school that’s obviously not always possible. So we call each other on the phone a lot to stay in touch and support each other. We’re also texting and messaging each other on Facebook throughout the day. It’s amazing how sending a picture to each other can help us feel close, like we’re in the same place. We also try to send little care-packages back-and-forth to each other around the holidays or when we know something stressful is happening in our lives. It really helps us to bridge the physical distance. **(Rose-Mary)**

Participants also articulated the importance of their relationship with the land, when seeking validation through connection. They described how land serves as a way of connecting with their culture, community, and ancestors; access to traditional sources of healing (e.g., medicinal plants); and as a safe and comforting place for self-care (e.g., smudging, connecting with nature, cleansing in water).

I love trees and moss and feel at home when I’m in the woods. ... Last summer I was able to harvest cedar bark to learn how to weave, which is a significant part of Tsimshian

culture. ...Growing up on reserve was mostly positive for me, I got to live in a community full of family and support. The Kitselas Canyon is only a half hour walk away from my home, we go for family walks there, I go for runs, and that is where we go fishing in the summer, there are also a variety of wild berries that we pick along the trail. The land is so important to me for many reasons. It's where I relax, connect with my ancestors, center myself, and generally heal. **(Brittany)**

Connection to personal memories through multiple modalities (e.g., photo albums, artwork, clothing, journaling) was included by all participants when articulating seeking connection as a source of well-being. All participants expressed how connecting to their personal memories through these modalities helped them to connect with positive past connection experiences (e.g., support systems, land, happy celebrations) that they may be unable to physically connect with or replicate in the present moment.

Photographing nature is something that is also important to me and contributes to my well-being as it allows for me to reminisce on memories captured by my cameras. When I was younger I always had a camera on hand when I would go on road trips with my family – and now I like to capture nature through my phone camera. Having these photos available to look at validate my sense of connection to the world – as it reminds me of the amazing adventures I took part in as a child or even a trip to the beach I had a week ago. **(Sydney)**

Lastly, all participants noted the significance of connecting with themselves when articulating sources of validation important to their well-being. Participants expressed that the relationship they hold with themselves is equally as important as other forms of sought-after connection. They reported that when they would lose connection with themselves, they rely on the previously mentioned sources of validation in order to ground themselves, which in turn facilitates their reconnection. A dialogue excerpt between three participants and myself, from the first focus group, has been included below to illustrate how connecting with oneself was viewed as meaningful by these participants.

Vanessa: Having a positive mind set about what you're doing is really important.

Brooke: I completely agree.

Vanessa: I mean the self is at the center of it all. It's about having a positive mind set about place, activities, relationships, and stuff that you connect with, the things that helps you get through. And when you don't you aren't as confident and can't get through things.

Sandi: That's why you have to make time for yourself. Your connecting with yourself is important.

Natasha: What happens when you don't make time for your relationship with yourself?

Sandi: If you lose the relationship with yourself you lose your path. And you better hope you have other people you can turn to, good places to go to. ... When I'm at odds with myself I go to the other areas I talked about before, friends, nature.

Brooke: Even though it's easy to let it slide because of all the other pressing things it's really important to make time for connecting with yourself.

Self-care activities. Engaging in self-care activities was a source of validation that contributed to all participants' well-being. Self-care activities ranged among participants but all in the categories of exercise, relaxation, or cultural tradition. Engagement with self-care activities were always described by participants as rejuvenating, and often subsequently contributed towards a more positive relationship with themselves. Among the most common self-care activities mentioned were walking, running, hiking, swimming, and biking. Mutual relaxation self-care exercises reported include: yoga, fishing, hot showers, and listening to music. While cultural traditions stated by each of the participants held unique cultural protocols specific to each of their nations, there were shared traditional practices of self-care such as: (a) connecting with family, (b) engaging in family traditions, (c) smudging, (d) attending potlatches, and (e) connecting with a spiritual presence through prayer or interaction with the land.

I think that I would go crazy if I didn't play sports, they're a great way to get my heart and mind going and a way to participate in social interactions, which is good because I find that I am a fairly social person. Hockey is one of my favorites to play, as well as soccer, but I am not picky and will play any sport. Being outdoors is a way for me to ground myself, and think of the bigger picture in life, which is to be as happy as I can by doing my favorite things and being around my favorite people. **(Brittany)**

A specific activity that also reminds me of my childhood and makes me feel happy is cooking with my dad. ... When I do cook with him now it makes me very happy. ... Hiking and running outside are also sources of validation that contribute to my well-being – physically, socially, and emotionally. Not only do I feel great about myself after

physical exercise, I again feel that connection to nature – and socially I love to share that moment with friends or family. ... Music is something that also contributes to my well-being. I have a friend that I frequently go to concerts with – and I think music is so amazing because it brings people together like that. Sometimes to gain motivation or to de-stress I can count on my headphones to remove me from a stressful situation, and allow the lyrics or rhythm to change my state of mind. **(Sydney)**

Self-care is really important. Anytime I'm in water I immediately feel better. Swimming, hot showers especially, walking by the ocean always make me feel better and recharged. It's funny I don't always make time for all those things, except hot showers, but whenever I do I'm able to accomplish so much more work. Water is very healing. ... Prayer is also really important. There are times when I don't have the answers and even though it doesn't occur to me right away I realize this is a time that I need prayer to guide me through. After praying I feel like a weight has been lifted off me ... Culturally, engaging in things like smudges is really cleansing and sometime just talking with family or Elders helps to unload and you feel grounded. **(Rose-Mary)**

Sources of Validation that Affirm Aboriginal Students' Sense of Self, Identity, and Purpose

Three themes emerged through conversation around sources of validation that specifically contribute to Aboriginal student participants' sense of self, identity, and/or purpose in life. These themes included: connection to relationships and symbolic objects, self-identity (i.e., consciousness of one's own identity), and activities related to identity building.

Connection to people, place, self, and ancestry. Similar to two of the validation themes (i.e., how we relate and seeking connection) that contribute to Aboriginal students' well-being mentioned in the previous section, connection was very important to participants when they articulated affirming their sense of self, identity, and/ or purpose in life. Connection to people (e.g., family, community, friends) and place (e.g., home community, nature, UBC First Nations Longhouse) was again referenced. However, when they described the importance of "connection" in relation to their sense of self, identity, and purpose it expanded upon these areas to include cultural connection with their ancestry and meaningful symbolic objects. Participants described that connection with their ancestry was vital for knowing and learning about: who they are as a person, how they conceptualize their identity, and what their purpose in life is. Participants' shared that they engaged with their ancestry by physically connecting with their traditional community, learning their cultures' history by visiting with family members, learning and practicing their native language, and engaging in protocol on their traditional land.

My family is my biggest support and around them I can completely be myself, therefore I am confident of my sense of self, identity, and purpose in life because they keep me focused by always reassuring me that going to school to get my degree will help my purpose in life which is to help children learn to the best of their ability. They also help me to be considerate and kind which part of my identity, and it is also my purpose in life as well. Although I am not as knowledgeable as I would like to be in my culture, I find that learning new things about my culture help affirm my sense of self and identity because culture is so important to self-identity. **(Brittany)**

Family is a very important part of our community, having dinners and potlatches together, there's nothing more crucial to celebrating our culture, art, history and traditions than family. **(Vanessa)**

Many of the participants held mixed ancestry either from different Aboriginal nations or from an Aboriginal and European nation. All participants expressed that engaging with other Aboriginal students provided them with a sense of belonging and acceptance as well as a safe space to express their Indigeneity.

I think connection and learning are two good words to use when thinking about my purpose in life. No matter my occupation or income is when I am older, I think the largest sense of my “purpose” will always be my connections to others. ... I feel safe at the Longhouse. Connecting with other Indigenous people. ... I am so grateful for my friendships. ... Feeling that genuine and happy from friendships allows for feelings of great self-worth. **(Sydney)**

Participants mentioned that access to meaningful objects and symbolic objects contributed to their sense of self, identity, and purpose. In this document the term “symbolic objects” is used where appropriate to refer to physical items with various symbolic meanings. Participants articulated that certain objects held connections to their current role as a student (e.g., laptop, UBC branded merchandise, club/laboratory sweater) as well as significant relationships in their life (e.g., wedding ring, rocks, knitted sweater). They shared that connection to Indigenous symbolic objects (e.g., sweet grass, eagle feathers, carved or beaded

jewelry) facilitated connection to their Aboriginal culture and cultural identity. Participants shared that engagement with these meaningful objects and symbolic objects helped to remind them where they came from, who they are, and who they could be.

My sweet grass is my connection to home and balance in my life. Not only have I carried the current sweet grass braid with me for years, it's lived in four homes and two provinces now, but it's medicines also give me strength when I need it. I sometimes use it for prayer, but often times I just need to hold it or see it at home to remind me of what is of most value in my life: home, family, and the Great Law (living the good path in life). ... My Mac Book has also become my physical world ... buying my first Mac Book, at the beginning of my Masters, was an important investment for me, as I feel like it is a standard status symbol in graduate school. I feel like often times I stick out like a sore thumb in my political and personal views, so at the very least I can "fit in" with my laptop! **(Brooke)**

Straddling two worlds. Participants shared that engaging in the act of "straddling two worlds," referring to the Aboriginal world and Academic Western world, is necessary for validating their sense of self, identity, and/or purpose in life.

My identity was fractured. I had one foot in my home community and feeling that connection to culture, but the other foot was in the Western world of academia and not bringing up who or *what* I am in order to fit in. ... When you don't express both parts of yourself you'll always feel divided. ... I needed a connection to my home community for

a healthy sense of self and being unafraid of my own identity where I no longer try to hide it by not wearing jewelry or other traditional First Nations clothes or regalia, for fear of appearing “too white” to be wearing it. (**Vanessa**)

Participants expressed that there is a desire to validate their Aboriginal identity and academic identity. Each identity is validated by embodying and practicing values and actions that are characteristic of each culture. An example of this is when expressing their Aboriginal identity participants would be more considerate of the needs of their fellow community members and would take actions that support the community’s welfare. When expressing their Academic identity, participants mentioned the need to demonstrate their merit as a scholar in order to prove their worth and position as a student in their program of study.

Participants spoke to the difficulty in managing conflicting values and actions that are emphasized and encouraged in each world. They shared, however, that engagement with values from both worlds was important in order to learn who they are and what direction they want to take with their life.

I feel constant conflict between the White-normative and colonial agenda of academe. ... I always feel self-conscious about needing to prove myself because of my Indigeneity. I feel my sense of Indigeneity and what it means to be a Haudenosaunee woman is dwindling, to be honest. It an unhealthy mindset, but I almost negotiate with myself: if I can’t fulfill the roles of a great Indigenous woman, then at the very least I have to be a great (if not the best) doctoral student. (**Brooke**)

It's really not easy and you never really find a perfect balance. But if you want to be in university having academia as part of your identity is necessary. And honestly, trying out different practices is how you developed your values. I try to follow the guidelines that my program has and weave my cultural and spiritual beliefs in. Sometimes they agree and sometimes they don't. I feel fortunate. My supervisor is supportive of knowledge from my culture and using it in my work. **(Rose-Mary)**

All participants agreed that in order to succeed in the act of “straddling two worlds”, it is important to have a healthy mindset, which entails a positive outlook on life, thirst for knowledge, passion for the work and training that they are pursuing, and desire to make a positive difference in the world through their academic training. Participants acknowledged that when this type of mindset is lacking, they have difficulty straddling these two worlds. Participants also referenced the value of places that support finding one's identity such as the UBC First Nations Longhouse, Xwi7xwa Library, and stimulating classroom environments. Participants shared that these types of supportive environments provide them with a space to learn about what career paths they want to pursue after graduation as well as discuss conflicting worldviews between Aboriginal and Western culture.

I also feel a great sense of self-worth while learning about something I am passionate about. I love being excited about learning. ... I think a lot of students have troubles finding a purpose to life while attending university ... Although school does come with a lot of stress, it also contributes to my well-being because I love learning. Learning is part of my wellness, as it gives me a sense of curiosity in my everyday life, and it makes me

feel so grateful because my learning now will help me in the future to help others.

(Sydney)

Having a supportive classroom makes all the difference. The NITEP [Native Teacher Education Program] program not only helps me accomplish my goals for becoming a teacher but is super supportive, we can discuss everything there. **(Brittany)**

Identity building activities. Participants shared that when they conceptualize their self, identity, and purpose in life they believe that they take an active role in building each through the pursuit of different identity building activities. The activities that they conveyed relate to one or more of the following categories: (a) career development (e.g., establishing an academic reputation, volunteering in research and charity projects, completing academic coursework), (b) socialization (e.g., spending time with friends, vacationing with family, attending cultural celebrations), and (c) self-care (e.g., spending time in nature, dedicating time to relax away from university, journaling).

A sense of identity increases with every opportunity available here [at UBC] like lunches at the Longhouse and volunteer work. Speakers and the vast amount of knowledge that is dispersed through cultural events and the fact the university is on Coast Salish land is amazing. This is Validation and Well-being. **(Sandi)**

Participants acknowledged that participation in these activities could be multifunctional and a successful pursuit could validate different aspects of their self, identity, and purpose in life.

For example, volunteering on a research project that cares for the treatment of the land and ocean helped to develop a participant's sense of how they viewed themselves (e.g., an activist, someone who enjoys working collaboratively on projects with others, is grounded when working in natural environments) and what they wanted to do with their life (e.g., work on a conservation team that protects Aboriginal Peoples' natural resources).

I rediscovered my sense of self when I was given the opportunity to work in historical old growth forests to survey the Culturally Modified Trees (CMTs) and medicinal plants of my ancestors. Working outside, jumping over fallen trees, climbing through insanely thick Salal bushes, taking a boat to work, staying remotely in a cabin deep in nature, tasting sea urchins and finding old Abalone shells on the beach, this is where I was meant to be! ... When I discovered ocean sciences as a discipline, everything else in my life also fell into place. This obvious choice was under my nose the entire time, the ocean is central to my spirituality and happiness. I could never leave the coast and the marine animals are central to my people! Realizing that I shared the exact same values of my people and that I can help to contribute towards ecosystem based management research to protect our coastal oceans and shores, I have never felt such a sense of belonging and I *know* that I have found my true purpose in life! ... My sense of self, identity and sense of purpose come from a connection to the land and ocean itself of my home community.

(Vanessa)

How Aboriginal Students Pursue Sources of Validation When Attending University

Three themes emerged through discussion of ways that Aboriginal student participants pursue sources of validation when attending university.

Redefining relationships. Relationships were an essential source of validation when participants articulated areas that contributed to both their well-being and sense of self, identity, and/or purpose in life. As a result, it was important to discuss how they pursued relationships when attending university. Participants shared that, while attending university, the pursuit of relationships took on two forms: (a) seeking new relationships (e.g., friendships with classmates, friendships with Aboriginal students and staff, mentorship connections with Aboriginal Elders) and (b) finding alternative ways of connecting with previously established relationships (e.g., family, friends, home community members). Creation of new relationships centered on connecting with peers, faculty, and staff at university was accolated by each of the participants. They shared how vital attending various events at the university Longhouse (e.g., Tuesday Aboriginal student lunches, Wellness Wednesdays, sweats in the sweat lodge) had been for connecting with other Aboriginal students, whom they might have not otherwise had a chance to develop relationships with.

I'm also trying to connect more to the people around me and creating a community within UBC, inside my own lab and network and the amazing people I'm getting to know at the Longhouse! (**Vanessa**)

Building these Aboriginal student connections, along with supportive Aboriginal faculty and staff, was described by the participants as critically important for developing a surrogate

Indigenous community away from home, where they could feel comfortable discussing issues pertinent to Aboriginal Peoples' and developing networks with other colleagues.

I have found that attending semesters here at UBC have brought me a sense of self-worth just being here and knowing I matter helps me see other places, people, things and more positive relations. Try it and see, and having compassionate faculty that takes time to support and understanding culture, helps me to realize my dreams and have silent victories and a willingness to venture out safely with new directions and well thoughts of change. **(Sandi)**

As for important friendships that validate me, I have found a great group of friends here at UBC. Some of them I have been friends with since high school, and others I have met at university. At UBC and through my summer job at UBC I have also made friends that are Indigenous. Growing up I never had that. This is something that is really important for me as it increases my sense of self-identity. ... For the past two summers, I have had the opportunity to work with the Summer Science Aboriginal Youth Program with the Centre for Excellence in Indigenous Health. The Elder of the program is so, so amazing. He speaks a lot about identity - and assures the youth that as Indigenous youth they are capable and worthy. He talks to each one of the youth and staff as if they are so important as Indigenous people - which provides myself with validation. **(Sydney)**

Participants reported that it was still important for them to find alternative ways of connecting with their previously established relationships, since these relationships were most

central to their well-being. Pursuit was accessed through electronic communication (e.g., phone and video calls, texting and emailing, social media), in-person visits when family, friends, and community members were in town, and visiting home community events or artworks presentations in the Vancouver area (e.g., art exhibit displaying carvings from an artist in a participant's home community).

