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NATIVE AMERICAN RESILIENCY RESOURCES

AND EDUCATIONAL GOAL ACHIEVEMENT

by

Diane Elaine Sharp

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

School of Behavioral Sciences

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APPROVED BY:

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to understand Native American life experiences which foster resilience and how resiliency resources contribute to their educational goal achievement. In a context of historical trauma, poverty, and oppression it is theorized that achieving one's educational goals requires a measure of resilience and a number of protective and promotive factors. These factors are what this strengths-based study sought to identify. The theory guiding this study was resiliency theory and the research approach was strengths-based. Proposed data collection was a series of semi-structured interviews of 6 Native American individuals age 18 or older who lived on a reservation for at least 70% of their K-12 education and have achieved or are in the process of completing a college degree. Data analysis strategies included the use of Atlas.ti software as well as detailed transcript analysis, manual coding and theme development.

Keywords: Resilience, Educational Goal Achievement, Native American, Indigenous, Protective Factors, Promotive Factor

Dedication

This manuscript is dedicated to my children Van, Tashi and Mia who rode through life with me during the lean years. May the completion of this degree bring about seasons of joy and harvest for us all. To my father Kay Sharp, who drove me to the library on demand as a child encouraging my love for reading, and my mother Donna Sharp who taught me how.

Acknowledgments

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

In 2015, the percentage of 18-24 year old American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) students enrolled in a two-year or four-year college was 23%, the lowest of all races in a study by the Department of Education (2017). This study also reported that 38% of AI/AN ages 20-24 were neither enrolled in school nor working compared with 15% of white young adults (Department of Education, 2017). Native American students face unique challenges based on historical trauma, poverty, the potential isolation and other challenges of reservation life. Despite these challenges, there are Native American individuals who overcome their personal circumstances and achieve their educational goals. There are many social and economic benefits for AI individuals and their communities when their higher education goals are achieved. Some of these benefits are higher employment rates, less reliance on public assistance, increased levels of mental and physical health, a greater sense of civic responsibility and more equal income distribution (Gregorio & Lee, 2002).

In a review of the literature there exists little research on how resilience encourages people to finish college, less on what gets them to college, even less on the AI/AN community and none found on protective and promotive factors which exist among Native Americans that empower them to pursue a college degree. The purpose of this study is to collect data which will help understand the stories of Native American individuals who grew up on reservations and have achieved (or are currently achieving) their educational goal of obtaining a college degree. Of specific interest is the concept of resilience which is comprised in part by protective and promotive factors (Zimmerman et al., 2013). This data will help to illuminate promotive and protective factors that can inform future qualitative research leading to improved educational

policies, and programs which can be implemented on reservations for current and future students.

This chapter serves to introduce the reader to the problem within the context of Native American history and their reservation experiences. The theoretical underpinnings of this study will be discussed along with the research model. My personal connection to Native Americans will be revealed as I propose to address the problem through my research questions. The significance and implications of the study will be examined in detail to emphasize that a voice needs to be given to Native Americans to make known the contextual challenges to their educational goal achievement and that policies and programs which affect Native Americans can and should be informed by resilience research.

Impediments to Educational Goal Achievement

The historical trauma (HT) Native Americans have suffered began long ago and continues through today (Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt, & Chen, 2004). This trauma, pain, oppression, and violence took the form of war and conflict with the United States Army, forced assimilation, relocation and boarding schools (Brave Heart, Chase, Elkins, & Altschul, 2011). The effects of HT still plaguing Native Americans which show up most clearly in a reservations setting include high rates of suicide (Wexler et al.; 2015), poor physical (Indian Health Service, 2017) and mental (Reynolds, Quevillion, Boyd, & Mackey, 2006) health, substance abuse (Whitbeck, Walls, & Welch, 2012), poverty (Sarche & Spicer, 2008) and unacceptably low graduation rates (Fryberg & Leavitt, 2004).

A Focus on Strength

On some level people who overcome problematic histories have had the resiliency resources to do so. The theoretical context into which this study is being placed is the idea that

resiliency resources including protective factors (Cwik et al., 2015) and promotive factors (Zimmerman et al., 2013) work together to increase the likelihood of personal success and educational goal achievement. Some Native Americans do succeed academically indicating that they had resilience resources upon which they could draw. Preliminary attempts, such as this one, to understand the specific resilience of Native Americans who have achieved their educational goal is important as a means of spurring future research, and ultimately policy and program implementation.

The major focus of this study is understanding the unique story of those Native Americans who have succeeded academically by way of search for the protective and promotive factors that enables them to overcome the aforementioned impediments to their educational goal achievement. The desire to utilize a strengths-based posture stems from the influence of positive psychology which as a general theoretical orientation, overlaps with Indigenous knowledge approaches to health and wellness (Dell & Hopkins, 2011). A strengths-based approach builds on existing assets rather than focusing on deficits (Benard, 2006) and allows therapists and researchers to "see the glass as half full rather than half empty" (Smith, 2006). A review of the current literature reveals that many of the studies which focus on Native Americans have been done using a deficit model and a search of the literature indicated that strengths-based studies are lacking in Indigenous research.

This study assumes that an individual's educational goal achievement is possible when he or she has protective and promotive resilience factors that outweigh the stressors, Historical Trauma and contextual challenges of reservation life. It is the hope that these factors can be identified and then fostered in Native American people who are currently or will in the future be facing challenges in their education. Logistical inaccessibility to higher education institutions is

one challenge specific to reservation populations along with inability to pay and the disparity between the pedagogical approach of most colleges and AI culture (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 2007).

The present study approached the challenges of reservation life from a strengths-based perspective focusing on the resilience of Native Americans. Resilience is a poorly understood and underused resource in AI/AN health research and practice to include program and policy development (Oré, Ore, Teufel-Shone, Chico-Jarillo, & Oré, 2016). Resilience models and research should not be deficit based rather they should focus on the strengths of the AI/AN population (Kahn et al., 2016). A strengths-based approach can serve to leverage strengths that exist to overcome barriers and reach goal achievement (Chain, Shapiro, LeBuffe, & Bryson, 2017).

Research Design

The Native American story is rich in both triumphs and sorrows. The majority of current research highlights these sorrows utilizing a deficit approach rather than focusing on the triumphs and strengths of Native American people. The goal of this project was to explore the unique stories of a group of Native Americans who have achieved their educational goals despite challenges from the setting in which the story began and to understand the characters and events which helped to shape the plot lines of these individuals. A qualitative narrative model was chosen as the means to most accurately capture the essence of the life experience being studied as qualitative AI/AN research has been determined to be necessary yet missing in the current literature (Wexler et al., 2015). This approach gives the participants a chance to share their perspective and worldview and viewing research data "from the perspective of the Indians" is crucial to determine the proper tribal viewpoint (Hoxie, 2017).

Situation to Self

Some of the contextual and background assumptions that I bring to the research stem from my cultural heritage and life history. Adopted at birth, I was raised in a predominantly Caucasian suburb of Minneapolis. My entire family was Caucasian. Much of my social circle was Caucasian as was my school system throughout high school. It was not until I was in my 20s that I contacted my birth family and learned that I am not only Caucasian but am also of Native American decent. My birth family had moved off the reservation a generation or two prior to my birth.

Since gaining knowledge from my Native American family members I struggle with the historical actions of the United States government in the treatment of Native Americans. It was important for me to bracket my disenchantment with the portions of U.S. history with which I identified as a child as I explored the essence of the experiences of Native Americans. Were I to have let any bitterness enter the process it may have negatively impacted the interviews and subsequent data analysis and steal from the trustworthiness of the study. Focusing on the personal strength and resiliency resources of the participants may also have acted as a protective factor for me as I heard their stories.

The philosophical assumptions that I brought to the research deal with the meaning individuals place on their experiences and how these will differ from meaning I place on experiences. The meaning that Native American participants have assigned to their experiences is what formed protective and promotive factors, and engaged their motivation toward educational goal achievement. Stemming from pragmatism, symbolic interactionism coined by Herbert Blumer in 1938 is the theoretical position with which I most closely identify. The three basic assumptions of this theory are as follows: 1) human beings act toward things on the basis

of the meanings that the things have for them, 2) the meaning of such things is derived from the social interaction one has with others, and 3) the modification and handling of these meanings is done through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with things one encounters (Blumer, 1994). The meaning assigned by participants to elements of their life could determine if those elements were viewed as protective and/or promotive.

Problem Statement

Research is lacking in resilience as it pertains to educational goal achievement particularly among Native Americans. More qualitative research needs to be performed which considers Native American culture and worldview and utilizes a strengths-based approach. The deficiencies on reservations are many. However, the focus in research needs to shift from the deficiencies in the community to what strengths and resiliency resources exist to properly incorporate these strengths into future programs and policies.

The problem is the low percentage of Native Americans people who are graduating high school and going on to higher education, although in light of this some have proven to be successful in their quest for their educational goals. Native American promotive and protective factors are underexplored area of research. This study serves to illuminate the protective and promotive factors in Native American individuals allowing them to pursue educational goal achievement. The data collected in this study can be used to inform quantitative research which can be presented to policy makers and program developers as evidence of the need for program funding and policy improvement.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to explore the lived experiences of Native American individuals who have achieved their educational goals. More specifically, this study sought to discover the protective and promotive factors which contributed to a story of educational success for these Native American individuals who attended school on a reservation. For this study, educational goal achievement was defined as having reached a goal of completing or actively pursuing a college degree.

Significance of the Study

Through the background information housed in chapter 2 of this manuscript this study serves to educate people on the context in which Native Americans live. The interview questions minimally sought to illuminate the effects of historical trauma and basic need deficiency some Native Americans experience on reservations to give an appropriate situational context. Although these deficiencies do have an effect on Native American educational goal achievement, the focus of this study is the strengths that have contributed to the success of the participants. From the perspective of the lives of Native American people who have achieved their educational goals of higher education, existing resiliency resources can be identified. These resources including protective and promotive factors can inform qualitative research to be used to foster burgeoning programs geared to improving Native American lives and opportunities.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this qualitative narrative study:

RQ1: What resilience resources exist for Native American participants which contributed to their educational goal achievement?

RQ1a: What intrinsic and extrinsic protective and promotive factors were they able to access on the reservation?

RQ1b: What are the personal, family and community factors that contributed to their success?

Given the context of life on a reservation, adequate resiliency resources in the form of protective and promotive factors must be present for individuals to reach educational goal achievement.

Definitions

The following terms call for definition and rationale for use where necessary. Some are borrowed from other relevant studies cited within this study.

1. *Native American* – The chosen term in this study to describe the cultural heritage of the participants.

2. *Indigenous* – This term will be used when speaking in generalities of tribal people in the United States who have historically been referred to as Indian, American Indian, and Native American.

3. *American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN)* – This term and its corresponding abbreviation is only used when referring to other literature which has used this term. The term is kept to keep the other author's intended meaning.

4. *Educational Goal Achievement* – For the purposes of this study Educational Goal achievement refers to having obtained or currently in the process of obtaining a college degree.

5. *Resilience* - The process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats and significant sources of stress. It is the ability to bounce back from difficult circumstances (Clinton & Hawkins, 2011, p. 165). Resilience allows an individual to

adaptively function (Meng, Fleury, Xiang, Li, & D 'arcy, 2018). The capacity of the brain and body to withstand challenges to stability can be considered as resilience (Karatoreos & McEwen, 2013). Resiliency theory guides this study.

6. *Resiliency Resources* – Factors that help prevent negative outcomes in the presence of risks (Hass & Graydon, 2009). Protective and promotive factors make up an individual's resiliency resources. Some AI/AN resiliency resources from the literature are spiritual resources, relationships and connection to family and community, humor, and the wisdom of their elders (Morse, McIntyre, & King, 2016).

7. *Protective Factors* – Protective factors come from an individual's past and can be drawn upon during times of stress to add to their overall resilience. It can be "any aspect of a person or the environment that increases the likelihood of a positive outcome or decreases the likelihood of a problematic outcome despite exposure to risk factors" (Bowman, 2013, p. 303). For the purposes of this research, protective factors will be considered those which nullify negative effects of risk factors (Farrington, Ttofi, & Piquero, 2016) and allow them to adapt in a healthy way.

8. *Promotive Factors* - Promotive factors are a person's assets or resources (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). Assets are factors intrinsic such as identity and hope. Resources are factors that are extrinsic such as adult mentors and opportunity structures (Zimmerman et al., 2013). A promotive factor will be identified in this research as an asset or resource which encourages an individual to move beyond merely nullifying risk factors or maladaptive outcomes and reach higher educational goals.