A source of validation that I can think of that I do not have present with me during university is some really close friends who live out of province. These people are really important to me and are very good at grounding me during times of stress. I overcome this by facetimeing (video-chatting) with them and text messaging them when we can find time. Snap chat is also an easy way to send each other words of encouragement or to update each other by sending pictures of our adventures. Like if I go on a hike I can snapchat these friends a picture of it. There is comfort in sharing our experiences that we have away from each other. **(Sydney)**

I try to get the next best thing to being home by visiting with my mom whenever she's in town to catch up on everything ... Additionally, I keep up with the marine research newsletters and community newsletters from my community to stay updated. **(Vanessa)**

Safe spaces. Seeking out safe spaces was an important method of pursuing validation when attending university for Aboriginal student participants. Participants shared how having Aboriginal specific buildings on campus, such as the UBC First Nations Longhouse and Xwi7xwa Library, created a space for Aboriginal students to congregate and create an Aboriginal

community. They labeled these spaces as “safe” because the spaces cater to the needs of Aboriginal students (e.g., provide access to teachings on Musqueam and local Aboriginal teachings, provide computer and study space resources, provide access to Aboriginal staff and/or Elder support and connection), maintain an environment that is supportive of discussion and action on Aboriginal topics, and facilitate the presence of a supportive Aboriginal community on campus.

Coming to UBC has allowed me to find some sort of “home away from home” at the Longhouse. Indigenous history and culture is complex - and I still have a lot of learning to do myself - but it is great to have a space available where I feel safe and understood. Sources of validation that contribute to my cultural identity include connecting with other Indigenous people, connecting with nature, Summer Science Aboriginal Youth Program and the Elder with the program, and having access to a safe space - such as the First Nations House of Learning at UBC. **(Sydney)**

Participants reported, however, that in recent years the presence of non-Aboriginal students and their use of the Longhouse resources had grown, which has resulted in a decrease in the overall feeling of safety surrounding the UBC First Nations Longhouse and Xwi7xwa Library. For example, participants mentioned that the Longhouse was starting to feel like any other place on campus because the non-Aboriginal students are not treating the Longhouse as a sacred space or using the Longhouse resources to support the needs of Aboriginal Peoples. Participants also acknowledged the significance of having a local safe place to go to in either their own home (e.g., apartment, dorm, house), or a friend’s home when attending university.

They stated that having a peaceful and relaxing environment to start and wind down the day was important for maintaining balance in their lives and grounding themselves in amongst their busy academic schedules. Participants reported that when they do not have access to this type of validation (e.g., messy or unruly roommates make their living space feel unsafe), it is difficult to maintain their well-being while at university and they have to rely on alternative safe space resources (e.g., friend's house).

From my understanding the Longhouse on campus is intended for Aboriginal students, but I always notice non-Aboriginals there, which fine [participant nods head in acknowledgment of this experience] we can't kick them out, but even at the luncheons they are there. They have no idea what I have been through, what I still go through, and what I will be continuing to experience throughout my life because I am First Nations. I do not feel comfortable talking about certain things in front of non-Aboriginal people and I thought that we finally had a space of our own compared to literally everywhere else on campus that is so dominated by non-Aboriginals. **(Brittany)**

Self-care. Aboriginal student participants reported that engaging in self-care activities or with self-care objects were key methods of pursuing validation when attending university. Participants shared that self-care related activities and objects provided them with a sense of escape from the pressures of university and allowed them to rejuvenate in order to take on future tasks. Activities including engaging in sports and exercise, attending cultural support groups (e.g., Indigenous Women's Rise Group), and engaging in water related activities (e.g., hot shower, bubble baths, swimming) were recounted by the participants as methods of self-care.

To be honest I sometimes will even put school on the back burner in order for me to be able to practice important self-care. For example, Mondays I go to this group called Indigenous Women Rise, where we are learning how to cedar weave a hat, which to me is very important because I am given the opportunity to be able to learn and practice my traditional culture and be surrounded by strong, and fun Indigenous women who understand me. **(Brittany)**

My artistic talents and skills have come out of the closet in volumes. Recognizing that they belong to ME and I can enjoy doing it as an expression of giving or therapy is empowering! I have acquired a new skill in looming, presenting Aboriginal first nation's images in my art cards and creativity ... and dreamcatchers. **(Sandi)**

Objects and symbolic objects related to these activities (e.g., sports equipment, tobacco for smudging, comfy bathrobe) as well as items sent from their home community (e.g., care packages, letters and photos, canned food) supported participants' wellbeing while at university and connected them to important relationships in their home community (e.g., parents, friends, community members).

I love tea. When I receive a care package with tea, canned food, or a letter from my family it's the best. ... There is nothing like having a taste of home ... it makes you feel like you are there. **(Brittany)**

Sources of Validation that Contribute to Aboriginal Students' Cultural Identity

Five themes emerged through conversation about sources of validation that contribute to Aboriginal student participants' cultural identity. These themes are relationships, symbolic objects, places, activities, and holistic connection with the self. A discussion of how each of these themes were pursued by participants while attending university will follow each theme.

Relationships. Akin to the importance that relationships serve when participants articulated sources of validation that contributed to both their well-being and sense of self, identity, and/or purpose in life; relationships were also a vital source of validation that supported their cultural identity. Participants shared how the relationships with their family (e.g., parents, siblings, extended family) and certain community members (e.g., Elders, friends, band members) served as a resource for learning about their Aboriginal heritage, community specific ceremonies and protocols, and land-based resource teachings (e.g., plants used for native medicines, fishing and hunting practices, spiritual care and thanks for plants and animals). These relationships were described as pivotal to the development and maintenance of their cultural identity, because many of the Aboriginal cultural teachings, described by the participants, were specific in most cases to each band and/or nation. Due to cultural privacy protocols, some teachings were only taught and practiced within their home community. Many participants reported that interacting with family and community members who are strong and grounded in their culture, served as a source of inspiration and support when they themselves are developing and maintaining their cultural identity.

My older brother is an incredibly strong and brilliant Haudenosaunee man, who grounds me constantly while I am away – away, as in away physically and emotionally from the

community. He dedicates his life to the community and revitalization of the Mohawk language, which keeps me humbled and grounded in what is truly of most importance for our Indigenous communities. (Brooke)

My family is also a great influence on my well-being. When I feel sad, angry, happy, basically any kind of emotion I know that I can speak with my mother, father, brother, or sister and will feel better and more grounded after, even in the event that I am telling them about a happy emotion they have a way [to] elevate that happiness and make it even more great. They have such eminence support and encouragement for me that I feel like I can accomplish anything I put my mind to. ... I believe that learning my culture is my purpose in life so I am able to pass it on to my children and future generations the traditional way, learning through family. I will be able to do a little bit of cultural learning from my family, but a lot of the learning will have to be through books and online sources ... and connecting with Elders. (**Brittany**)

Within the university environment participants acknowledged several relationships that contribute to their cultural identity, including: (a) Aboriginal colleagues and peers, (b) Aboriginal staff and Elders, and (c) supportive Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Faculty. Participants mentioned that having access to other Aboriginal people and allies at university was important for developing and maintaining their cultural identity. Some participants described that attending university represented an opportunity to connect with their Aboriginal ancestry for the first time. They reported that having accessible Aboriginal staff and Elders present at the

University Longhouse was helpful for connecting with resources for Aboriginal students and teachings of the local Coast Salish culture (e.g., sweat lodge protocols).

Growing up, the only Indigenous people I was constantly surrounded by was my mother and brother. ... As someone who is of both Indigenous and European descent, sometimes it is hard finding where I fit in growing up. Talking with the elder [connected to the Summer Science Aboriginal Youth Program with the Centre for Excellence in Indigenous Health] really provides a self-validation for me. Being a role model for the Indigenous youth also provides me with a sense of identity. I wish that when I was younger I attended a program like the Summer Science Aboriginal Youth Program. I am so happy that the youth of the program get to interact with each other, Indigenous youth from around the country, and also the staff members and Elders. I feel as if it is an important role to instill confidence in Indigenous youth when it comes to university – and it provides me with a great sense of identity to be able to do that. **(Sydney)**

Other participants reported that they had longstanding connection to their Aboriginal ancestry and that having access to other Aboriginal students (e.g., Indigenous Graduate Student Symposium, Aboriginal student lunches, Longhouse yoga) and Elders (e.g., Aboriginal Summer Science Program, Longhouse sweats, resident Elders at Longhouse) while on campus was important for creating a resemblance of Aboriginal community life that would not have otherwise existed when attending university away from their home community.

I am Haudenosaunee, Mohawk Nation, from the Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory. Being Haudenosaunee, we tend to spend time within the community and in the Longhouse, which I haven't been able to participate in since I moved away from the reserve. Since moving out to Vancouver, however, reaching out to other Indigenous colleagues – such as through the SAGE [Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Student Enhancement] program – has been essential to my adjustment to the doctoral program. **(Brooke)**

Accessing cultural relationships while at university. Participants reported that accessing home community relationships connected to their cultural identity (e.g., family, community member) was very difficult due to geographical displacement from their home community while attending university. As a result, participants relied on technological (e.g., phone conversations, video and text messaging, social media) and material-based forms of communications (e.g., care-packages, letters, photographs). They shared that while these forms of connection were better than no contact at all, they did not result in the same impact as connecting in-person would bring. As a result, the amount of validation that they receive from pursuing relationships through these types of non-physical modalities results in less overall validation of their cultural identity. Participants also stated that some type of community-based relationships (e.g., Elders, community gatherings, friends) were inaccessible while at university, because they are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with using technological forms of communication or the type of interaction required by the relationship (e.g., community gathering for a potlatch ceremony) is not well supported by a technological platform of connection.

Calling Mom. To compensate for the distance with my mom, it's essential for the two of us to stay in touch over the phone, such as texting throughout the day, and speaking on the phone at least 2-3 times a week. We used to Facetime but that happens less so now. My mom and I have always been close, and I especially now that I am a wife, educator, and general "busy body" I need her opinion on everything. She can tell by the sound of my voice how I truly am, and I tell her truly everything that is going on. **(Brooke)**

There are somethings you just can't do over the phone. Like visiting in relatives' homes and listening to family stories. Or hearing stories at potlaches. Somethings just wouldn't work over the internet because gatherings are too large. **(Brittany)**

Participants mentioned that developing relationships with other Aboriginal people (e.g., students, staff, Elders) at university helped to fill the void of not connecting with home community relationships in-person. They stated that while these new relationships did not take the place of the previous relationships, their physical presence provided a level of companionship, socialization, and a sense of community that would have been lacking in the technological and material-based forms of communication.

Not being around my family is hard, especially during times of big change in my life. I was surprised how meaningful it was to connect with other students at the Longhouse. Attending the SAGE Tea and Toast sessions is really nice. Just knowing that I had a place to go every Wednesday where I could check-in with other Aboriginal students is comforting. It's like a little club that you can always casually drop into. ... I mean these

are new friendships and not the same as my family but it's nice to make new friends and have social contact. It's easy to get isolated from others when you're completing your assignments. **(Rose-Mary)**

Symbolic objects. Similar to the impact that meaningful objects and symbolic objects had when participants articulated sources of validation that contributed to their sense of self, identity, and/or purpose in life, access to Indigenous symbolic objects were also a source of validation that facilitated connection to their cultural identity. Participants reported that culturally symbolic objects, whether created by members of their home community (e.g., silver carved jewelry, regalia, dreamcatcher), nature-based medicines (e.g., sweet grass, berries, tobacco), or historic and symbolic representations (e.g., UBC Reconciliation Pole, wooden carvings, Aboriginal artwork) helped them to connect to their ancestry, ancestors, and/or home community. For example, a participant shared that walking by the Haida UBC Reconciliation Pole on her way to class reminds her of the impact that the residential school system had on her grandmother and family. She shared that this interaction not only helps her to connect with her grandmother's experience, but also develops her connection to her Aboriginal cultural identity.

The totem poles on campus also provide me with a sense of validation. When I see the Reconciliation Pole on campus, I think about my grandma. I honestly never thought coming to University that I would be so affected by seeing a totem pole on my way to classes. I never had the opportunity to meet her, but seeing that pole is a reminder of the struggles she faced and lived through. **(Sydney)**

Keeping a comfortable clean home surrounded by cedar, dreamcatchers, feather, abalone and medicine, with accomplishments of my own decisions and my own personal art on the walls reveal my specialness. This keeps me in a stable grounding situation to appreciate and be a part of UBC. I utilize my affirmations that are on the walls and sit proudly in my UBC t-shirt as I review my commitments to the class. **(Sandi)**

Accessing culturally symbolic objects while at university. Participants shared that accessing symbolic objects related to their cultural identity during university was possible when they were able to easily transport these items (e.g., jewelry, regalia, small artwork) to their new residence at university. Whereas accessing nature-based medicines (e.g., sweet grass, berries, tobacco) while attending university was difficult because they either had difficulty traveling with the item (e.g., sometime raw tobacco would be questioned and/or taken away by airport security checks) or were unable to harvest or purchase the item (e.g., tea leaves, berries, roots) in an urban environment. Participants mentioned that some Aboriginal representations (e.g., UBC Reconciliation Pole, wooden carvings, Aboriginal artwork) are present in the university and urban city environment, which provides them with an alternative way of connecting with symbolic objects that support their cultural identity while attending university. They shared that while these forms of Aboriginal representation do not replace the validation they receive when interacting with Aboriginal symbolic objects or nature-based medicines in their home communities, interacting with Aboriginal symbolic objects in an urban setting does contribute positively towards their cultural identity.

When I do not have a chance to talk with my mom, on the phone, I am reminded of her and her positivity when I admire the dreamcatcher she gave me that is hanging in my room. In my room, I also have a medicine pouch that I made with an Elder. By having this pouch in sight, I am reminded of this Elder, which instills a calmness in me because he, like my mother, provides confidence in my own abilities. **(Sydney)**

I got in a car crash ... the driver's side of the car was absolutely untouched, as was I. ... At the time, I was wearing a carved necklace of my grandmothers and I believe she saved me... Items of hers are the most important possessions I own and the most sentimentally invaluable. I wear three of her gold rings every day and wear her special gold necklace my mom handed down to me for high school graduation, whenever I need to gather extra strength and grace. She also knit a lot for us when we were kids and I still have the vests she's made just for me. Therefore, my family, celebrating my culture, being in nature, especially on my own land and my Naan's jewelry are the top five sources of validation I require for my health and well-being. **(Vanessa)**

Places. Corresponding to the significance that place served when participants illustrated sources of validation that contributed to both their well-being and sense of self, identity, and/or purpose in life, place was a source of validation that reinforced their cultural identity. The description of culturally validating places either fell in the category of nature or Aboriginal resource buildings. Within nature, participants reported the positive impact that spending time on the land and water (e.g., Coast Salish land, forests, ocean) had for connecting with and developing their cultural identity.

As for my well-being, being close to nature is very important. Walking on the beach and touching the ocean, or walking in the forest grounds me and is one of the best ways for me to destress and catch a breath. It lightens my mood and makes me feel wholesome and connected to the earth. I feel as if being a UBC student has provided me with great opportunities for self-validation through its physical surroundings, people, and programs available for me to take part in. ... UBC is located on Musqueam land – which is home to amazing ocean views, beaches, the forest, and sometimes beautiful sunny days. Since being immersed in nature is so high on my sources of validation – I feel really lucky to be attending a university on such beautiful land. I live off campus and about a twenty-five-minute walk from the beach – which I am also so thankful for. I feel that if I went to a university inland and not close to the ocean I would lose my sense of self – probably since I have always grown up next to the ocean. **(Sydney)**

Participants shared that Aboriginal resource buildings (e.g., UBC First Nations Longhouse, Aboriginal Friendship Centers, Museum of Anthropology) also provided them with safe spaces where they could discuss, develop, and connect with their cultural identity, as well as learn about Aboriginal practices that may differ from their home communities.