9. *Strengths-based* – a theoretical approach birthed from positive psychology that guides researchers to study and enhance a person's existing assets and resources (Zimmerman,

2013). This research uses a strengths-based approach in the formulation of the interview

questions to gain knowledge of Native American resiliency resources as opposed to

deficits.

The terms resiliency resources, protective factors and promotive factors have not been defined

clearly in the literature and are often used interchangeably. In this research project, some factors

were found to operate as both protective and promotive and the whole of participant's resiliency

resources were considered as the sum of their promotive and protective factors. The participant's

resiliency is the process of facing a risk and successfully appropriating the resiliency resources.

Potential Implications of This Study

Research completed within a specific people group 1) should be for the benefit of the

people being studied, 2) address a specific need as the people being studied determine, and 3)

be a benefit for them in the future for their knowledge, policy and development, or possibly

even for the purpose of procuring external funding (Whitbeck, Sittner Hartshorn, & Walls,

2014). The need for higher quality, culturally informed programs and policies toward

improvement in Native American education is clear.

Definitions of promotive and protective factors are not clear or consistent in existing

resilience research. One study notes that in their view protective factors are not synonymous

with a positive or beneficial experience (Rutter, 1985) while another states that it can protect

against undesirable outcomes or promote the desirable (Henson, Sabo, Trujillo, & Teufel-

Shone, 2016). Another study uses the terms interchangeably (Zimmerman et al., 2013). The

present study sought to operationalize, define, and create tangibility of the concepts of

protective and promotive factors and to give some substance and clarity to these terms as the

definitions in the current literature are abstract and vague. Protective and promotive factors that

work in a Native American context must be transmitted to those who generate the policies and develop the programs to inform more effective programs to encourage educational goal achievement. Some Indigenous communities view qualitative research as good for non-Indigenous researchers who need to get a clear picture of how things work and what is going on. Indigenous people already know those answers and are looking for more evidence that they can bring to the policy table and present when arguing for more resources (Andersson, 2008). More clear definitions need to be provided for researchers to assess these terms effectively.

Summary

Native American reservation life presents unique stressors that must be overcome for individuals to achieve educational goals. This can be accomplished by accessing promotive and protective factors. Understanding the protective and promotive factors accessed by Native American individuals who have achieved their educational goals can inform future research for the improvement of Native American educational programs.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The goal of this chapter is to present a review of the applicable literature in the areas of Native Americans historical trauma, contextual factors, and resilience factors as they relate to education. While this is a study of the strengths and resilience of Native Americans relative to educational goal achievement, some reported statistics in related areas of trauma which highlight deficits will be examined briefly to give a foundational understanding of the challenges faced by Native Americans. The following sections will highlight some negative health and behavior outcomes of historical trauma which directly and greatly impact an individual's ability to reach their educational goals. Due to the lack of research literature specifically obtained from the tribes represented in this study information will be reported for Indigenous people as a whole to provide context to reservation life experiences. The theoretical underpinning of this study is resiliency theory. Strengths-based literature will be explored as it is the approach this study takes toward directing the research. These theories will be presented and defined to give the reader an understanding of the study's framework and to show that there is a need for a qualitative, strengths-based study on Native American educational goal achievement and resilience.

Literature on Contextual Challenges

Proximal Effects of Historical Trauma (HT)

The concept of historical trauma incorporates historical oppression in some definitions to include not only intergenerational experiences but also current daily experiences like poverty and discrimination (Burnette & Figley, 2016). The construct of historical trauma was pioneered by Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart (Hartmann & Gone, 2014) and is defined as "the cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations emanating from

massive group trauma experiences" (Brave Heart, 2003, p.7). Another definition of HT is "the collective experience of violence perpetrated against Indigenous Peoples in the process of colonizing the Americas resulting in an unresolved humanitarian crisis for reservation communities" (Brockie, Heinzelmann & Gill, 2013, p.2). Historical trauma has helped to explain vulnerabilities that can compound the risks affecting AI/AN populations (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008).

Historical losses suffered by Indigenous populations are only historical in the sense that they began a long time ago and there is a continual and persistent process of loss still salient (Whitbeck et al., 2004). The term Historical Trauma is not limited to events and wounds of the past but also encompasses the present day traumatic phenomena experienced by Native Americans. Negative outcomes of their continued oppression and effects of historical trauma directly impact their meaning making and identity formation (Grant, 2008).

"Assimilation and Allotment" was the basic philosophy of the U.S. government concerning Indian relations between 1880 and 1930 (Reynolds et al., 2006). Relocation to eight American cities occurred between 1950 and 1968 and House Concurrent Resolution 108 in 1953 started termination where 200 tribes were terminated in order to rid the country of reservations and the protections afforded Indians (Reynolds et al., 2006). Boarding schools were a leading cause of historical trauma among Native Americans (Hoxie, 2000). Beginning in 1879, the American government forcibly removed Native children and placed them in schools where the goal was to "kill the Indian and save the man" (Churchill, 2004) by stripping them of their language, culture and family ties. Physical and sexual abuse that occurred requires healing and the lasting effects are still a challenge to healing (Kelsey, 2013).

The proximal effects of historical trauma on the survivors of the boarding school era are not far removed from the present. Historical loss is one culturally distinct factor that contribute to these alarming suicide rates among AI/AN populations (Burnette & Figley, 2016). The Center for Disease Control reported AI/AN suicide rates to be 21.5 per 100,000, more than 3.5 times higher than those among racial/ethnic groups with the lowest rates. In their study on completed suicides, AI/AN decedents were significantly different from white decedents. More than one third (35.7%) of AI/AN decedents were aged 10–24 years (versus 11.1% of whites). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2014 suicide was the leading cause of death for AI/AN girls between the ages of 10 and 14 and adolescent AI/AN females have suicide death rates at almost four times the rate for White females in the same age groups (U.S. Department of Heath and Human Services, 2018).

It is reported that AI/AN experience earlier onset of substance use, move more quickly into regular use, and experience earlier onset of substance use disorders (Whitbeck et al., 2012) and by 12th grade 80% of youth are active drinkers (Lowe, Liang, Henson, & Riggs, 2016). Indian Health Services (HIS) in 1995 reported an alcoholism death rate of 13 times the national average among some Native American tribes. More recently IHS reports certain Native American tribes have a rate of liver disease and cirrhosis that is 4.8 times higher than the rest of the United States (Indian Health Service, 2017). The impaired memory and neurological damage done by the misuse of substances (Cruz, 2011) negatively impacts one's ability to achieve educational goals.