The Longhouse is a safe place where you can be free to learn about yourself. That inspiration alone, standing on the vast grandiose of native land with eagles circling above. I could sense mother earth and felt gratitude and humility. I felt the impact of UBC. UBC's diverse cultural community as a whole is intriguing. ... I sing and would

like to learn cultural songs and drumming even if it isn't Saulteaux. I reside with respect to the Coast Salish and have artistic friends. I would like to learn how to carve. **(Sandi)**

Accessing cultural places while at university. Participants stated that accessing places related to their cultural identity had to be significantly modified while attending university. They shared that while they are able to access nature (e.g., Coast Salish land, forests, ocean) while attending university, the degree of undeveloped and private natural spaces is limited in an urban environment. As a result, participants reported that the amount of validation and rejuvenation of their cultural identity related to being in nature in an urban environment is diminished compared to the effects of being in nature in their home community.

The thing is you can never really be alone here. Even when you go into the bush you end up finding someone else's' garbage. ... It's not the same here ... you aren't able to connect with the cedar trees in the way that I could back home and be calmed. ... Being in the city I can't just walk into my backyard and eat thimbleberries, huckleberries, or blueberries. ... The city life is very different for me and I was aware of the major change that it would be. **(Brittany)**

Participants mentioned that the presence of Aboriginal resource building (e.g., UBC First Nations Longhouse, Aboriginal Friendship Centers, Museum of Anthropology) on the university campus and urban city environment provides them with an alternative way of connecting with culturally-related places that support their cultural identity while attending university. While the positive impact of these resources does not substitute the deficits associated with a lack of

connection with nature, participants reported that these Aboriginal resource buildings provide them with a space for creating community with other Aboriginal students and a safe space for exploring their cultural identity while attending university.

The Inspirational UBC endowment Lands have an advantage of a beautiful campus surrounded by fresh ocean air and water, natural greens and ancient trees and beaches. ... I have found the comfort of using the computer lab at the Longhouse and the Library calm and inviting, ...participated on a trip to the MOV [Museum of Vancouver] (Musqueam city within a city exhibit) and on to other guest lectures expressing critical awareness on and about our planet, eaten blueberries at the UBC farm, toured the Museum of Anthropology, Beaty Biodiversity Museum, McMillon Space Observatory, TRIUMP and received my certification and ceremony for Humanities Writing 101, and 201 at the MOV. To be welcomed and have these opportunities of greatness have secured a place for validation well-worth and new discovery. **(Sandi)**

Activities. Parallel to the role that activities serve when participants articulated sources of validation that contributed to both their well-being and sense of self, identity, and/or purpose in life; culturally related activities engagement was a source of validation that reinforced their cultural identity. Participants stated it was important for them to learn about their culture through traditional teachings (e.g., sweats, drumming, potlatch ceremony), language practices (e.g., language courses, songs, speaking their native language), and university programs/ facilities/ events (e.g., food gathering practices at UBC farms, cultural displays at the Museum of Anthropology, marches for missing Indigenous women) in order to maintain and enhance their

connection with their cultural identity. Participants emphasized how culturally related activities often included connection with other Aboriginal people, land, meaningful ceremonial and/or community-based medicines and symbolic objects, and the expression of Indigenous worldviews.

My cultural identity comes entirely from my Nation's culture and land, including the potlatches, ceremonies, dances, songs, language (what little we know), people and art. I especially get validation of my cultural identity through art since all of the best artists are from my Raven clan. The more fame, recognition and success of the numerous artists in my family brings me such pride that I feel that they are my successes too, since we are all interconnected to one another. ... What's really important to me regarding culture specifically, is the songs and the unity and pride that I feel while singing them. ... I didn't realize this was my favourite part of my culture until I experienced what it was like to go without it for so long in those first few years of university and I returned to a potlatch or a First Nations event in the city and good feelings of connection came rushing in, overwhelming and absolutely wonderful. ... We celebrate many events in the city in a traditional way and we do not hold practices secret because we gather our strength and resilience through sharing our culture and being inclusive. (**Vanessa**)

Accessing cultural activities while at university. Participants reported that access to activities connected to their cultural identity (e.g., traditional teachings, language practices, community ceremonies) was extremely compromised due to geographical displacement from their home community while attending university. As previously mentioned, accessing many of

these activities can be difficult when attending university because some traditional teachings, language practices, and community ceremonies are specific and/or private to each Aboriginal band or nation, require access to community Elders, and may require access to land-based resources. As a result, many participants reported an inability to practice various teachings and protocols when away from their home community. While the teaching of Coast Salish Peoples (e.g., Musqueam First Nation) is offered in different capacities at the University of British Columbia, many participants reported discomfort or unauthenticity with learning and/or practicing the traditions of another Aboriginal group separate from their own. However, participants stated that the presence of Aboriginal university programs/ facilities/ events (e.g., food gathering practices at UBC farms, cultural displays at the Museum of Anthropology, marches for missing Indigenous women) were still welcomed and provided them with an alternative way of connecting with culturally-related activities that supported their cultural identity while attending university.

If I am on the lands of other First Nations traditional territories, I know that I am a visitor and I cannot connect to the place that is not mine. It's often hard to explain in words the way I feel when I am home versus when I am in the city but it's a very obvious divide where my stress literally lifts off my chest and shoulders and I feel better and at peace when I am on that island, even if my responsibilities are remaining constant. (**Vanessa**)

Holistic connection with the self. When describing sources of validation that reinforced Aboriginal student participants' cultural identity, the theme of holistic connection of the previously mentioned areas (i.e., relationships, symbolic objects, places, and activities) with the

self was expressed by the participants. Many shared that the development and maintenance of their cultural identity and holistic conceptualization of self is similar to the teachings of the medicine wheel used of many Eastern Aboriginal people. These teachings discuss the balance in interaction between the mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional, realities. Participants described how their self and their cultural identity is holistically connected to culturally related relationships, symbolic objects, places, and activities. They agreed that while the degree of interaction with each area may vary for each Aboriginal person, developing confidence and a positive mindset in ones' chosen culturally related area(s) is vital for developing a strong Aboriginal cultural identity.

The medicine wheel is an acquired resource which I presently use for any type of situation, problem, rewards, reflection and well-being. ... My personal journey of wellness, recovery are a result of wisdom of the medicine wheel. Physical, mental, emotional and spiritual awareness and have me participating and being more brave, and courageous. In the validationgram, I have considered "self" as physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being. Adding relationships, places mark my actuality at the present moment. My understanding of my core beliefs and values have me enjoying life more positively, treating expectations as they come using dialectical thinking and using practices and skills for non judgement and predictability. **(Sandi)**

Accessing holistic connection with the self, while at university. Participants shared that finding balance between culturally related relationships, symbolic objects, places, and activities can be challenging when attending university due to the inaccessibility or modification of

culturally related sources of validation as mentioned above. Participants indicated that it is possible to access many alternative short-term forms of cultural validation (e.g., Aboriginal peers, UBC Reconciliation Pole, Spanish Banks, UBC First Nations Longhouse) while attending university. However, they stated that access to community-based culturally related relationships, symbolic objects, places, and activities (e.g., family, medicinal plants, undeveloped nature, community celebrations) is required for long-term maintenance and development of their cultural identity. Figure 12. displays how participants conceptualized the connection between relationships, symbolic objects, places, activities, and self when describing accessing holistic connection with self while at university. This visual conceptualization reported by all study participants supports the holistic connection between one's self and the four self-validation domains that are outlined in the self-validation model (Ishiyama, 1989) and validationgram exercise (Ishiyama, 1995).

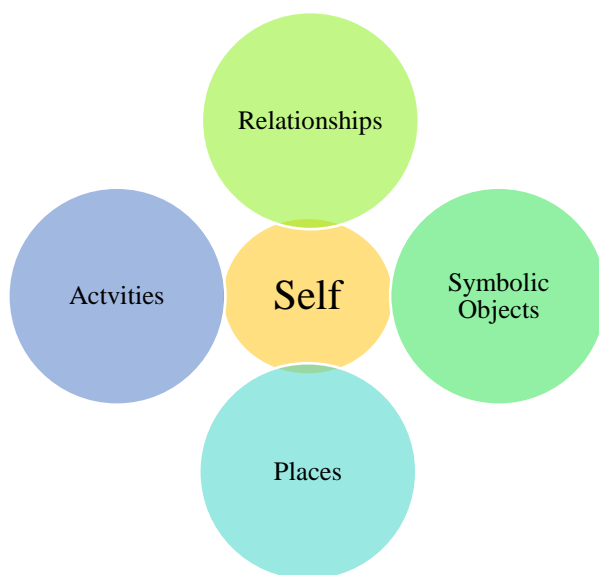


Figure 12. Holistic connection of relationships, symbolic objects, places, activities, and self.

Now here in Vancouver, I enjoy going to the First Nations Longhouse on campus and meeting other Indigenous students, but I have yet to seek out any urban Indigenous

centers, such as Native Friendship Centers, because Haudenosaunee practices are so different from west coast Indigenous identities, which don't sustain me in the same spiritual and cultural ways that my own territory and community does. As a consequence, I tend to place my own Indigenous cultural identity on the backburner, because I fear that it is inauthentic to express my Indigeneity in a non-Haudenosaunee way. This doesn't make it easier for me to be away from my community, but I negotiate with myself that I must return to my community after graduate school to study my language and contribute to my community to make up for lost time. **(Brooke)**

Sources of Validation that Aboriginal Students Pursue When They Have an Academic Setback

Three themes emerged through discussion of ways that Aboriginal student participants pursue sources of validation when they have an academic setback at university.

Comforting relationships. Participants shared that when they face the pressures (e.g., completing assignments on time, fulfilling academic obligations, getting good grades) and setbacks (e.g., unable to complete an assignment, unable to participate in all activities associated with their programs, receive a poor grade) associated with university, their first line of defense is pursuing validation that they receive through comforting relationships. These comforting relationships most often included family (e.g., parents, partners, siblings), friends (e.g., university friends, friends from home community), Aboriginal staff or Elders, academic advisors (e.g., Aboriginal Student Coordinator, professors, enrolment service providers), and qualified listeners (e.g., counsellors). As previously mentioned, the majority of these relationships are

accessible while at university, with the caveat that home-based family and friend relationships are accessed primarily through technological and/or material-based forms of communication.

When dealing with academic setbacks, it's been primarily relying on other Indigenous doctoral students and family to help. Beginning an academic career in the academy, I feel constant conflict between the White-normative and colonial agenda of academe, and I struggle with what my role is as an Indigenous woman within this system. I therefore rely on my family as sounding boards to let me express these inner conflicts as I attempt to negotiate the expectations of myself as an Indigenous academic. I also heavily rely upon Indigenous colleagues, as I mentioned, as they often have sound advice because they too deal with the same tensions of Indigeneity in the academy as I do. **(Brooke)**

Whenever I have an academic setback the first thing I do is call my mother, she always does anything and everything she can to help me get back on track. I also think about my ancestors, I know the hardships that they had to endure and how proud they would be of me, and that survival runs in my blood. I sit down and make a plan and schedule on how to get back on track to stay on top of my studies, lists help me calm down and have a visual of what I need to do in order to accomplish my goals. And I try not to kick myself when I'm down and be too hard on myself, I really try to tell myself that everyone makes mistakes and just to make sure to learn from the mistakes and change my ways for the next time. **(Brittany)**

I resort to community programs and recovery organizations to keep the healing live and interactive. The medicine wheel teaches respect, balance and spirit - using negativity and positivity as resources. I take a deep breath, practice the skills I've learned, persistence and lots of walking. Asking for help, counseling, the importance of gratitude and giving back and just doing all support validation and self-worth. **(Sandi)**

Prioritizing time. Participants reported that when academic pressures and setbacks piled up while attending university, it was important to seek validation through the prioritization of how they were spending their time. Prioritization of time focused on how they spent time in relationships with others and how they spent time in relationship with themselves. Within relationship with others (i.e., family and friends) they described dedicating time for contact (e.g., phone, texting, in-person visits) with these relationships, socializing (e.g., having fun with friends, cooking Sunday night dinners, attending a concert), and traveling (e.g., visiting their home community). One of the participants shared that when they set time aside to visit their home community during school breaks (e.g., summer vacation) they felt like they could finally breathe and were able to build-up their strength for another academic year. Within relationship with self, participants discussed how it was vital for them to dedicate time to self-care activities and evaluate their values and priorities in life. They shared pursuing validation of their relationship with themselves through exercise (e.g., running, walking, swimming), being in nature (e.g., water, hiking, alone in the forest), scheduling self-care breaks (e.g., watch television, relax by a fire, reading fiction), planning (e.g., writing in a daily planner, making visual lists), mindfulness activities (e.g., positive self-talk, writing in gratitude journal, meditation), and engaging in prayer and/or cultural protocol.

I've also had to learn to create a life outside of university, which is difficult when both myself and my husband are aspiring academics, where a lot of our energies are spent networking, applying to conferences, travelling, publishing, and attending lectures, in addition to completing our doctorates – and we also live on-campus at UBC. With this, I take pleasure in creating time away from the university; such as taking language classes (currently learning Russian, as my husband is from Russia) I also tutor early literacy one day a week. My husband and I will take as many little moments as we can, even if it's just a short walk or playing Scrabble, to “escape” the pressures of academe. **(Brooke)**

Re-centering and rejuvenating. Participants acknowledged that, when faced with academic pressures and setbacks at university, seeking validation through re-centering and rejuvenation methods was important to their well-being. All participants reported that when engaging in this process it is necessary to remind yourself that grades and academic accomplishments are not everything and that there are other meaningful sources of validation in their lives.

It is easy to get stuck in a bubble thinking that this grade in that class determines your life path, and because of that be in a perpetual spiral of stress. I definitely have been there and still feel that way sometimes, but I feel so thankful that I have found ways to pursue my sources of validation while attending university. **(Sydney)**

Re-centering and rejuvenating methods were accessed by participants through seeking out safe spaces (e.g., forest, oceans, apartment) where they could often be alone and collect their thoughts. Other sources included engaging with calming objects (e.g., iPod, comfort food, achievements and motivational posters hung on the wall), comforting relationships (e.g., family, friends, counsellor), and engaging in self-care activities (e.g., watching television, taking a bubble bath, attending concerts).

I also realized that hearing these songs (from my home community) outside of events and just on my iPod also really helps me to gain confidence before a big presentation in my schooling, ... One important alternative I've discovered is concerts here in the city, which is the one thing I can access here but not at home in my small, remote community. Even as an adult, I feel the same excitement I experienced for concerts as a teen, and it's so beneficial for my mental health to sing, dance, mosh, get lost in the crowd and feel the emotions of the band that it's almost like a religious experience. Even just last night, I saw a show where everyone was looking out for each other in "the mosh pit", metal-core style music, and the lyrics touched my soul and we all experienced a shared connection similar to potlatches or pow-wows and I will now carry this positive energy for the world with me for a long time following this event. (**Vanessa**)

Along with support from friends and organizations, other programs of positive interaction. Self-care is most important to wellbeing. Being social, learning about my heritage and getting in touch with myself in healthy ways and places pulls everything together. Activities like smudging, being good friend with my 84 year friend, getting in

touch with nature and being mindful of life itself creates good things for me. I just started somewhere. It is a great validation to oneself. (**Sandi**)

Sources of Validation that Aboriginal Students Are Unable to Access While Attending University

Through deeper discussion with the Aboriginal student participants, regarding on sources of validation that are inaccessible while attending university, the theme of feeling dislocated was the most prominent.

Feeling of dislocation. Dislocation is caused by a disruption of one's proper, usual, or original state (Ishiyama, 1995b). Participants described that while attending university the reduced proximity to: (a) family and community members, (b) displacement from traditional land, limited ability to spiritually connect with plants and animals, (c) difficulty accessing culturally-related symbolic objects (e.g., sage, licorice root, deer meat), and (d) limited access to culturally-related activities associated with their home nations (e.g., sun dances, hunting, fishing) contributed to many challenges of pursuing validation areas related to well-being, self, identity (i.e., student identity, cultural identity, and other aspects of identity), purpose, and managing academic setbacks.

Since I moved away from Tyendinaga after high school, I've never been able to access Haudenosaunee culture or language while post-secondary. I first moved to Ottawa where I completed my undergraduate and teaching degree, where I learned to accept that Haudenosaunee practices weren't very visible in the city. Many of the urban Indigenous resources in Ottawa were focused on very vague pan-Indigenous cultural practices and

songs, of which have little-to-no similarities with Haudenosaunee practices. Because Haudenosaunee practices are so different from west coast Indigenous identities, I am not sustained spiritually and culturally in the way I would be in my home community.

(Brooke)

I can only access these important sources of validation when I am in my home community and the longer I stay in the city without a trip back, my mental state and confidence tend to deteriorate. ... When my home community is a remote island up North, I don't have access to things I need to help feel at peace. My community is a mere two hours away by plane but when the price of a return plane ticket is more than it costs to fly around the world, it very often feels like it's an entire universe away... The community I grew up in is central to my well-being because it's surrounded by natural pristine land, full of old growth forests and ocean surrounding each and every side of our land. It was those beaches, tide pools and forests where I first learned to respect all living things and to be a steward and care for our land and seas. **(Vanessa)**

While multiple alternative sources of validation have been previously discussed, participants shared their hesitation around developing alternative sources of validation out of fear that it will distance them from their Aboriginal ancestry and traditional cultural ways of living. One participant shared that she worried about the consequences of developing new relationships outside of her home community. She feared how this might influence her decision to return to her traditional land post-graduation. Another participant elaborated on this sentiment and reported that they wanted to wait to begin having children with their partner, because they

wanted their children to be brought up in teaching and protocols of her home community, which would be absent in this university environment that is not situated on the traditional unceded territory of her home nation.

It is important to my husband that we together remain connected to the Mohawk community, so when the time comes we believe we will move back to Tyendinaga, or near the general vicinity, to ensure our family (including any future children) will be grounded in Haudenosaunee identity. **(Brooke)**

There are many validations I cannot access while attending university and that is being able to have in person interactions with my family members, but that is because I chose to go to UBC. ... The other validations I don't get at university would be the specific traditional practices of my own culture, being in Musqueam territory it makes sense, but many of the cultural activities I feel like I should not participate in because it is not my culture, and I would feel guilty if I knew more of another nations culture more so than my own. I feel like I can't learn much of my own culture until I move back home because that is where it is accessible. **(Brittany)**

Alternative Sources of Validation that Aboriginal Students Access While Attending University

Through participants' reflection of how they compensate for sources of validation that they are unable to access while at university, they articulated two themes related to alternative sources of validation: resilience from dislocation and accessing available wellness activities.

Resilience from dislocation. As previously mentioned, finding new ways of connecting with validating places and relationships while attending university was necessary for participants in order to support their well-being, self, identity (i.e., student identity, cultural identity, and other aspects of identity), purpose, and managing academic setbacks. Participants reported that in order to achieve resilience from dislocation they needed to engage in a process of “re-connecting” by engaging with new validating places and relationships tied to the university campus and surrounding Vancouver area. They expressed that having more private natural spaces (e.g., Spirit Park, Wreck Beach, Lynn Canyon), Aboriginal resources on campus (e.g., Longhouse, computer facilities, Xwi7xwa Library), and comforting relationships (e.g., Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peers, UBC family at the Longhouse, Indigenous Women’s Rise Group) facilitated re-connecting, because relating to place and seeking connection with others are two of their main overall sources of validation.

Seeking out other Indigenous colleagues – more often Indigenous female colleagues – has been an essential lifelong during my graduate schooling. Surrounding myself with strong Indigenous women who are also expected to navigate the dichotomous worlds of academia/Indigeneity is an important aspect of my validation in university. During my undergraduate degrees, Bachelor of Arts in Aboriginal Studies, and Bachelor of Education, I was heavily involved with the Indigenous Students’ Association and Aboriginal Resource Centre events ... Once I started graduate school, however, I no longer had the time to be as involved. I then found two other Indigenous women who were doctoral students, while I was doing my masters, who became instant and vital

friends, who could speak to the multifaceted areas of my life that few non-Indigenous people can understand. **(Brooke)**

It wasn't till most recently I went to [the Longhouse] lunch and the library. I found comfort in using the Longhouse and Xwi7xwa Library. I like the UBC's motto "State of Mind." It helped me realize there were other things - yoga, places to be, and other fantastic people to me. ... Compassion is empowering and at UBC, I've been shown that at the Xwi7xwa Library and at the Longhouse. This had increased my aboriginal self-worth and validation. Everyone is deserving of compassion. This opens up awareness and solidifies self-worth. **(Sandi)**

Accessing available wellness activities. As previously mentioned, there are a number of culturally related wellness activities available to Aboriginal students at the University of British Columbia and in the Vancouver area. Participants shared that having wellness activities related to or facilitative of cultural expression and learning is important not only to their overall well-being but also to the nurture and development of their cultural identity.

Being part of the talking stick [an Aboriginal email list serve] is great because every week they tell you events going on at the Longhouse and funding opportunities. Even if you're not from the west you're invited to participate in the sweats here on campus and they also have medicine workshops. I haven't had a chance to go to the medicine workshops but I want to, because I'm not able to get home and collect roots and things for tea. ... Also the feast bowl is great. There is a group who grows and picks food from

the UBC garden and then prepares it at the Longhouse in traditional ways. Usually someone also donates local seafood or game. There baked bannock is the best. ... Lots of people come out to these events. It's a great way to learn about your Aboriginal protocol for the Coast Salish people and for yourself. There are similarities. **(Rose-Mary)**

Whenever there is an opportunity to see art from my home community I take advantage of it. ... We have some of the best artists. ... I attend art unveilings of sculptures carved by my uncle and works by my cousins whenever I can here in Vancouver. **(Vanessa)**

Aboriginal cultural wellness activities on campus (e.g., Aboriginal student lunches, Wellness Wednesdays, beading workshops at the Longhouse) and in the Vancouver area (e.g., cedar weaving, drumming, Tsimshian dance group), along with access to culturally related symbolic objects (e.g., smudge kits, jewelry and artwork from home community, medicinal plants) and cultural teachings of their home nation (e.g., online dictionary of native language, community history books that contain community photos and story) were reported by participants as crucial to pursuing validation related to cultural expression and learning. They shared that access to these areas enabled their ability to teach other people (e.g., peers, staff, co-workers) about their Aboriginal culture and broaden others' understanding of Aboriginal ways of being.

The sources of validation that contribute to my cultural identity is mostly cedar weaving because that is the only cultural practice that I know. Reading different histories about Kitselas, Tsimshian, or Tahltan traditions helps too. ... Going to Wellness Wednesdays

that NITEP hosts, it is great because I feel very comfortable with Nora who runs it, she is very caring and I feel like I can 100% be myself around her. Another alternative is going to the beach and trying to hike through the bush, whether or not there is a trail. ... I have been to Wreck Beach and was able to look at the different hiking trails in that area which I was happy about. **(Brittany)**

As a graduate student, I chose UBC once again because of this amazing support system that has only grown and flourished since I started all those years ago and it helps me to gather strength. I attend the [Aboriginal student] lunches every week, have joined the yoga group this term, and utilize the resources that the Longhouse always has available, such as the smudge kits we've used recently. Smudges aren't traditional to my nation but the good feelings that rushed over me as I shared in a small, informal smudge outside the Longhouse, really moved me deep inside once again. Now, I plan to utilize this new avenue of spiritual validation of smudging into my own practices. My journey towards feeling validated and accepting myself for who I am has been a long one full of ups and downs, but my culture, nature and home are central pieces to me finding peace.

(Vanessa)

Participants also reported that accessing self-care outlets, outside of traditional Aboriginal wellness activities, was required for pursuing validation of self-care activities while attending university. In addition to self-care activities previously reported (e.g., exercise, social media, looking through photo albums), participants shared that learning about other people's culture while attending university served as a self-care activity. For example, one participant

shared that if she was unable to learn about her Haudenosaunee culture while away at university, she wanted to learn more about her partner's Russian culture through a Russian language course.

Because my husband is Russian, I enjoy taking Russian language classes in Vancouver because there is a rather large Russian community here. Although it is not my ancestral and cultural identity, it is important to me because it is now a part of my "family" identity. If I can't study Mohawk in Vancouver, I tell myself, then at the very least I can study Russian in the time being. **(Brooke)**

The other participants also echoed this sentiment and reported interested in learning about Coast Salish practices (e.g., Musqueam First Nation) while attending university even though they were often different from the practices of their home nation. Lastly, participants acknowledged a new alternative source of self-care validation that resulted from participation in this study. They shared that taking the time to write out a narrative on self-worth experiences was extremely validating because it helped them to evaluate what their priorities are for supporting their well-being and how well they are currently pursuing these sources of validation. Many participants acknowledged that they had not previously set aside the time to create a written and/or visual account of important sources of validation in their life, nor examine how they are related to their self, identity (i.e., student identity, cultural identity, and other aspects of identity), purpose, and ability to manage academic setbacks. They shared that taking the time to participate in this study opened their eyes to important sources of validation in each of their lives; the reality that failed validation pursuit was often linked to an inability to access home-community based sources of

validation, and how they have been able to access alternative or modified sources of validation while attending university.

I was actually shocked how helpful it was participating in this study. Like I never take time to stop and really think about these things. I guess I just take good things for granted sometimes and don't really unpack what's going wrong. You know, why you don't feel fulfilled. Now it's so obvious. There's things I want but can't get right now. **(Rose-Mary)**

Writing this narrative made me feel very thankful for all that I have here at UBC and close by. ... Thank you for including me in this study. ... It's really great to connect with everyone here. **(Sydney)**

It has been great getting to know everyone here [at the focus group] and hearing how we are experiencing similar things. ... I'm glad I came. **(Brooke)**

We need more groups like this, who meet and support each other. I know that's not the point of this group but it's good to hear other people's stories and take time for ourselves. ... Thank you for having me. **(Brittany)**

Reasons that Prevent Aboriginal Students from Accessing Sources of Validation

During articulation of sources of validation, Aboriginal student participants shared six reasons that prevent them from successfully pursuing sources of validation.

Busyness. Due to the many school commitments that accompany each university program and degree requirement, participants shared that they have difficulty engaging in the sources of validation that are important to their well-being. Participants expressed that they feel like they never have enough time in the day to accomplish everything and often feel like they are never able to successfully pursue any one source of validation to their desired extent. Participants shared that their time is often prioritized to completing school assignments and exams with the goal of learning as much as they can from their chosen study of interest and receiving grades that reflect a solid level of knowledge retention and application.

Busyness, however, often makes it difficult to prioritize my own well-being above commitments (professional, academic, and personal commitments). ... Due to the seemingly endless demands of doctoral studies – such as course work and assignments; publishing deadlines; GRA contracts; and, thesis/research demands – I often feel burnt out. I crave physical exercise and activities, particularly running, yoga, and playing soccer with my husband, but I rarely feel as though I have time for these activities.

(Brooke)

While I am at university I am able to engage in cedar weaving, but it is very hard because I have such a heavy course load that many times I will have to put homework first. Which I hate. It isn't easy for Indigenous students to just focus on school because we have so many other things that are more important and beneficial, whether it be revitalizing our culture through cedar weaving, or having the duty to skip classes to attend protests against pipelines on our sacred lands. These things are so unique to

Indigenous students but those experiences and physical learnings do not always connect to our classes, which degrees are more important in order to get a career rather than what we hold close to our hearts. **(Brittany)**

Some participants shared that they were surprised by the amount of time they dedicate to school commitments (e.g., homework, studying for exams, grades) when it is not a source of validation that contributes highly to their overall well-being. However, they shared that due to other sources of validation in their life (e.g., family, home community, cultural expression and learning) that are connected to their school performance (e.g., financially and/or emotionally support their educational pursuit, desire that their educational training will positively impact their home community upon their return, hope that their training will positively impact the Aboriginal community at large), they prioritize spending their time engaging in school related commitments over other areas of well-being.

I'm sure that there are many resources in the library at UBC or in Greater Vancouver that I could access about my own cultures, but it is hard when I have to have at least five courses in order to be eligible for my bursary and funding from my band, trying to balance sports, work, sleep (haha), and enough time for self-care and time for friends and family. I haven't even had the chance to try to see what resources there are that I can look at and learn. **(Brittany)**

Guilt. Many participants acknowledged that feelings of guilt often prevented them from accessing sources of validation. Participants reported feelings of guilt that emerged from

thinking about things they should be doing more of, such as working on academic assignments and publications, professional networking, and engaging in self-care activities. Participants shared feelings of guilt that resulted from thinking about things they should be doing less of, such as devoting too much time to an academic assignment or publication, networking event, or self-care activity.

Rarely, however, do I fully allow myself to enjoy these activities, because I often feel guilty about not taking care of the dozens of other things I “should” be doing. ... It’s a bit of a catch-22 when it comes to making time for physical activity, because I know if I made time for exercise I would have more energy, and yet when I do make time for myself I feel guilty because it’s not “necessary.” The ironic thing is, I know it is necessary for myself, and yet I don’t view it as a necessary exercise because it doesn’t benefit other people and/or help me to graduate faster. Since starting graduate school, I find the guilt is never ending, in the sense that I feel guilty for not exercising enough, or not putting as much effort into a publication as I should, or not spending enough time at home (or even for spending too much time at home!). A huge impediment to my well-being is seemingly never finding a work-life balance, because the pressures and guilt of graduate school is always looming over you, and there never seems to be enough time in the day to adequately do a “good” job in work or personal life. **(Brooke)**

Negative thoughts. Through the process of articulating sources of validation, participants expressed experiencing multiple negative thoughts surrounding one’s capability, worth, and authenticity. Within capability, participants shared feelings of self-consciousness,

confusion surrounding the need to prove their indigeneity, worry about bettering themselves, and fear of not being smart enough when compared to their peers. Within worth, many participants reported that they had felt the need to prove their value and position at university to their peers, professors, and supervisors. Several participants acknowledged fears around non-Aboriginal peers or faculty thinking that they only gained admission to their program due to their Aboriginal ethnicity, versus their academic merit as a scholar. As a result, these participants acknowledged that they often went above and beyond their program requirements to prove their worth and position in their given program of study. Within authenticity, participants shared their dejection regarding having to choose between the values and priorities of western academic and Aboriginal agendas. For example, participants illustrated how the western academic emphasis on individual achievement and encouragement to engage in self-promoting social climbing often conflicted with the values and teachings of their home communities. Participants also shared their grievances about being asked to express or research their indigeneity without available cultural guidance or support (e.g., counselling and advice from Aboriginal Elders), which would result in a culturally incompetent exploration or presentation of indigeneity.

Academic Performance: Now that my professional success is also dependent upon my academic success, I find my confidence and validation is inextricably tied to my academic performance – for better or for worse. I constantly feel the need to ‘beat’ or ‘better’ myself. This ‘bettering’ myself has become particularly worse since starting doctoral studies, because I am by far one of the youngest in my classes ... and always feel self-conscious about needing to prove myself because of my Indigeneity. Am I publishing enough? Did I sound smart enough? It is one of my biggest fears to have a

colleague think that I only got accepted into the doctoral program because I'm Indigenous, and so I put this pressure on myself to feel like I need to 'earn' my spot in the program. **(Brooke)**

You know I always appreciate when a teacher tries to say something positive about me being Aboriginal but sometimes, I don't think they do this intentionally, they assume that because you're Aboriginal that means that you automatically know how to do things the "Aboriginal way" and sometimes we don't. I mean I know things I've been taught by my family but they don't do research. So it would be great to have an Aboriginal mentor that could guide me through doing things in a culturally appropriate way because even though I'm respectful I don't know everything and I need as much guidance in this areas as I would with statistically analyzing somethings and at least they have classes for that.

(Rose-Mary)

Moving and traveling. Many participants reported that their home community resides outside of the Vancouver area and that they had to travel great distances when going between their home community and university during school breaks (e.g., reading break, winter break, summer break). As a result, participants shared that creating stable routines in Vancouver was difficult, which further negatively affected their ability to prioritize time to pursue sources of validation.

My husband and I move and travel a lot, and yet I am a person of routine, so it takes me a while to find a gym that fits my lifestyle (i.e. is close and affordable) and a routine that

agrees with my schedule. I have yet to find this routine since moving to Vancouver in late August. **(Brooke)**

I only have the opportunity to travel home once or twice per year for less than a week at a time and the busier I am, the more I need to return home but it becomes impossible to find the time. **(Vanessa)**

If you still have a foot in your community when you're going to school you really have to work double time because you travel back-and-forth. It makes it difficult to connect with people in Vancouver because you're on the road a lot. So sleep, rest, and socializing definitely get impacted. On both ends. I feels like sometimes you're just showing up and then have to leave again. **(Rose-Mary)**

Long university career. Graduate level (i.e., masters and doctoral students) participants shared that due to the length of time they have been engaged in post-secondary education the line between their academic and personal successes has become blurred. As a result, they reported that it was harder for them to prioritize engaging in sources of validation that did not directly facilitate their academic success (e.g., receiving top marks that would help them get into a doctoral program, engaging in collaborative research projects that would aid in securing future research funding, completing enough publications to support securing a post-doctoral internship). They shared that since academia had become such a large part of their identity they often did not take the time to evaluate other aspects of their identity (e.g., cultural identity, social roles, spiritual connection), which would otherwise support them when suffering an academic setback.