Native American physical health and social well-being are at risk as a result of historical trauma due to the public health implications in populations who have experienced historical trauma to include greater incidents of disease (Sotero, 2006). AI/AN people experience lower

life expectancy and a disproportionate disease burden when compared with other Americans. Heart disease, unintentional injuries, and diabetes are leading causes of AI/AN death (Indian Health Service, 2017). Data also shows an extremely high rate of food insecurity among American Indian households (61%) (Tomayko et al., 2017). Burleson and Thoron (2017) accurately conclude that there exists a connection between the motivation to pursue education and the satisfaction of basic needs like food. It is my belief the negative impact of historical trauma on Native American educational goal achievement can be mitigated by well-informed programs which address this unique challenge among this population.

There is limited research information available on AI/AN mental health however what is available suggests that AI/AN youth and adults suffer a disproportionate burden of mental health disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2007). Sixty-five percent of AI referred to mental health treatment or suicide ideation did not complete care which could be the result of the perception that existing care may be culturally inappropriate, the care is often offered by non-native care givers, and existing services (which are often far from the client's home) tend to address individual psychological issues rather than social, cultural, and spiritual issues while ignoring historical oppression, intergenerational trauma, and ongoing marginalization. (Wexler et al., 2015). Increased thinking of historical loss can also influence symptoms of depression (Tucker, Wingate, & O'Keefe, 2016). Family satisfaction, parental warmth, family income and education, and coercive parenting, family trauma and stressful life events, and family violence are all factors affecting substance use and mental health (Burnette & Figley, 2016) Social connectedness can be protective against mental illness and can serve as a mechanism for resilience (Dang, 2014).

Few research studies have focused on cultural continuity and connectivity as it relates to AI mental health and well-being. An integral component of cultural continuity research is the transmission of knowledge, particularly intergenerational transmission in AI communities (Auger, 2016). This qualitative study will serve to fill this gap in the current research and inform educational programs of the need for mental health treatment for Native American students.

Indigenous Education

As of 2012, 17% of AI/AN age 25 and over have at least a bachelor's degree, in comparison to 33 percent of non-Hispanic Whites and 6% of American Indians and Alaska Natives have at least an advanced graduate degree as compared to 12 % of the non-Hispanic White population (U.S. Department of Heath and Human Services, 2018). Some main reasons for the low graduation rates among AI/AN youth are high teacher turn-over rates, not enough native teachers, and lack of necessary supplies and resources (Wilcox, 2015).

Educational programs and policies can learn from the success of existing programs that are working and find out what it is that makes them thrive. Student resilience and capitalizing on protective and promotive factors should be among the elements studied. Normalizing the educational setting for AI/AN students and convincing them that it is "for them" can have a large positive effect on their school performance (Fryberg & Leavitt, 2004). Fryberg and Leavitt (2004) conducted an analysis of high-risk Native American children in schools and found that a sociocultural approach suggests three things that will disrupt the cycle of educational underperformance: 1) a meaningful recognition and incorporation of historical events which impact the experience for Native American students, 2) an acknowledgement that history is replete with examples of historical injustices that Native people experience in their everyday lives, and 3) a sincere belief that all children to have the potential to learn and succeed.

Although these statistics are alarming and call for an intervening response, the present study includes them for the sole purpose of highlighting how they impact educational goal achievement among Native Americans. These negative contextual factors reinforce the importance of discovering what protective and promotive factors and strengths exist among Native Americans which, if fostered, can operate as resilience countermeasures. This study presents themes of resilience which include cultural implications as well as educational challenges geographically specific to Native Americans.

Literature on Theory and Approach

Strengths-Based Approach

A strengths-based approach can serve to leverage strengths that exist to overcome barriers and reach goal achievement (Chain et al., 2017). A negative bias appears to be pervasive in psychological theory and research and this bias can greatly impact the understanding of human functioning and limit the perspective and subsequent assessment of human nature (Sheldon & King, 2001).

Resilience models and research should not be deficit based rather they should focus on the strengths of the AI/AN population (Kahn et al., 2016). Much has been written of the plight but far less literature exists on existing strength and resilience (Chang, Downey, Hirsch, & Lin, 2016). Deficit orientation can actually perpetuate negative stereotypes of AI/AN students as being passive and non-competitive (Gone & Alcántara, 2010). A strengths-based perspective is an appropriate framework for prevention-based programming developed in support of Native American youth and more research needs to be performed (Aschenbrener & Johnson, 2017). The present study seeks to explore protective factors, and promotive factors which contribute to educational goal achievement among Native Americans by utilizing a strengths-based approach.

Research in areas of positive psychology has up to this point been from predominantly white samples and has rarely taken into consideration concerns specific to other ethnic groups (Chang, et al., 2016). More attention needs to be paid to cultural context when researching resilience among marginalized populations (Wexler, DiFluvio, & Burke, 2009). Scholars must be sensitive to tribal knowledge and ceremonials when writing about Native American history and performing research. Viewing research data "from the perspective of the Indians" is crucial to determine the proper tribal viewpoint (Hoxie, 2017). It is important to know how an individual's culture affects their well-being as how one defines what is considered a strength is not static across all cultural groups. In the AI/AN cultural worldview one is considered to experience well-being when keeping not only oneself but also one's community in balance and harmony (Chang, et al., 2016). This would imply that relationships and cultural connectivity may be identified as resiliency resources among the participants.

It is recommended that future researchers engage in participatory research on risk and protective factors to inform the development of culturally appropriate, strengths-based and resilience interventions among AI/AN populations (Yuan, Belcourt-Dittloff, Schultz, Packard, & Duran, 2015). A number of principles have been identified that can guide researchers in developing strengths-based collaborative research projects with Indigenous populations 1) spending time with the community prior to the research taking place; 2) respect for the diversity of community values, perspective, and knowledge; 3) respect for the history of the community; 4) respect for tribal customs and practices; 5) respect for Native epistemology; and 6) giving back and reciprocity (Rink et al., 2016).

Due in part to lack of research in the area of Native American positive psychology, little is currently known about how strengths are constructed cross-culturally (Chang et al., 2016;

Jeglic, Miranda, & Polanco-Roman, 2016). Oral histories and traditional stories in AI/AN culture suggest a positive approach to living (Sheldon & King, 2001). Indigenous ways of knowing and approach to wellness correspond well to a psychologically positive theoretical orientation (Dell & Hopkins, 2011).

Resiliency Theory

Resiliency theory provides a conceptual framework for considering a strengths-based approach (Brenner & Zimmerman, 2010). Based on a review of the current literature, there is a deficit in research with AI/AN populations in the area of resiliency resources particularly related to educational goal achievement. Researchers need to improve their understanding of what it is that make some AI/AN populations (youth specifically) respond to adversity and risk positively (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008) by appropriating available intrinsic and extrinsic protective and promotive factors.

Resilience has been defined as the process of effectively negotiating, adapting to, or managing significant sources of stress or trauma (Windle, 2011) and as a process of adapting well in the face of adversity and significant sources of stress (Clinton & Hawkins, 2011, p. 165). These definitions provide a good overview of what resilience is, in light of the fact that the community of resilience literature admits that there exists a challenge in defining the concept. Reasons for this definitional ambiguity are that some uses of the term reflect the orientation of the source author and more academic definitions tend to focus on the resilience 'process' (Cummins & Wooden, 2014).

Resilience has historically been viewed from two different perspectives; trait and process. Some researchers suggest that resilience is an individual attribute, personal strength, or trait (Windle, 2011) and more contemporary researchers noted that resilience factors vary in different

risk contexts pointing to resilience as a process (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008). See Table 1 for a

comparison of the two historical perspectives (Liu, Reed, & Girard, 2017; Pan & Chan, 2007;

Reinschmidt, Attakai, Kahn, Whitewater, & Teufel-Shone, 2016)..

Table 1: Historical Perspectives of Resilience

Trait	Process
Personal characteristic	A multidimensional and flexible dynamic process of positive or successful adaptation
Individuals have the ability and strength to overcome adversity	A set of social and intrapsychic processes
Could imply that some individuals may have it and others do not	The generation and maintenance of positive adjustment in the face of adversity
Early school of thought	More recent school of thought
	Driven by social, cultural and physical contexts
	A trajectory of coping

This study presents resiliency as a process with a focus on resiliency resources that

include protective and promotive factors, intrinsic traits, and extrinsic assets. Gary Collins

(2007) compares resilience to a *mental muscle* that everyone has and everyone can exercise and

build up. However, conceptually resilience is meaningful only when it relates to a specific

context and specific outcomes (Pan & Chan, 2007). The resiliency process may take place almost

immediately for minor new pieces of information or it may take years to adapt to traumatic

events (Richardson, 2002). A solid resiliency inquiry both nurtures client strengths and explores

personal and interpersonal gifts which can be accessed to grow through adversity (Richardson,

2002). Resilience is an active process, not simply the absence of pathology (Feder, Nestler, & Charney, 2009).

A concept analysis of resilience identified the three necessary requirements for resilience are a significant adversity or risk, the presence of assets or resources which can offset said adversity, and positive adaptation or avoidance of a negative outcome (Windle, 2011). In the wake of disruption, individuals can choose personal growth, seize the opportunity to connect with their resilience and their spiritual source of strength, become more process oriented by looking for the "silver lining", and find meaning and purpose in the disruption itself (Richardson, 2002). One facet of resilience is that it does not occur in isolation rather individuals, family, communities, environment, and culture are interconnected and their interactions contribute to all levels of resilience (Oré et al., 2016). Broader contextual variables in resilience is positive support outside of family, good role models, and feeling that one is part of a community (Collins, 2007). These conceptualizations fit nicely with the Native American worldview of the importance of community.

Resilience is a poorly understood and underused resource in AI/AN research and practice. Mallon (2007) identified factors that enabled some participants in his 2007 study to develop resilience and achieve academis success despite many risk factors they experienced in their youth. The present study's focus on resilience adds value in providing an understanding of Native American promotive and protective factors.

Protective Factors. The influence of culture is an essential component in resilience research and yet very few studies involving AI/AN have focused on the risk and protective factors at family, community, cultural or societal levels. Enculturation (the degree that an individual learns about, identifies with, and is embedded in his or her ethnic culture) is a

protective factor against mental distress and substance abuse (Burnette & Figley, 2016). After reviewing the literature it was determined that the most frequently mentioned protective factors in the AI/AN literature involved strong social connections (Zautra, 2014) and relationships (Stumblingbear-Riddle & Romans, 2012).

       Promotive Factors. These are the assets and resources that individuals possess which help them to overcome exposure to risk (Zimmerman et al., 2013) and research has shown that prevention efforts designed to enhance promotive factors may help youth overcome the effects of these risks (Stoddard et al., 2013). Program trajectory needs to be one of positive growth from the point of functional rather than merely a means to fix existing pathologies and negative behaviors to achieve the bare minimum necessary to reach a status of well-adjusted (Kahn et al., 2016). Examples of potential promotive factors are high academic achievement, good parental supervision, and high involvement in family activities (Farrington et al., 2016). A review of the literature uncovered research on promotive factors in areas like urban youth violence (Stoddard et al., 2013), adolescent development (Youngblade et al., 2007) and adolescent racial identity (Zimmerman et al., 2013) while revealing little research that focuses specifically on AI/AN promotive factors. One study reported that family, individual, and community systems operated synergistically to enable the youth in the study (all foster children) to achieve high-school graduation and advancement to college (Hines, Merdinger, & Wyatt, 2005) and that the development of programs and interventions that foster individual empowerment and the ability of the individual to influence available resources during the transition to young adulthood may be a promising direction for future research. The present study serves to highlight some of these available resources among Native Americans.

Summary

Historical trauma and the subsequent negative outcomes pose challenges in the educational goal achievement of Native American individuals. Resiliency resources exist that can aid individuals to overcome the negative outcomes and set them on a path to their desired educational goals. A review of the literature portrays education as a protective factor to counter negative risk factors but there is a clear deficit on protective and promotive factors that lead to education as the goal and none was found concerning Native Americans. Utilizing a qualitative narrative design was the best way to gain the depth of experiential description necessary to fully explore resilience, protective factors, promotive factors, and strengths which foster educational goal achievement. There is no cause to believe that Native Americans are lost or without hope as this study aims to show that there are several protective and promotive factors which point to a trajectory of healing and restoration.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This chapter serves to inform the reader of the procedures, research design, and analysis for the present research study. The procedures to be discussed include participants, design, setting, and research questions. The rationale for choosing the narrative method of inquiry and design will also be detailed. Data collection methods will be discussed complete with the interview questions posed to participants and justification for the order and nature of the questions. Post-data collection information reported in this chapter will include analysis, trustworthiness, credibility, and transferability of the data. Finally, ethical considerations throughout the entire research process will be addressed.