I find the longer I am in university the more the lines blur between personal, professional, academic successes. I often feel conflicted as to what it means to be an Indigenous woman and yet am voluntarily displaced from my community, and so I find I then need to see “success” in order to justify being away from my community. I take pride in teaching, particularly in my roles as an educator within teacher education programs, and feel validated when I help teacher candidates better understand Indigenous peoples and Indigenous education. And yet, as of late, more specifically this semester, I have found my well-being is becoming increasingly interdependent upon my “success” as a doctoral student. Whereas my family is still on the reserve, or colleagues are learning the Mohawk language and great work within the community, I am “still” just a student living on the other side of the country. Lately, I feel my sense of Indigeneity and what it means to be a Haudenosaunee woman is dwindling, to be honest. **(Brooke)**

Geographical displacement. All participants shared discontent for how geographical displacement from their home communities affected their ability to pursue desired sources of validation while attending university. Among this dissatisfaction was their lack of ability to learn and practice the traditions of their home community due to displacement from relationships, symbolic objects, places, and activities tied to their traditional land. Participants reported that due to the ethnic diversity of Vancouver, Aboriginal practices are not actively visible in urban environments and are often vague or pan-Indigenous.

Being away is the hardest. But this is the choice we make for this kind of education opportunity. ... Like we've been saying, it's great that there are Musqueam teachings here but they're not our own. But sometimes we have to be at home to engage in the things that really feed our spirits. ... But it's important that we stand together and fight for resources because we're a minority here and if we don't raise our voices they won't know how many First Nations students are on campus and in Vancouver. **(Rose-Mary)**

Desire for Future Aboriginal University Student Programming

In order to increase access to sources of validation, participants shared several future Aboriginal student university programming areas. Such as: (a) travel and communication grants, (b) access to nature, and (c) creating more safe spaces.

Travel and communication grants. In order to connect Aboriginal students to culturally related relationships, symbolic objects, places, and activities in their home communities, participants expressed a desire to have travel and communication grants available to Aboriginal students throughout the academic school year. Travel grants would help pay for Aboriginal students travel (e.g., airfare, gas, ferry rides) to their home communities during school breaks. Communication grants would help them afford technological devices and services (e.g., smartphones, data, laptops) that could connect them digitally with available community-based sources of validation.

What would be helpful for Aboriginal students, would be a travel grant that we could apply for, similar to travel grants for conferences. Except it would be to return to our home community, whether for an important event, an illness or death of a community

member or simply being burnt out and needing some traditional home-cooked food to help recharge. It could still be an extensive application with restrictions on how often you could utilize it but that could help address our cultural needs that we mentioned that we can't get in the city while at academia. (**Vanessa**)

Access to nature. To facilitate connection to land, participants shared a desire for more green spaces on campus (e.g., cedar trees) and complimentary transportation to local nature resources (e.g., hiking trails in North Vancouver). Participants reported that the Vancouver public transportation systems, covered by their student fees, do not provide timely service to local nature resources. As a result, they suggested the creation of free shuttles to local outdoor natural resources (e.g., Lynn Canyon, Grouse Mountain, Deep Cove) or an Aboriginal student car share program.

We definitely need more cedar trees and green spaces in general where students can be alone with the trees. .. Also free buses to North Vancouver would be great. I'd love to go to but it takes so long on the bus ... with all the homework I have I don't have time to travel on the public buses that get you there. ... Also an Aboriginal student car share program would be great for that. (**Brittany**)

Creating more safe spaces. To promote Aboriginal students' cultural expression and learning, many participants expressed their desire to create more Aboriginal-specific places on campus. These suggestions included affordable Aboriginal student housing, Aboriginal women's and men's groups on campus, and specific times in the UBC First Nations Longhouse

that are for Aboriginal students only. Participants mentioned that by creating more safe spaces on campus Aboriginal students would be better able to connect with each other, access Aboriginal student resources, and develop a more visible Aboriginal community on campus.

I miss the sense of family and community where I live, I do not like or get along with my roommates and that has put a major stress on me. ... I would love having an all Aboriginal dorm where we could get together, cook together, just be ourselves.

(Brittany)

I'm all for inclusion but they need to set some boundaries at the Longhouse so Aboriginal students feel safe again. I've heard from other students that things have really changed overtime and that you used to be able to come on the weekends and leave your belongings without worrying that outsiders would steal things. I think having hours dedicated to Aboriginal students using the Longhouse would be good. Then there would be more of a chance to get together and be like, look there are other Aboriginal students here. I mean Sauder has lounges just for their students. We should be able to have something like that if the funding and programming is really meant for us. **(Rose-Mary)**

This chapter has provided a review of the study results, including themes associated with Aboriginal students' well-being; sense of self, identity, and purpose; cultural identity; and handling academic setbacks. It also discussed themes associated with inaccessible and alternative sources of validation for Aboriginal students when attending university. Among reported alternative sources of validation, participants acknowledged the benefit of taking the

time to create and analyze a written and/or visual account of important sources of validation in their life, which occurred due to participation in this study. Lastly, results associated with reasons preventing Aboriginal students from accessing sources of validation and desired future Aboriginal student university programming were presented.

The next chapter will provide an overall discussion of the research study. It will include a discussion of study limitations, description of the implications drawn by this study, exploration of recommendations for future research, and closing summary.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This study investigated six Aboriginal university students' sources and access to self-worth. This chapter begins with a summary and discussion of the results in light of the research questions posed. This is followed by an examination of the results in the context of the extant literature on university students' sources and access to self-worth. This is followed by a discussion of the study limitation and the significance of general study results. The chapter concludes with an articulation of recommendations for future research and a closing summary.

The study addressed the following questions:

- 1) What are the sources of self-worth that Aboriginal university students seek to experience?
- 2) How do Aboriginal students experience self-worth when attending university?

The results from this study of six Aboriginal students enrolled at the University of British Columbia, collected by using a narrative inquiry research design, gave rise to fifteen themes that addressed sources of self-worth that Aboriginal university students seek to experience. While the focus group participants decided to examine these themes in relation to four validation contribution areas: (a) overall well-being; (b) sense of self, identity, and/or purpose in life; (c) cultural identity; and (d) management of academic setbacks, the significance of relating to place, others, and self; engaging in cultural expression and learning, and engaging in cultural and non-culture methods of self-care were intertwined and woven throughout the fifteen validation themes.

Sources of Self-worth that Aboriginal University Students Seek to Experience

Within sources of validation that contributed to Aboriginal student participants' well-being, including sense of self, identity, purpose in life, cultural identity, and management of academic setbacks, a parallel can be drawn to the literature on non-Aboriginal students who

expressed a desire for validation pursuit in the four cross-cultural contingency domains of self-worth, which included pursuit of self-validation within: (a) relationships (Blaine & Crocker, 1995; Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, & Bouvrette, 2003; Harter, Marold, Whitesell, & Cobbs, 1996; Gallup and Bezilla, 1992); (b) activities (Crocker, 2002; Crocker et al., 2003; Harter, Whitesell, & Kowalski, 1992; Reinboth & Duda, 2004); (c) places (Ishiyama, 1993; McCormick, 1997); and (d) objects (Ferraro, Escalas, & Bettman, 2011; Patrick, Neighbors, & Knee, 2004).

This current study yielded additional layers to these previously reported self-worth sources, with traditional land (i.e., home community, band and/or nation, natural environment and associated plants and animals) being often connected to or sometimes dependent on for successful pursuit of each of the four cross-cultural contingency domains of self-worth. Connection to traditional land for self-worth pursuit is not a construct that is often discussed or analysed in previous self-worth literature. It is unclear if connection to traditional land is also important for self-worth pursuit among non-Aboriginal people. Since traditional land plays an important role for many Indigenous Peoples personal and collective wellbeing, this validation source should be further explored as a research question in future research for other cultures. A second addition is how this study distinguishes between “Aboriginal symbolic objects” and “objects” that related to participants’ self-validation. The term “symbolic objects” has been used in this study to describe physical representations of Aboriginal history (e.g., UBC Reconciliation Pole), physical connectors to ancestry and/or spirituality (e.g., land-based medicines), and symbols of identity (e.g., beaded jewellery). This term was selected to distinguish physical entities that represent connection and relationship with one’s history, ancestry, spirituality, and/or identity. The term “objects” is used in this study when referring to material sources of validation (e.g., laptop) that are not associated with an individual’s cultural history, ancestry, spirituality, and/or identity.

Research by Crocker and Wolfe (2001) acknowledged the importance that place can have on contingencies of self-worth, however they reported that the relevance of place on domains that related to self and self-ideals only provides “an approximation to the construct of contingencies of self-worth” (p. 599). Therefore, while they recognize that place can be personally important and valued in one’s culture, assessment of self-worth pursuit related to place is noticeably absent from the Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale (CSWS; Crocker, Luhtanen, and Cooper, 2003), in which they created.

For each of the participants the majority of their validating sources which contributed to their well-being, sense of self, identity, purpose, and management of academic setbacks were heavily tied to their traditional Aboriginal ancestral land (e.g., medical medicines) and practices (e.g., Sundance ceremony). Aboriginal participants endorsed seeking connection and relation as two motivators for pursuing sources of validation.

These motivators have also been found for non-Aboriginal people. Andersen and Chen (2002) proposed an interpersonal social-cognitive theory of personality and the self, where knowledge about the self is tied with knowledge of significant others and can be envisioned as self-other relationship. They described how human connection is a basic human motivation, which influences an individual’s motivation, affect, self-regulation, and self-evaluation.

Aboriginal participants in this study reported pursuing validation through access to safe spaces on campus (e.g., UBC First Nations Longhouse) that allowed for connection with other Aboriginal people and Aboriginal allies. They shared that access to safe spaces facilitated expression of their cultural identity as well as an opportunity to connect, learn, and relate to other students’ ancestral relation to land. Anderson and Chen (2002) also reported on how relationship pursuit can occur to fulfil a human need for security, in order to feel protected and safe.

Relating to self through the interaction of culturally related relationships, activities, places, and symbolic objects was also strongly expressed by Aboriginal participants. Many participants recounted cultural teachings that were gained through interaction with these four sources, often dependent on physical connection to the validation source.

Within the majority of self-worth literature (Blaine & Crocker, 1995; Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, & Bouvrette, 2003; Harter, Marold, Whitesell, & Cobbs, 1996; Ferraro, Escalas, & Bettman, 2011; Gallup & Bezilla, 1992; Patrick, Neighbors, & Knee, 2004; Reinboth & Duda, 2004), the four cross-cultural areas of self-worth are often discussed separately in terms of validation pursuit (i.e., students' pursuit of validating relationships, activities, places, or objects in isolation). However, many Aboriginal participants expressed validation pursuit holistically in terms of seeking balance between the four areas of self-worth. This description of balance between self-worth domains is akin to Ishiyama's (1989) self-validation model, which describes self-validation in a holistic manner with the goal of achieving harmonious balance aspects of self. Multiple participants in the current study referenced the medicine wheel (i.e., visual Aboriginal representation of the continuous interaction between the spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional aspects of one's life) when conceptualizing how they evaluated successful validation pursuit.

The engagement with activity-related sources of validation is commonly referenced in the literature for university students (Crocker, 2002; Crocker et al., 2003; Harter, Whitesell, & Kowalski, 1992; Reinboth & Duda, 2004). Aboriginal participants shared this pursuit with an emphasis on culturally related activities of validation. Aboriginal participants expressed that engaging in activities related to cultural expression and learning, and cultural methods of self-

care promoted not only their overall wellbeing but the maintenance and development of their cultural identity.

How Aboriginal Students Experience Self-Worth When Attending University

In response to how Aboriginal students experience self-worth when attending university, the focus group participants decided to examine study data in relation to: (a) how validation was pursued; (b) sources of validation that are inaccessible; and (c) alternative sources of validation pursued. In relation to how validation was pursued, three validation themes emerged (i.e., redefining relationships, safe spaces, and self-care). At a global level, validation sources reported by Aboriginal participants paralleled those cited in the literature for university students and/or adults pursuing self-worth within: (a) relationships (Blaine & Crockers, 1995; Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, & Bouvrette, 2003), (b) activities (Crocker, 2002; Crocker et al., 2003), (c) places (Ishiyama, 1995; McCormick, 1997), and (d) objects (Ferraro, Escalas, & Bettman, 2011; Patrick, Neighbors, & Knee, 2004); with the addition of the category of “symbolic objects” to distinguish physical validation and self-worth entities that represent connection and relationship to one’s history, ancestry, spirituality, and/or identity.

Aboriginal expansions to self-worth literature. Examination of specific validation pursuits within the cross-cultural domains of relationship, activities, places, and symbolic objects has revealed particular emphases that Aboriginal students placed on each validation source. Within relationships, Aboriginal students were focused on redefining meaningful relationships in their lives whether through the establishment of new university relationships (e.g., friendships with Aboriginal students, staff, and Elders) or finding alternative ways of connecting with previously established relationships (e.g., technological contact). Pursuit of validating relationships (e.g., student friendships, team and club mates, and professors) at university has

been a source of self-worth cited in previous studies (Blaine & Crockers, 1995; Cohen, Sherrod, & Clark, 1986; Crocker et al., 2003; Gallup & Bezilla, 1992; Harter, Marold, Whitesell, & Cobbs, 1996) for non-Aboriginal students, however connection to the students' cultural affiliation is often not referenced or discussed as a validation relationship criteria. Additionally, Aboriginal participants spoke passionately about their desire to find alternative ways of connecting with previously established relationships, often located in their traditional communities, which is not widely addressed in the self-worth pursuit literature.

Within symbolic objects, Aboriginal students prioritized culturally related symbolic objects that were related to land-based materials (e.g., sage) or connection to their home community (e.g., community history books). Within object-related validation pursuit literature, the pursuit of nostalgic items (e.g., television shows, automobiles, food) has been associated with a desire to belong with others as well as serve as a restorative social function (Loveland, Smeesters, & Mandel, 2010). Loveland, Smeesters, and Mandel (2010) examined the relationship between possession and/or exposure to nostalgic products and the desire to belong with others. They exposed 94 undergraduate students either a social exclusion or inclusion manipulation and then had students indicated their preference between nostalgic or contemporary products. They found that students in the exclusion condition were significantly more likely to choose a nostalgic product than those students that were in the inclusion condition.

An examination of the explicit connection between nostalgia and culture (e.g., carved Haida jewelry passed down from a grandparent), as found in this current study, has not been investigated or reported in object-related self-worth literature (Ferraro, Escalas, & Bettman, 2011; Loveland, Smeesters, & Mandel, 2010).

Within places, Aboriginal students focused on environments self-designated as “safe spaces”, which facilitated cultural expression and learning. Whereas for their non-Aboriginal counterparts, validating places focused more on nostalgia, relaxation, and comfort versus safety for cultural expression and learning. Within activities, self-care related activities; such as yoga (Head & Hammer, 2013), exercise (Crocker et al, 2003), and grooming; were also identified by Aboriginal participants as self-worth sources.

Akin to relationships, symbolic objects, and places, self-care activities were often related to traditional protocols and access to traditional sources of healing (e.g., medicinal plants, cedar trees, the ocean) for Aboriginal participants, which is not something that has been examined for non-Aboriginal populations (Crocker et al, 2003; Head & Hammer, 2013).

Through discussion of inaccessible sources of validation while attending university, a feeling of dislocation was expressed by Aboriginal participants. As previously mentioned, many of their validation sources were tied to traditional land, which severely compromised their ability to access sources of validation while attending university. The experience of cultural dislocation is addressed in the literature with regards to the impact that dislocation from one’s socio-cultural context can have on one’s self-validation system (Ishiyama, 1995). Cultural dislocation is considered to be closely associated with damages to individual’s self-validation systems, such as reduced cultural competencies, academic failure, and threatened identity (Westwood & Ishiyama, 1991).