Participants

The sample pool for this study was enrolled Native American individuals who have successfully reached or are in the active process of reaching their educational goal of earning a college degree. The sampling procedure was a mix of convenience and snowball sampling. Snowball sampling was employed generating from the initial participant and other family contacts of the researcher. The participants were from three different tribes. The reservations home to these tribes are in South Dakota, North Carolina and Montana. All three of these reservations have poverty levels that are greater than the United States. The 2017 rate for all people living below the poverty level in the United States was 12.3% where the rates for these three reservations were 50.4%, 40.5%, and 22.8% respectively (U.S. Census, 2018).

Qualitative methods seek great depth over breadth and inquire in to issues careful attention to detail, context and nuance thus the small sample sizes dictate that the cases should be carefully selected and information-rich (Patton, 2002). Sample size was 6 participants to

reach data saturation and adequate transferability. The appropriate sample size for a study of this nature depends on the richness of the individual cases (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009) once the interviews have occurred. The richness of the participant's interviews supported the sample size of 6.

The criteria for inclusion of participants are as follows, they each:

- Were an enrolled member of a Native American tribe

- Were age 18 or older at the time of the interview

- Had lived on a federally recognized or terminated reservation for at least 70% of their K-12 education

- Reported that they have completed or are in the process of completing a college degree

Proof of any of the above elements were not required as asking for proof of enrollment to validate one's claim to be Native American might be interpreted as insulting and would damage the trust relationship and rapport that is paramount in research involving interviews (Patton, 2002). The final write up of this section includes enough detail about them so that the reader can visualize the participants (Pyrczak & Bruce, 2014). Participant demographics are reported in Table 2 below to make it easy for readers to scan demographic information (Pyrczak & Bruce, 2014).

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Participant	Age	Gender	Educational goal achieved
Adam	21	M	Bachelor's in Psychology IP
Belle	42	F	Bachelor's in Social Sciences completed, Master's in Human Resources completed
Char	49	F	Associate's in Early Childhood, Bachelor's in Social Work, Master's in Social Work completed
Dara	34	F	Associate's completed, Bachelor's in Healthcare Communications IP
Eric	28	M	Associate's Completed, Bachelor's in Business Management IP
Fenla	39	F	Bachelor's in Psychology

Design

In order to exact the richest possible essence of the life experiences of Native Americans, the most appropriate choice for this study was a qualitative narrative research design. Qualitative research involves collecting, analyzing, interpreting and reporting of data which cannot be easily reduced to numbers (Anderson, 2010) and is recommended when studying human resilience (Burnette & Figley, 2016). A qualitative narrative design can detect more nuances and elements of lived experiences than can other research modalities due to the storytelling element. Native American storytellers are held in high social status using stories to pass on the tribe's culture and history which sets the stage well for solid qualitative study outcomes. Intergenerational transmission of knowledge is a central component for cultural continuity among Indigenous populations (Auger, 2016). The incorporation of indigenous knowledge, wisdom, multiple

relationships, and heritage is imperative in research and treatment.

Interviews and oral histories are imperative to gain a full understanding in Native American research. Responsible research among AI/AN populations requires gaining Native perspective (Fixico, 1996). There exist nuances in conversations and interpersonal contact which cannot be captured in a survey or impersonal type of data collection. These nuances are particularly important as they will guide the prompts and follow-up questions during the interviews in order that I might capture the true essence of the participant's experience.

Qualitative research is missing and necessary (Wexler et al., 2015) as evidenced by only two qualitative articles having met the criteria for inclusion in a literature review identifying protective factors with positive health outcomes among AI/AN adolescents (Henson et al., 2016). In another systematic literature review on AI/AN resilience published from 1970 to 2015, only eight articles on AI/AN life course and resilience qualified for inclusion (Oré et al., 2016) which indicates a need in the current research for the present study which seeks to identify promotive and protective factors in resilience.

A Narrative method of inquiry begins with the experiences as expressed in the lived and expressed stories of individuals (Creswell, 2013). This study sought to explore Native American reservation life by finding out what the participant's narratives reveal about the participant and the world from which they come as it relates to their available protective and promotive factors which led them to achieve their educational goals (Patton, 2002). Narrative research is best for capturing the detailed stories or life experiences of the life of a single individuals or the lives of a small number of individuals (Creswell, 2013). With this research focusing on the meaning participants place on their lived experiences, narrative inquiry provides an ideal medium for understanding the lives of the participants in social context (Elliott, 2005). Often when life

stories are told by participants the process of collecting the stories, analyzing them for key elements and a chronological sequence are often missing. In narrative research, restorying is when the researcher retells participants' stories in a way that identifies themes and places them into a chronological context and identifies implied causality (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this qualitative narrative study:

RQ1: What resilience resources exist for Native American participants which contributed to their educational goal achievement?

RQ1a: What intrinsic and extrinsic protective and promotive factors were they able to access on the reservation?

RG1b: What are the personal, family and community factors that contributed to their success?

Setting

Optimally the interviews would have been face-to-face as opposed to via an online meeting platform, however this was not feasible due to the geographic distance between myself and the participants making in-person interviews not logistically possible therefore an online platform was utilized instead. Utilizing an online platform as an alternative to conduct interviews aids in overcoming many of the limitations inherent in face-to-face interviews such as difficulty arranging a time and place to meet and the challenges of noise interruptions. Some key benefits of utilizing an online platform for conducting research interviews are; 1) ease and flexibility of scheduling, 2) virtual and visual interaction, 3) ease of data capture, 4) less intimidating than a private space', and 5) more control for participants leading to a more open interview. The potential obstacles of dropped calls and pauses, inaudible segments, and loss of intimacy can be overcome by confirming a stable internet connection for both parties, finding a quiet room

without distractions, slowing down speech, being open to repeating questions, and paying close attention to facial expressions (Seitz, 2016). Online interviews can produce data that is as reliable as data produced by face-to-face encounters as well as increasing the number of participants who will agree to participate (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). Utilizing digital resources to include video can in some cases act as an augmentation to enrich the interview and capture non-verbal cues that may be important (Dowling, Lloyd, & Suchet-Pearson, 2016). Issues like signal strength and technological challenges during recording are additional challenges that can occur during online interviewing (Oates, 2015).