To conceptualize the impact that cultural relocation and the joining of cultures can have on an individual, Ishiyama (1995b) presented a cultural conflict model that explored two cultural conflict dimensions (i.e., home cultural conflicts and host cultural conflicts). Ishiyama argued that cultural dislocation can be understood in terms of the level of conflict between these two

dimensions, which is affected by the level of emotional attachment that an individual has to either their host or home culture. Ishiyama explained that when individuals experience conflict within both their home and host culture (i.e., bicultural conflict state) they may experience a bicultural dislocation of self or a cultural identity crisis. Individuals in this state may ponder questions such as, “Who am I?” and “Where do I belong?” Those in this state can feel as if they have no home culture or feel biculturally uprooted. Individuals in this state may experience ambivalence towards either cultures or disruption in inner dissonance.

Through dialogue of alternative sources of validation Aboriginal participants expressed two themes: (a) resilience from dislocation and (b) accessing available wellness activities. As self-labeled by the participants, their first theme captured their ability to overcome challenges of dislocation through identification and engagement with new validating places and relationships tied to the university campus and surrounding Vancouver area. Their second theme identified their ability to identify and access available wellness activities, often related to their Aboriginal ancestry, at the university campus and surrounding Vancouver area. While the impact of geographical dislocation and need for culturally-related wellness activities was not the focus of current self-worth literature for student populations, results from this study have identified the significance that connection to land and culturally-related wellness activities have in facilitating and/or hindering Aboriginal students’ ability to access sources of self-worth during university. Results from this study also revealed that participants experienced validation through the creation and evaluation of written and/or visual accounts of important areas of validation in their life. These findings add further support to the holistic connection of self-validation domains outlined in the self-validation model (Ishiyama, 1989) that are visually explored in the validationgram exercise (Ishiyama, 1995).

During discussion of validation sources, participants identified that the following experiences prevented and/or stifled their ability to access sources of validation while attending university: (a) busyness, (b) feelings of guilty, (c) periods of negative thinking, (d) time required to move and travel between university and home, (e) a long university career, (f) and geographical displacement from their home and culture. While busyness was reportedly caused by demanding program and degree requirements, participants shared that the development of guilt and negative thoughts were self-generated. They reported experiencing guilt regarding their academic output and concern about their capability, worth, and authenticity as a student. Many participants cited conflicting values between their Aboriginal identity and academic western identity as a negative contributor to feelings of guilt and negative thoughts experienced, which are not listed in the literature as preventative validation factors. While geographical displacement has been discussed as hindering factors for university students' validation pursuit, the impact of time and cost commitments for traveling and moving in-between one's home community and academic setting, in regards to validation pursuit, have not been explored. Lastly, the influence of lengthy university careers (e.g., completion of a bachelors, masters, and doctoral degree for one a specific career) have not been explored for Aboriginal students in terms of the impact that extended time away from their traditional land has on the maintenance and development of their cultural identity and/or academic western identity.

In response to inaccessible and/or alternative validation sources, Aboriginal participants shared three areas (i.e., travel and communication grants, access to nature, and creating more safe spaces) for future desired Aboriginal university student programming. Each of these areas promotes connection to validating sources that are sought by Aboriginal students while attending university. To increase connection with previously established validating relationships,

participants expressed a desire for funding that would either physically or technologically connect them with relationships in their home community. To facilitate relation to the land, participants suggested methods for creating access to more green spaces on campus and to natural land reserves in neighboring communities. Lastly, to promote cultural expression and learning, participants outlined ideas for creating more safe spaces for Aboriginal students to gather on campus, such as Aboriginal student housing, Aboriginal women's and men's group, and specific time periods allocated for Aboriginal student in the UBC First Nations Longhouse.

Traditional language regarded as a source of self-validation. Research on the well-being of Indigenous Peoples has identified that connection to one's native language is often a vital component of Indigenous Peoples cultural identity (King et al, 2009). This is a validation source that was discussed by several participants of this study as an underlying validation category to several validation areas and contributing themes. Within sources of validation that affirm Aboriginal students' sense of self, identity, and purpose, language was found to contribute to participants' connection to people, place, self, and ancestry. Within sources of validation that contribute to Aboriginal students' cultural identity, engagement with language practices (e.g., language courses, songs, speaking their native language) were found to assist in the maintenance and enhancement of their connection to cultural identity. Within alternative sources of validation that Aboriginal students accessed while attending university, language was cited as a contributor to the validation theme of resilience from dislocation. For example, one participant shared that engaging with cultural language teachings from their home nation (e.g., online dictionary of native language) was crucial to their pursuit of validation related to their cultural expression and learning.

As to why language was not identified as a stand-alone validation theme in this study multiple hypotheses can be generated. Haig-Brown (1988) discusses how disconnection or displacement between Aboriginal people and their home community can result in a loss of aspects of cultural identity (e.g., loss of tradition, protocol, language). Multiple participants in this study shared that they were unable to learn or practice their language while attending university. One shared that they are waiting to return to their community after graduate school to study their native language because they are unable to access language teachers and speakers while at university. Haig-Brown (1988) discusses how through the residential school system, pupils were subject to extreme forms of punishment for engaging in cultural expression (e.g., language, beliefs, food, dress). This has resulted in an intergenerational disconnection and/or loss of native language for many Aboriginal Peoples. Several participants acknowledged that they would like to know or learn more about their native language but that language knowledge keepers are limited in their community or no longer available. Lastly, the level of acculturation for participating members of this study should be taken into consideration. Acculturation refers to the level of adaptation of ideals, behaviors, and values that an individual experiences when they come into contact with two or more cultures (Erdogan, 2012). Based on each participant's response to ideals, behaviors, and values encouraged in western society, and retention of ideals, behaviors, and values represented in their Indigenous community, preferences for validation pursuit related to Indigenous language will vary.

Limitations

There are two main limitations to this study that need to be discussed. These limitations fall within the categories of: (a) evaluation of discussion and claims of knowledge; and (b) influence of the researcher.

Evaluation of discussion and claims of knowledge. Knowledge evaluation, discussion, and claims are guided and restricted by the epistemology used in a research study. Reality is viewed quite differently in a positivist versus postmodernist perspective. From a positivist perspective, used in quantitative research, reality is governed by laws. From this epistemological perspective, truth is discovered through deductive reasoning, which is achieved through application and evaluation of the scientific method. Truth from this perspective is based on correspondence between reality and observation. Within a quantitative study, manipulation and measurement of an independent variable is paramount to describing cause and effect (i.e., functional relationship), which describes the research knowledge goal of a study. However, from a postmodernist perspective, which is used in qualitative research such as narrative inquiry, it is believed that reality is always in flux and is socially constructed through human agency, experience, and perception. From this epistemological perspective, truth is socially constructed, and knowledge is obtained through inductive reasoning. As a result, truth changes based on one's social experiences and interpretations. The goal and boundary of postmodern research therefore is to interact with individual's subjective experiences (e.g., through text, interview, artwork) and report the individuals experiences while attending to researcher subjectivity. As a result, concepts such as validity, reliability, and generalizability take on different meaning and importance in a postmodernist research study. In interpretive research, the researcher's goal is to report a chain of interpretations in such a manner that demonstrates trustworthiness of the research findings to the reader (Bjerrum Nielsen, 1995). This is accomplished by the researcher providing evidence that their results have met the outlined trustworthiness criteria (i.e., comprehensiveness, verisimilitude, resonance, and pragmatic value) as proposed by Marshall and Rossman (2016).

Generalizability of Aboriginal self-worth claims. Compared to quantitative studies that strive to generalize research findings and conclusions to a larger population, the goal of this research was not to make a universal claim for all Aboriginal Peoples' experience of self-worth, but instead to add each participants' voice into the literature that described their self-worth experiences. Due to the in-depth exploration of personally significant sources of self-worth for Aboriginal students and ways in which they pursued the experience of self-worth, a small number ($N = 6$) of Aboriginal students were able to participate in this study. While this is not a limitation of the study, it is important to acknowledge that the findings from this study represent a small proportion of the representation of the diversity across Aboriginal people. To put this into a Canadian Aboriginal context, there are 203 First Nations groups that reside in British Columbia and over one million self-identified First Nations, Inuit, and/or Métis people of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006). Since each Aboriginal band and/or nation has their own form of self-governance, culture, and language or dialect, experience claims from this research are not appropriate for generalization into universal claims about Aboriginal people.

Possible gendered influence on data. While the focus of this study was not to provide descriptions of self-validation pursuit specific to each gender, it is acknowledged that all participants of this study self-identified as women. This homogeneous gender sample may have contributed to a gendered nature of the perceptions and data generated in this study. Self-worth literature examining gender influence has identified that gender ideals can affect external contingencies of self-worth (Sanchez & Crocker, 2005). Future self-validation research would be enhanced through the recruitment and participation of both men and women in their study sample. This would allow for an examination of the impact that a heterogeneous gender sample has on a collaborative group thematic content analysis and resulting self-validation themes.

Inclusion of both men and women would also allow for examination of gender similarities and differences found between Aboriginal Peoples and non-Aboriginal people in their preferred validation sources and methods of validation pursuit.

Influence of the researcher. When a researcher collects participant's stories and combines them into a larger narrative, they cannot help but impose their own meaning on the lived experiences reported by the participants. While I outlined a plan for noting my ongoing narrative constructions, the participants that I worked with were never truly free of my influence, interpretation of their lives, how this interpretation influenced the questions that I asked, and the manner to which I responded to their answers. However, narrative inquiry recognizes that stories are inherently multilayered and that the co-constructed truth, between the participants and the researcher, will evidently include subjectivity contributed by the participants and the researcher.

Significance of the Study Results

Although previous research has been conducted on sources of self-worth that university students pursue, very little research has been conducted on areas of self-worth specific to Aboriginal university students. This study was unique in that it was the first to explore the pursuit of these sources of self-worth for Aboriginal students while attending university. As a result, this study contributes to both the existing cross-cultural and Aboriginal literature on preferred sources of self-worth by providing information on similarities and differences between Aboriginal people and other cultural minority groups, and information on the pursuit of self-worth sources. This study adds to the current literature by providing rich, detailed descriptions of both the preferred sources of self-worth as well as the accessibility of these self-worth sources while attending university.

Through my own experience of mentoring Aboriginal students, I have witnessed anecdotal reporting of the need for alternative and/or modified sources of self-worth when attending university due to an inability to pursue traditional sources of self-worth. Therefore, a significant contribution of this study's research findings is empirical evidence of Aboriginal students' experiences of self-worth pursuit. This empirical documentation of their self-worth pursuit can be used to support their access to viable sources of self-worth or the creation of alternative and/or modified sources of self-worth while attending university. By focusing on areas specific to Aboriginal people this investigation has begun to fill the literature gap, which can provide valuable information to university administrators, educators, and clinicians on how to support Aboriginal students' success and retention at university. Of which are priority areas that align with Aboriginal student strategic engagement plans held by the majority of Canadian universities.

Implications for theory. Theories that explore individuals' well-being find that perception of one's self is influenced by: self-validation (Ishiyama, 1995), self-worth (Crocker, 2002), and self-efficacy (Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2004). These theories indicate that individuals' self-esteem fluctuates based on successful obtainment of areas that self-validation (Ishiyama, 1995) and self-worth has been placed in (Horberg & Chen, 2010). The results of this study are consistent with these theories based on the themes and categories formed.

The operational definition of identity given in the literature changes based on the assumption that a given theory of identity holds for the role of independence, interrelation (Goodwill, & McCormick, 2012; Stets, & Burke, 2000), or interconnection (Stroink & DeCicc, 2010). However, across theories, identity refers to the beliefs and understanding that one holds for oneself through their cognitive representations of self (Robertson, 2014). These cognitive

representations are referred to as one's self-construal. These cognitive representations fall into three categories: (a) independent, unique, separate, and distinct self from others, (b) interdependent self that is located within a social context, and (c) metapersonal self that is interconnected with all aspects of life (Stroink & DeCicc, 2010). The interconnection among Aboriginal people, nature, and humanity has been well documented when conceptualizing selfhood and identity from an Aboriginal perspective (Hill, 2006). Results from this research support Stroink and DeCicc (2010) results that found increases in identification with Aboriginal identity, participation in Aboriginal culture, and engagement with traditional Aboriginal protocols, resulted in stronger connection with a metapersonal self-construal (i.e., holistic conceptualization of self with other aspects of life).

Ishiyama (2007) proposed that individuals are motivated to seek validating experiences through engagement with relationships, activities, places, and objects. Support for these cross-cultural sources of validation was found for Aboriginal participants in this study, with the inclusion of a holistic connection between these validation domains and one's perception of self. In addition, this study has expanded upon these four cross-cultural sources to include symbolic objects as a fifth validation area. As previously mentioned, this category denotes physical validation sources that represent connection and relationship to one's history, ancestry, spirituality, and/or identity. Akin to Ishiyama (1995) conceptualization, current study participants reported that access to these cross-cultural sources of validation affirms their sense of self, self-worth, and reason for existence. Disconnection from these experiences leads to aversive feelings of self-doubt, disorientation, and stress.

Results from this study adds to the dialogue on cross-cultural sources of validation. Findings highlight the importance that connection (i.e., connection to physical people, places,

and symbolic objects, as well as ancestry) and identity building activities (e.g., career development, socialization, self-care) have for Aboriginal students when they pursue validation that contributes to their sense of self, identity, and purpose. Additionally, results revealed that Aboriginal students experience often feel like they are straddling two worlds (i.e., engaging in values and practices from both the Aboriginal world and Academic Western world) during their validation pursuit journey.

When self-worth was investigated among students in the literature, the following areas were identified within cross-cultural domains: (a) relationships such as family support (Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, & Bouvrette, 2003) and religious faith (Blaine & Crockers, 1995), (b) activities such as academics activities (Crocker et al., 2003) and athletic activities (Reinboth & Duda, 2004), (c) places, especially traditional land and nature (McCormick, 1997), and (d) objects including material possessions (Ferraro, Escalas, & Bettman, 2011). Current results support these same areas of self-validation sources originally proposed by Ishiyama (1995) with an emphasis on culturally related relationships, activities, places, and symbolic objects influencing Aboriginals students' well-being, sense of self, identity, and/or purpose in life; cultural identity; and management of academic setbacks.

When the pursuit of self-worth is successful, short-term emotional benefits such as decreased anxiety and increased happiness can be achieved. Furthermore, long-term emotional benefits, such as self-regulation, mental and physical health, learning, and autonomy compound the effect (Crocker, 2002; Crocker & Luhtanen, 2003; Crocker et al., 2003; Crocker & Wolfe, 2001). Failure can have the reverse effect on self-worth, and can lead to ruptures in self-regulation, mental and physical health, relationships, learning, and autonomy (i.e., decrease self-esteem). Study results were supportive of this pattern.

Due to the impact that failed pursuit of self-worth has, individuals are very selective about what areas of self-worth they pursue while attending university (i.e., redefining relationships, safe spaces, and self-care). Since contingencies of self-worth mold our short-term and long-term goals, domain based self-validation goals are created in order to provide opportunities to be successful, valuable, and worthy. Self-validation goals are strongly linked to contingencies of self-worth and individuals report spending more time on sources that promote their self-worth. This was supported by participants in the current study with the inclusion of desired future Aboriginal programming (i.e., travel and communication grants, access to nature, and creating more safe spaces) that will help Aboriginal students to access desired areas of self-worth while attending university.

Implications for methodological procedures. Narrative inquiry research analyzes stories or descriptions of event sequences and assumes that the story is a fundamental unit that describes human experience (Riessman, 2002). Types of and sources of data collected in this study were unique because they accessed Aboriginal students experiences of self-worth through different modalities: (a) visually through the creation of their written narratives; (b) kinesthetically through the passing of an eagle feather during the focus group talking circle; and (c) verbally through the talking circle and group thematic content analysis.

The method of a collaborative group thematic content analysis, used to identify themes across participants' self-worth narratives, was selected for its fit with the oral storytelling tradition used by Aboriginal Peoples to preserve and share their history, values, and practices. To honour and maintain the stories, voices, and shared experiences of each participant, the decision was made to have participants take an active role throughout the multiple study stages (i.e., data collection, data analysis, and review of study results).

During data collection, participants were given ownership of their personal stories and were free to describe their experience as an Aboriginal university student and how it had contributed to their sense of self-worth from their own subjective perspective, in a written and oral format. During data analysis, participants were tasked with identifying and creating cross-participant themes that corresponded to their experiences of self-worth. During review of the study results, participants were responsible for reviewing and providing feedback when necessary on the results section of this dissertation, to ensure that their stories, voices and shared experiences were presented in a manner consistent with their experiences of self-worth.

Future research could benefit from incorporation of these methodological procedures when the goals of the research are to first, elicit the collection of data through multiple communication styles (i.e., written, kinesthetic, and verbal communication). Second, maintain and present the participants' stories, voices, and shared experiences throughout the study process. Third, allow for and facilitate the incorporation of participants' feedback through the data collection, data analysis, and review of study results stages. Fourth, provide a more robust exploration of study data. Fifth, illustrate that the participants' voices and views were on the same level as researcher. Sixth, incorporate triangulation (i.e., process of bringing together multiple sources of data to understand the research in question) into the research design to gain a deeper understanding of participants' experiences. Seventh, simultaneously include member checks (i.e., when research findings are evaluated by the members of the group from whom the data was originally obtained) in the analysis phase of the research design.

It is vital to demonstrate trustworthiness in order to strengthen the quality and validity of research findings (Creswell, 2012). The following criteria were used to evaluate the trustworthiness of the research findings of this narrative inquiry: comprehensiveness,

verisimilitude, resonance, and pragmatic value. Comprehensiveness (i.e., extent that the research findings are complete and comprehensive in covering all aspects of study's research questions) was upheld through both the triangulation of sources and analyst triangulation, as well as the employment of member checks. The use of triangulation of sources enabled examination of the degree of consistency across data sources and provided continuity and coherence to the shared experiences of the participants. Analyst triangulation allowed for identification of multiple ways of understanding the data and generated research findings. The employment of member checks allowed participants to describe their actions and responses, to correct errors and to challenge incorrect interpretations, and to confirm the adequacy of study findings. Verisimilitude (i.e., sense of authenticity that can be associated with a text when depicting the narratives of study participants) was upheld through the inclusion of focus group dialogue excerpts in order to illustrate the themes generated during the group thematic content analysis. Resonance (i.e., ability to affect, influence, or move a reader through evocative or aesthetic representations) was upheld through the inclusion of thick descriptions and detailed accounts of studied experiences for each of the participants' stories when describing the research finding, as well as, inclusion of discussions with participants on research findings (i.e., "Do these findings resonate with the story as you told it?"). Pragmatic value (i.e., the usefulness of the research) was examined by the researcher, study participants, and committee members. Each party evaluated the relevance, timeliness, significance, and interest of the research findings in relation to the contribution that findings would make to the fields of research, education, and social practice.

Implications for practice. Literature on Aboriginal Peoples' healing methods and conducting counselling with Aboriginal people outlines the importance of incorporating traditional methods of healing, Aboriginal values and knowledge, and the facilitation of cultural

expression (Anderson, 1993; Goodwill, 2003; Goodwill & McCormick, 2012; McCormick, 1997). Results from this study support these findings and found that cultural expression and learning was an important source of validation that contributed not only to Aboriginal students' well-being but also to the development and maintenance of their sense of self, identity (e.g., cultural identity), and purpose.

Clinical implications for practice. Counsellors and psychologists could utilize findings from this study to develop interventions and techniques to support Aboriginal clients in the pursuit of self-worth sources, with particular emphasis on strategies for successful pursuit while attending university. Review of the nine validation discussion areas covered in this dissertation with Aboriginal clients could facilitate information on validation pursuit that may not otherwise be addressed in a counselling session. For example, exploring how an Aboriginal client pursues relating to place, cultural expression and learning, seeking connection, and self-care activities may provide counselling professional with a snapshot of sources of validation that may influence their client's well-being. By enabling clients to explore and articulate their own sources of validation, counselling professionals can become more aware and sensitive to appropriate and efficient uses of culturally related sources of validation (i.e., relationships, symbolic objects, places, activities, and holistic connection to self) that can promote their client's well-being.

Educational implications for practice. Educators and policy makers at universities could utilize findings from this study to create learning opportunities and systemic programming that facilitates successful pursuit of validation areas for Aboriginal students. Classroom educators can utilize the findings regarding validation pursuit at university (i.e., redefining relationships, safe spaces, and self-care) to develop assignments that facilitate and/or create these sources of validation. For example, developing assignments that encourage the creation of new

relationships with peers, faculty, and staff at university will support students; pursuit of developing new relationship supports in the university environment. Educators can actively take steps to transform their classroom environment into culturally safe spaces for students by openly encouraging and accepting the discussion of cultural expression and learning, as it relates to the course's curriculum. Lastly, educators could carve out time in their evaluation schedule to create a self-care assignment that promotes successful completion of another course related assignment. Since all occupations in life benefit from self-care rejuvenation, an assignment such as this would train students in conceptualization and development of healthy work-life balance strategies that will aid in preventing burnout.

Findings related to sources of validation pursued during an academic setback (i.e., comforting relationships, prioritizing time, and re-centering and rejuvenation), alternative validation areas accessed at university (i.e., resilience from dislocation and accessing available wellness activities) and desired future Aboriginal programming (i.e., travel and communication grants, access to nature, and creating more safe spaces) can be used by university policy makers in the maintenance and creation of Aboriginal student programming at universities. For example, equipping student services (e.g., career support centers, counselling services, health and wellness centers) on university campuses with strategies and resources for helping student access comforting relationships (e.g., family, academic advisors, counsellors), prioritize time for work-life balance, and engage in re-centering and rejuvenating experiences would help students develop the skills and resources required to manage academic setbacks at university.

Future university programming for Aboriginal students should incorporate the alternative validation accessed while attending university and desired areas of future Aboriginal programming identified by Aboriginal participants in the study. Research suggests that in order

to help students navigate the hurdles of academic life, they need to have sufficient access to and success in self-worth domains (Crocker, 2002; Crocker & Luhtanen, 2003; Crocker et al., 2003; Crocker & Wolfe, 2001), which will fuel their sense of purpose (Bandura & Locke, 2003), motivation, academic success, and academic retention (Zepke & Leach, 2010). By maintaining current validation and wellness sources on campus (e.g., green spaces, Aboriginal resources the Longhouse, Aboriginal community at the Longhouse) and expanding with resource directions identified by Aboriginal students (e.g., travel and communication grants, access to nature, creating more safe spaces) university officials can feel confident that their programming efforts and financial resources are going towards programs that are desired and required by Aboriginal university students.

Future Research

Future research should consider the following directions. First, an evaluation of current Aboriginal university student programming should be conducted in collaboration with universities that have a large population of Aboriginal students, within a research design that lends itself to the exploration of personally significant sources of self-worth for Aboriginal students and how this influences their retention in post-secondary education. An alternative narrative inquiry research design with in-depth individual interviews may lend itself to this aim and be feasible to implement in a university setting. The use of in-depth individual interviews would allow for data collection on Aboriginal university students' self-worth experience in multiple Aboriginal university student programs. The in-depth interviews could occur four times throughout the academic school year (i.e., beginning of first semester, end of first semester, beginning of second semester, and end of second semester) across multiple participants ($N = 12$). This would allow for an exploration of different university programs that Aboriginal students

participate in throughout the year, self-worth experiences associated with participation in each program, accessibility of and retention in university wellness program, and how participation in Aboriginal wellness programs influences Aboriginal students' retention in post-secondary education.

Second, related consideration is to increase the number of study participants in order to broaden the representation of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. As previously mentioned there are approximately one million self-identified First Nations, Inuit, or Métis people of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006). Each Aboriginal band and/or nation has their own form of self-governance, culture, and language or dialect. As a result, it is important to take into consideration a diverse breadth of Aboriginal students' experiences of self-worth when designing wellness programming for Aboriginal students.

Third, associated consideration is to include a heterogeneous gender research sample. Inclusion of both genders will allow future researchers to examine if self-validation sources and methods of validation pursuit articulated by Aboriginal Peoples vary by gender. Inclusion of both men and women would also allow for examination of gender similarities and differences found between Aboriginal Peoples and non-Aboriginal people in their preferred validation sources and methods of validation pursuit.

Fourth, in regard to next steps is the necessity of actively collaborating with university administrators and educators in the enhancement of Aboriginal student wellness programming. This would include collaboratively defining the key components of future programming, discussing strategies to include culturally-related sources of validation into wellness programming, consulting with Aboriginal students and Elders on the inclusion and implementation of culturally-related sources of validation, scheduling consistent wellness

programming across the school-year, and gathering multiple dependent variables that the researchers, university, students, and Aboriginal community Elders believe would be affected by the enhanced wellness programming.

Fifth, fidelity of implementation of the Aboriginal student wellness programming by university staff needs to be evaluated throughout the school year. To this end, a checklist of key steps and features of the Aboriginal student wellness programs needs to be developed, with operational definitions of each step and feature so that they can be objectively evaluated.

Sixth, a social validity questionnaire should be created to include Likert-type scale items that address the cultural content and responsiveness of Aboriginal student wellness programs in relation to students' sources of self-worth. These items should specifically include an evaluation of the extent to which Aboriginal student wellness programs maintain and enhance student's cultural awareness and sense of cultural identity. In addition, the administration of such a social validity questionnaire should be completed during the end of each university semester and used formatively to further improve the structure and content of Aboriginal student wellness programming.

Finally, if future program evaluation research on Aboriginal student wellness programs shows to be effective at connecting students to Aboriginal student wellness programs, facilitating their pursuit of self-worth sources, and increasing their retention in post-secondary education, then additional research should replicate such wellness programming at different universities with Aboriginal students of different age levels and socio-economic backgrounds. If positive results are obtained during this systematic replication, it would contribute to the validity of the Aboriginal university student wellness programming.

Summary

This study explored sources of and accesses to self-worth that Aboriginal university students seek. The purpose of this study was to identify validation themes that would illustrate areas that contribute to Aboriginal students' well-being; sense of self, identity, and purpose; cultural identity; and ability to handle academic setbacks. These themes were intended to contribute empirically to cross-cultural literature on the similarities and differences between Aboriginal people and other cultural minority groups, and information on the pursuit of self-worth sources.

The narrative inquiry research design involved data collection through the use of a written narrative and subsequent focus group discussion. The group thematic content analysis, which incorporated the Aboriginal tradition of sharing knowledge orally (M. Buchanan, personal communication, 2017) yielded nine validation discussion areas. Within these areas there were four main themes that relate to sources of validation that contribute to Aboriginal students' well-being; three validation themes that relate to their sense of self, identity, and purpose; five validation themes that relate to their cultural identity; and three themes that relate to handling academic setbacks. In relation to inaccessible and alternative sources of validation when attending university, one main theme was derived for inaccessible sources, and two main themes for alternative sources of validation. The group thematic content analysis also revealed five themes relating to reasons preventing access to sources of validation, and three themes relating to desired future programming for Aboriginal students. Multiple criteria were used to evaluate study results validity.

The findings of this study contribute to the field of counselling psychology by the provision of validation themes that are trustworthy and comply with Aboriginal principles of

ethical research and practice. This study suggests potential developments and recommendations in theory, methodological procedures, clinical and educational practice, and future research. The most significant implication for future direction in research on Aboriginal students' preferred and accessed sources of self-worth while attending university is understanding and supporting the role that culturally-related sources of validation have for Aboriginal students' well-being.

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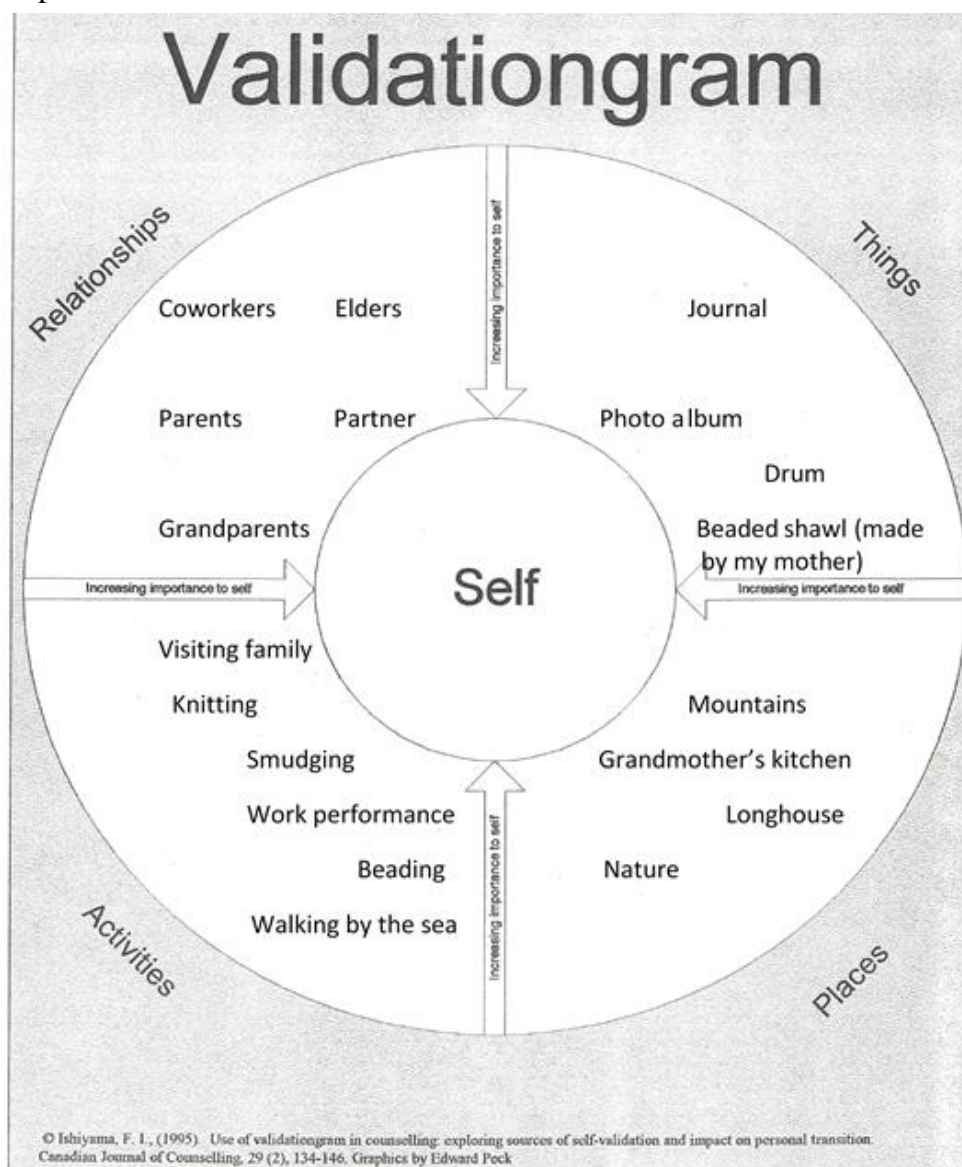
Appendices

Appendix A: Validationgram Exercise

Validationgram Exercise

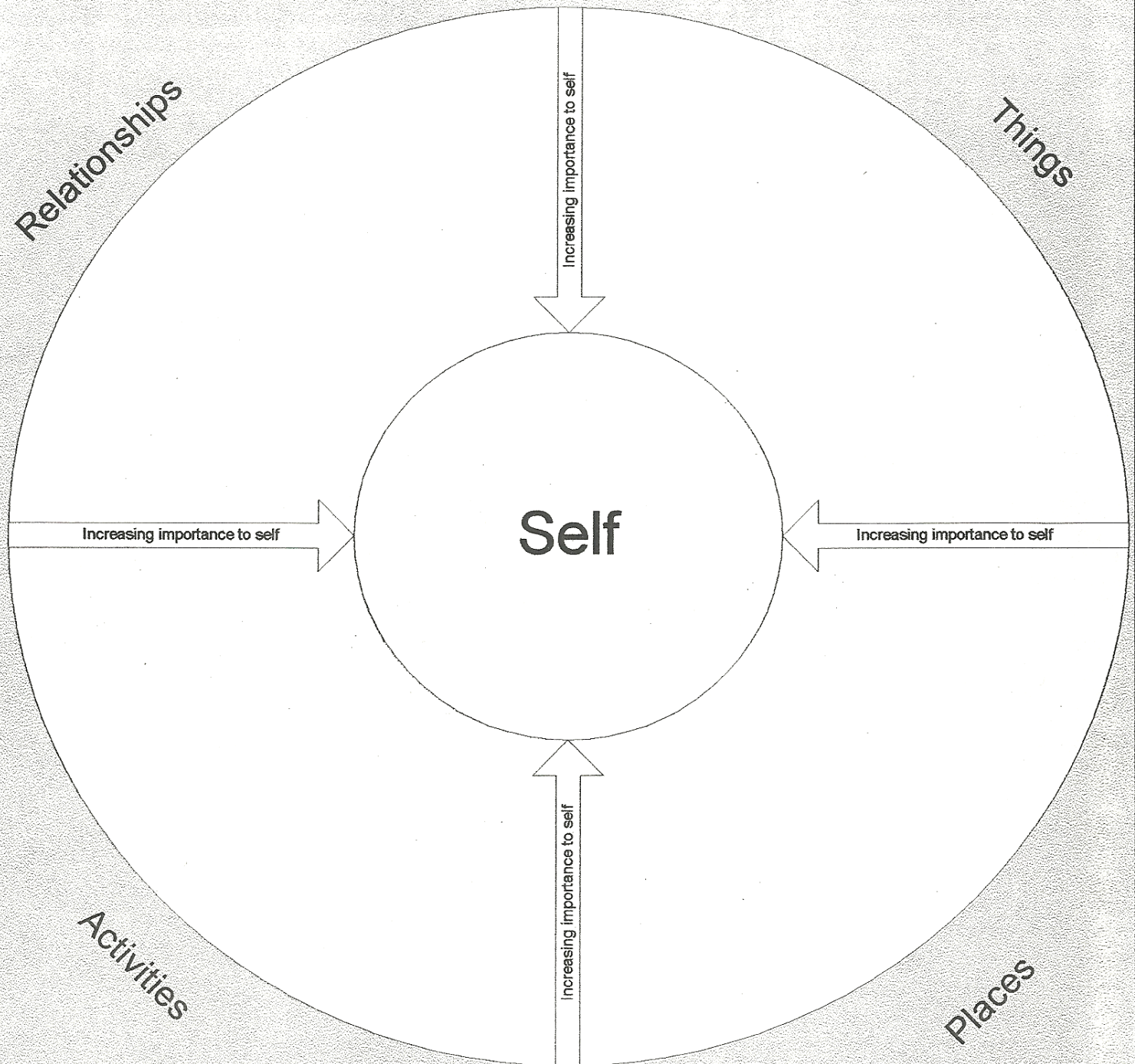
Thank you for participating in this study, which investigate validation experiences that Aboriginal students engage in. Prior to construction of your written narrative please complete the blank Validationgram on the next page. The Validationgram is divided into four sections (relationships, things, places, activity) with “self” listed in the center. Please fill in sources of validation (i.e., engagement with an area that provides: a sense of self-worth, identity, and/or increase in self-esteem) in your life. As you list items place more important sources of validation closer to “self” in the center and less important areas towards the perimeter. Note: interaction with the four areas does not have to be equal.