Procedures

Potential participants were contacted via phone, email, and social media by the researcher to determine their interest in participation. Full disclosure and informed consent took the form of a document sent digitally containing the following information: 1) The purpose of the study and how the results may be used, 2) That they are not required to participate, 3) They may withdraw from the study at any time (Pyrczak & Bruce, 2014). The informed consent form was patterned after the template on Liberty University's IRB website (see Appendix A). Once participants expressed their intent to participate an interview was scheduled and performed at a location deemed appropriate according to the aforementioned research setting protocols. The interviews will be both audio and video recorded with the permission of the participant. In order to maintain confidentiality a semi-private location was chosen (Pyrczak & Bruce, 2014) so that the interview will not be overheard by anyone deemed unacceptable by the participant.

In summary, the procedures were as follows:

1) Interview conducted

2) Interview transcribed

3) Transcript returned to participant for member checking

4) Data analyzed/themes identified

5) Themes returned to participants for member checking and comments

Data Collection

Interviews

The primary data collection method was the semi-structured open-ended interview. This approach to interview design presented participants with a predetermined set of questions intended to take the participants through the same sequence with the same questions in essentially the same words in order to minimize question variation (Patton, 2002). Semi-structured interviewing allows for modification of the style, pace and ordering of questions to evoke the fullest responses from the participants and allows them to structure their responses in a way congruent with how they think and use language (Qu & Dumay, 2011). There needed to be some flexibility in the questions and the probing to limit the bias of my worldview as it may appear in the questions, allow for the participant to have some freedom of affect in responses and incorporate a language into the questions as deemed appropriate by the participant's previous answers (Heppner, 2008). Flexibility in interviewing also allowed for spontaneity and deeper inquiry for more personal understanding (Patton, 2002).

Interview Questions and Prompts

1. Resilience is the main area of the study I am interested in exploring with you. When I say resilience, I am referring to factors in your life that have helped prevent negative outcomes and motivate success. Can you take a minute to think about your personality, your temperament, and your personal traits and talk about any of those

that have been important in helping you be successful?

2. Another aspect that is related to resilience, is the role of your family. Can you talk about the role your family has served in your success?

3. What about external relationships; consider mentors, teachers, individuals in the community. Are there any people who have contributed to your success or helped you avoid negative outcomes?

4. Ok, thank you. You have given me a good idea of the internal assets and of the external assets, like family, friends and leaders that have contributed to your success. Two other areas I want to explore with you related to resilience are protective factors and promotive factors.

5. Let's talk about protective factors. Think about a situation that you have encountered that had the potential to be stressful, and problematic to you, especially in your pursuit of your college degree. Let me give you a minute to recall a situation like that.

6. In reflecting on that potential "bad" situation, can you recall any of the resilience factors you mentioned earlier that protected you from experiencing a negative outcome? What knowledge, wisdom, or insight do you draw from during a difficult situation?

7. Another area I want to explore is promotive factors related to resilience. This is different than protective factors in that promotive factors encourage you to a desirable outcome beyond merely avoiding the negative. After that difficult situation, you made choices about how to deal with the situation and move beyond a potential bad outcome. Can you talk how you have been able to continue moving

towards your college degree, or achieve it, despite the many challenges you have

faced along the way. What drives you to push forward?

A Native American cultural consultant chosen by Liberty's IRB reviewed the interview

questions and evaluated them for cultural competence and clarity. Immediately following the

interviews, I wrote necessary field notes to document data while it was still fresh in my mind.

The audio/video recordings from the interviews were then transcribed verbatim. A professional

transcriptionist was used and was required to sign a confidentiality agreement to protect the

data.

Observations

The participants were observed to note any nonverbal communication that may add to

the interview. Their appearance, disposition and affect were noted as it pertained to the

interview.

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Data Analysis

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The analysis focused on the content of the narratives to formulate a clear sequential

order and identify common elements connected in a meaningful way (Elliott, 2005) which

indicated protective and promotive factors as they relate to the participant's educational goal

achievement. It was the desire of this researcher to examine and interpret the narratives in a

manner which provides an understanding of and illuminates the life and culture that created

these narratives (Patton, 2002). The process of member checking seeks to ensure that the

transcripts and themes accurately reflect the participant's intended meaning. Bracketing of the

data is a task that was performed early on where I clarified my own preconception(s). To the

greatest extent possible I separated my meanings and interpretations and yielded to that of the

participant. The subject matter is not interpreted in light of the standard meanings in the

existing literature rather it is taken out of the world where it occurs for inspection (Patton, 2002; Tesch, 1990). Atlas.ti software was utilized allowing for open coding of the material which is considered highly compatible with the sequential method of narrative analysis (Flick, 2009). Descriptive coding proved to be useful when reading participants narratives and noting codes in the margins. The procedures for data analysis followed the following general steps set forth by Creswell (2014):

Step 1: Organize and prepare the data for analysis – Interviews were transcribed, material was be optically scanned, and the data was be sorted and arranged in to types (Creswell, 2014). The conceptual categories for organization were not established beforehand rather they will derive from the data (Tesch, 1990).

Step 2: Reviewed each transcript for errors or omissions.

Step 3: Started coding all of the data. The coding process followed the eight steps in Figure 1 below provided by Tesch (1990) in conjunction with the computerized coding of Atlas.ti software.

1. Read all transcripts carefully to get a sense of the whole

2. Choose one interview transcript and go through it while writing notes of thoughts on the underlying meanings (topics)

3. Repeat this for several participants and make a list of emerging topics

4. Abbreviate the topics as codes and write the codes next to the appropriate sections of text, monitor to determine whether new codes emerge

5. Find a descriptive name for the topics and group related topics into common categories

6. Make a final decision on the abbreviation for each category and alphabetize

7. Perform a preliminary analysis after assembling to each category in one place

8. If necessary, recode existing data

Figure 1. Tesch's Eight Steps in the Coding Process

Step 4: Use the Coding process to generate categories for themes. Five to seven themes are appropriate for a study of this magnitude.