Example:



Questions regarding the completion of the validationgram can be sent to: wawrykow@alumni.ubc.ca

Validationgram



© Ishiyama, F. I., (1995). Use of validationgram in counselling: exploring sources of self-validation and impact on personal transition. Canadian Journal of Counselling, 29 (2), 134-146. Graphics by Edward Peck

Upon completion, please reflect on your validationgram when completing your written narrative.

Appendix B: Written Narrative

Thank you for participating in this study. I would like to hear the story of your experience as an Aboriginal university student and how it has contributed to your sense of self-worth. Write a 4 to 6-page narrative describing sources of validation (i.e., engagement with [specific area] provides me with a sense of identity and/or increased self-esteem) that contribute to your sense of self-worth. Please respond to the following questions in your written narrative:

- (1) What source(s) of validation contribute to your well-being?
- (2) What source(s) of validation do you need to access in order to affirm your sense of self, identity, and/or purpose in life?
- (3) How do you pursue sources of validation (as references in response to the above questions) when attending university?
- (4) What source(s) of validation contribute to your cultural identity?
 - a. How do you pursue these sources when attending university?
- (5) When you have an academic setback, what source(s) of validation do you utilize?
- (6) Are there sources of validation that you are unable to access while attending university?
 - a. If so, what source(s) of validation are you unable to access while attending university?
 - b. If so, what alternative source(s) of validation have you been able to access while attending university?

Appendix C: Focus Group Prompts

What in your story is similar to other stories that you have witnessed today? What is a common theme between yours and another person's story?

Additional Prompts

- What name or label could we give to that shared experience?
- Please tell me (more) about that... ?
- Can you give me an example of... ?
- Could you explain what you mean by...
- Can you tell me something else about... ?
- Can you remember a particular time when... ?
- Tell me what happened at this point in your studies?

Appendix D: Description of the Thematic Content Analysis Process

Thematic Content Analysis

To understand themes across participants' narratives the data in this study was subjected to a modified version of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic content analysis.

Familiarization with the data. This first step involves actively reading and taking notes of the data multiple times for meaning, possible codes, and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Create initial codes. This second step involves creating codes that identify features of the data and organize the data into meaningful groups. Data should be coded in its entirety, for as many patterns as possible, situated with relevant surrounding data, and if needed, coded with multiple codes.

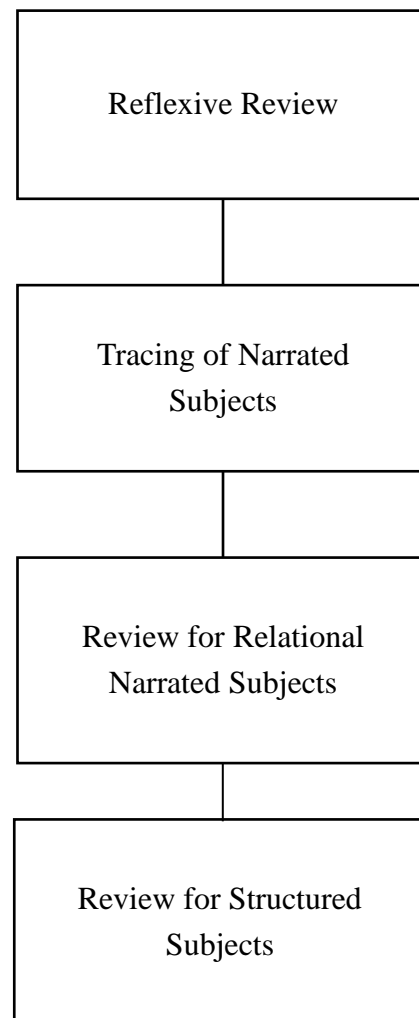
Search for categories. This third step involves considering how many different codes can be combined together to create overarching categories (M. Buchanan, personal communication, 2017). During this step, visual representations of the codes and categories can be made through construction of an initial thematic maps are used to create category themes.

Review categories. This fourth step involves refinement of categories. To begin this step, codes within each theme are re-read to evaluate coherency. Then, revisions of themes are made with the potential creation of new themes until consistency is achieved. Lastly, the themes are revealed holistically to determine if they represent the data set as a whole. During this step, the development of the thematic map is use to facilitate the refinement of categories.

Name and define themes. This fifth step involves identifying the crux of each theme and assigning it a name. The assigned definition should operationalize each theme and identify how it relates to the study's main and sub research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Translating themes into a report. This final step involves reporting the data in a coherent, non-repetitive, and interesting manner, which conveys the value of the analysis process, responds to the research questions, and provides data extracts that reflect the themes.

Appendix E: Visual Sequencing of Data Analysis

#1 Thematic Content Analysis**#2 Thematic Content Analysis****#3 Listening Guide Excerpts**

Appendix F: Transcription Code Key

Non-Verbal Gestures

Non-verbal gestures, such as body language and facial expressions were included in the transcript through the use of notations. The following example illustrates body and facial expression:

“It was getting close to the end of the term ... my assignments started to pile up ... I felt so alone” (cries and puts head in hands).

Appendix G: Consent Form



Project Office:
 Department of Educational and Counselling
 Psychology, and Special Education
 2125 Main Mall
 Vancouver, BC Canada V6T 1Z4

Principal Investigator:
 Ishu Ishiyama, Ph.D.,
 Associate Professor

Co-Investigator
 Natasha Wawrykow., PhD Student

Consent Form

Title: Self-Worth: Sources that Aboriginal University Students Pursue

Principal Investigator: Ishu Ishiyama, Ph.D., Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education, University of British Columbia

Insert Date: _____

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in the Exploration of Sources of Self-Validation Research Study. The purpose of the project is to investigate sources of self-validation that Aboriginal students pursue while attending university. Participation in this study will require the completion of a personal written narrative, participation in a focus group, and review of focus group transcripts.

Participant's Time:

Completion of the validationgram and written narrative will vary across participants but is estimated to take one to two hours. Completion of the focus group activities will occur over two 3-hour focus group segments within the same day. Participants will be given a one hour lunch break in between the two focus group segments. Completion of the focus group transcript will take approximately one hour.

The validationgram is a paper exercise that helps participants to visually reflect on validating experiences that influence their self-worth, identity, and self-esteem. The validationgram is divided into four sections (relationships, things, places, activity) with "self" listed in the center. The written narrative represents an opportunity for participants to reflect on their experience as an Aboriginal university student and how it has contributed to their sense of self-worth. Participants are asked to write a 4 to 6-page narrative describing sources of validation that provide them with a sense of identity and/or increased self-esteem

Risks and Benefits:

It is not anticipated that the written narrative or focus group used in this study will pose any risk. A significant potential benefit of the study will be the identification of sources of self-validation that Aboriginal students pursue to support their sense of self-worth, which can be used to create facilitative self-worth programs for Aboriginal students at university. This research will contribute to Natasha Wawrykow's doctoral dissertation.

Right to Withdraw and Compensation:

You are eligible to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. All individuals who participate in the submission of the written narrative portion of the study will receive \$25. An additional \$25 will be provided to participants at the beginning of the focus group. Snacks, refreshments, and lunch will be provided during the focus group.

Confidentiality:

Any information resulting from the research study will be kept strictly confidential. All documents will be identified only by code number and kept in a locked filing cabinet. Participants will not be identified by name in any study reports. Participants will be videorecorder during the focus group portion of the study. Electronic data stored on the computer will be encrypted and password protected. Upon completion of the study all written and electronic data including the focus group video recording will be stored in a secure location at UBC for 5 years after the end of the study, after which time it will be destroyed.

Means of Data Collection:

Data will be collected for this study through an electronic written narrative and video recording of the interactions and dialogues that take place during the focus group section of the study.

Inquiries:

If you have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the principle investigator, Dr. Ishu Ishiyama ishu.ishiyama@ubc.ca or the co-investigator, Natasha Wawrykow wawrykow@alumni.ubc.ca. If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

Sincerely,

Ishu Ishiyama, PhD., Associate Professor, Counselling Psychology

Natasha Wawrykow, PhD Student, Project Coordinator

PLEASE DETACH AND RETURN

Consent Form

Title: Self-Worth: Sources that Aboriginal University Students Pursue

I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I understand that I will receive \$25 after the submission of my written narrative and an additional \$25 at the beginning of the study focus group.

I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records.

Name: _____(please print)

Date: _____

Email Address: _____

Primary Telephone Number: _____

All responses will be held confidential

THIS COPY IS FOR YOU TO KEEP FOR YOUR OWN RECORDS.

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All responses will be held confidential

Appendix H: Student Study Advertisement



Project Office:
 Department of Educational and Counselling
 Psychology, and Special Education
 2125 Main Mall
 Vancouver, BC Canada V6T 1Z4

Principal Investigator:
 Ishu Ishiyama, Ph.D.,
 Associate Professor

Co-Investigator
 Natasha Wawrykow., PhD Student

Study Advertisement

Title: Self-Worth: Sources that Aboriginal University Students Pursue

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research study that explore sources of self-validation. Participation in the study will enhance your understanding of sources of self-validation that you pursue to support your sense of self-worth. The purpose of the project is to investigate sources of self-validation that Aboriginal students pursue while attending university. Participation in this study will require the completion of a personal written narrative, participation in a focus group, and review of focus group transcripts.

While attending university provides individuals with a positive experience of personal development and learning, it also subjects students to sources of stress. In order to successfully navigate these hurdles of academic life, it is vital that students have access to self-worth domains and effective domain-specific coping skills, which will fuel their sense of self-efficacy, motivation, and academic success.

Participant's Time:

Completion of the validationgram and written narrative will vary across participants but is estimated to take one to two hours. Completion of the focus group activities will occur over two 3-hour focus group segments within the same day. Participants will be given a one hour lunch break in between the two focus group segments. Completion of the focus group transcript will take approximately one hour.

Risks and Benefits:

It is not anticipated that the written narrative or focus group used in this study will pose any risk. A significant potential benefit of the study will be the identification of sources of self-validation that Aboriginal students pursue to support their sense of self-worth, which can be used to create facilitative self-worth programs for Aboriginal students at university. This research will contribute to Natasha Wawrykow's doctoral dissertation.

Right to Withdraw and Compensation:

You are eligible to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. All individuals who participate in the submission of the written narrative portion of the study will receive \$25. An additional \$25 will be provided to participants at the beginning of the focus group. Snacks, refreshments, and lunch will be provided during the focus group.

Confidentiality:

Any information resulting from the research study will be kept strictly confidential. All documents will be identified only by code number and kept in a locked filing cabinet. Participants will not be identified by name in any study reports. Participants will be videorecorder during the focus group portion of the study. Electronic data stored on the computer will be encrypted and password protected. Upon completion of the study all written and electronic data including the focus group video recording will be destroyed.

Means of Data Collection:

Data will be collected for this study through an electronic written narrative and video recording of the interactions and dialogues that take place during the focus group section of the study.

Inquiries:

If you have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the principle investigator, Dr. Ishu Ishiyama ishu.ishiyama@ubc.ca or the co-investigator, Natasha Wawrykow wawrykow@alumni.ubc.ca.

Sincerely,

Ishu Ishiyama, PhD., Associate Professor, Counselling Psychology

Natasha Wawrykow, PhD Student, Counselling Psychology

Appendix I: Study Advertisement Request



Project Office:
Department of Educational and Counselling
Psychology, and Special Education
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, BC Canada V6T 1Z4

Principal Investigator:
Ishu Ishiyama, Ph.D.,
Associate Professor

Co-Investigator
Natasha Wawrykow., PhD Student

Study Advertisement Request

Research Study: Sources that Aboriginal University Students Pursue

Principal Investigator: Ishu Ishiyama, Ph.D., Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education, University of British Columbia

Dear Aboriginal Affairs Office,

Please consider forwarding this study advertisement onto Aboriginal students at the University of British Columbia. Aboriginal student participation in this study will help to identify sources of self-validation that Aboriginal student's pursue to support their sense of self-worth, which can be used to create facilitative self-worth programs for Aboriginal students at university.

Rationale for Aboriginal Affairs Office Participation:

Access to sources of self-worth can be impaired for Aboriginal students who relocate from their traditional community. Relocation can contribute to a failed pursuit of self-worth which will ill equip them in their academic pursuits. When students come to university they often move away from their home community, which encompassed their family and/or community support networks and served as healing resources. This is the case for many Aboriginal students who describe their experience of relocating to university from their close-knit home community as isolating

Purpose of the Project:

- 1.To determine what sources of self-worth that Aboriginal students seek when attending university.
- 2.To determine how Aboriginal students seek these sources when attending university.

Study Participation:

Participation in this study will require students to complete a personal written narrative, participate in a focus group, and review the focus group transcript.

Participant's Time:

Completion of the validationgram and written narrative will vary across participants but is estimated to take one to two hours. Completion of the focus group activities will occur over two 3-hour focus group segments within the same day. Participants will be given a one hour lunch break in between the two focus group segments. Completion of the focus group transcript will take approximately one hour.

The research team for this project is as follows:

Ishu Ishiyama, PhD., Associate Professor, Counselling Psychology

Natasha Wawrykow, PhD Student, Counselling Psychology

Inquiries:

If you have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the principle investigator, Dr. Ishu Ishiyama ishu.ishiyama@ubc.ca or the co-investigator, Natasha Wawrykow wawrykow@alumni.ubc.ca.

Please do not hesitate to contact any of the research team.

**Project Office:**

Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology,
and Special Education
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, BC Canada V6T 1Z4
Tel: (604) 862-8274
Email: wawrykow@alumni.ubc.ca

Principal Investigator:
Ishu Ishiyama, Ph.D.,
Associate Professor

Co-Investigator
Natasha Wawrykow., PhD Student

Study Advertisement

Title: Self-Worth: Sources that Aboriginal University Students Pursue

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Risks and Benefits:

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Right to Withdraw and Compensation:

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Inquiries:

If you have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the principle investigator, Dr. Ishu Ishiyama ishu.ishiyama@ubc.ca or the co-investigator, Natasha Wawrykow wawrykow@alumni.ubc.ca.

Sincerely,

Ishu Ishiyama, PhD., Associate Professor, Counselling Psychology

Natasha Wawrykow, PhD Student, Counselling Psychology