Step 5: These themes will be advanced and conveyed in detail to be communicated in the finding of this study.

Step 6: Make an interpretation of the findings and results and how they connect to the theories presented in the literature review in Chapter 2.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is created when a report exhibits high levels of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Connelly, 2016). The following protocols coupled with the use of Atlas.ti software aided in the production of a trustworthy report. Quality field notes will added trustworthiness and rigor of my study and were taken throughout the data collection phase of the research process (Patton, 2002). Since I used audio and video recording during the online interviews, notes will not be verbatim rather key phrases and

quotes as I was able to return to the recordings to review at any time. The period immediately following the interview is critical for note-taking as the interview experience will still be fresh in my mind for reflection and elaboration.

Credibility

To maintain credibility the findings are presented in a manner which most accurately describe reality. The credibility of this study depends on the richness of the information gathered and on my analytical abilities as researcher. In addition to taking a stance of bracketing, reflexivity was embraced in order that I remain aware that my personal background, culture, and experiences could potentially shape the interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2014).

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability and confirmability are like reliability in quantitative studies. A multitude of techniques were employed to ensure a high degree of qualitative reliability. Codes were monitored throughout the analysis process to ensure there is not a drift in the definitions and assignment of codes. Since I am coding this data alone an intercoder agreement will be sought by asking academic colleague who have obtained a doctorate to cross-check my codes to determine if they would use my chosen code for certain passages of text (Creswell, 2014). Names will be redacted from all documents prior to sharing them with my colleague to protect the participants' identities. In order to achieve a high level of validity rich, thick descriptions were used in the writing of both the final report and field notes to transport readers into the experience (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2002). Member checking with the participants as a follow up to the interview increased the accuracy of my analysis of the data they have provided (Creswell, 2014). Peer review by my reader as well as my chair were an important element in

my quest for validity.

Transferability

The transferability of my findings is another aspect of my research that had to be considered. Transferability refers to the possibility that what was found in one context is applicable to another context. The degree of transferability is a direct function of the similarity between contexts (Patton, 2002).

Ethical Considerations

I strive to avoid becoming a researcher who simply records findings for outsiders or studies Native American ways for personal gain who leaves nothing of value behind (Whitbeck et al., 2014). It is my hope that the findings of this study serve to inform programs and policies which will add value to all Native American people as their information belongs to them. I am merely a tool by which the information they share is processed.

After consulting several resources containing tables and checklists on ethical considerations, the one I found to be most succinct and befitting to my personal organizational patterns is found in Creswell (2014). The organizational structure is divided into ethical issues that need to be considered prior to conducting the study, upon beginning the study, during data collection, during data analysis, and in the reporting phase and beyond.

Prior to Conducting the Study

An informal needs assessment was done with friends and family members of Native American descent and it was determined that a study of this nature is necessary to further educational goal achievement. I have consulted with appropriate codes of ethics and obtained IRB approval by way of this submitted proposal. In additional to the ethical guidelines set forth

by the IRB at Liberty University, I adhered to the codes of ethics set forth specifically for research with Indigenous communities to include the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Policy Research Center's Core Values and Guiding Principles (See Appendix D). Participants signed and submitted an informed consent form before providing any data.

Patton (2002) also adds that a risk assessment be performed before conducting the study. Potential risks that are pertinent to this study include but are not limited to participant psychological stress, ostracism for talking, or political repercussions. Psychological stress was minimized by allowing the participant the freedom not to participate or to answer any questions they deemed too stressful and to guide the interview with sensitivity reading the participant's cues for any signs of stress and adjusting the interview accordingly. Ostracism and political repercussions were minimized by keeping the identities private and choosing an interview location that does not expose the participant. After considering these risks I determined that the study could go forth as the participants could choose not to participate if they felt pressures in any of these potential risk arenas.

Beginning the Study

Appropriate consent was obtained from people who agreed to be a part of the study. The purpose of the study was communicated, any questions answered, and no pressure was applied to individuals to participate. I submitted my proposal including interview questions and methodological plans to a cultural consultant for revision and approval in order to maintain a level of cultural competency and respect in areas in which I may be ignorant having not been raised on a reservation (Creswell, 2014).

Collecting and Analyzing the Data

Deception, exploitation, and collection of harmful information will be avoided (Creswell, 2014) as participants will have control over what they have to say. I did not disclose only positive results that bolster my opinion and theory rather I will disclose all applicable data and results (Creswell, 2014). I strove to respect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants throughout the entire research process through the use of pseudonyms for individuals and locations during analyzing, coding and recording (Creswell, 2014).

Reporting, Storing, and Sharing Data

No part of this study was falsified or plagiarized and no information was disclosed that would be harmful to the participants. Participant names will be redacted so that this advisor will be unaware of their identities. Raw data will be kept for 3 years then destroyed. Paper documents will be stored in locked file cabinets with no identifying data included (names, actual locations, etc.) and digital data will be stored in a password protected online storage platform.

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The Researcher's Role

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My role as researcher does not end at the time of research design and pick up again upon data analysis. I am an active part of the entire interview process and my presence will influence the outcome no matter how far I try to remove my personal beliefs from the equation. In quantitative research, standardized instruments are used to measure reaction of a sample of people. In qualitative research, I am the instrument. My credibility hinges in large part on my skill, competence and rigor and ability to adopt a stance of neutrality (Patton, 2002). The observer can make or break a research study. If a researcher is well-trained and astute they will add value and credibility to the inquiry while a researcher who is ill-prepared and imperceptive can cast doubts on the credibility of the research findings (Patton, 2002). With a narrative design

the researcher must engage the participant, build a rapport and relationship of trust while taking steps not to lead the conversation in a direction that fits the researcher's worldview over that of the participant.

Part of my job as researcher is to be self-aware concerning my own feelings and perspective which is referred to as reflexivity (Creswell, 2014), particularly when I start to form an idea of how much I have in common with the participants. Reflexivity is employed to indicate an awareness of the identity, or self, of the researcher within the research process (Elliott, 2005). I strove to remain aware and take precautions not to become entangled emotionally with the participants to a degree which may have created a tension to become more enmeshed and yet maintain distance (Patton, 2002). It is imperative that I bracketed (set-aside) my biases and expectations before the interview process in order to remain as close as possible to the participants words and meanings in the data analysis stage (Hill, 2015). I remained aware of my personal bias and involvement with the interview material.

Summary

A qualitative narrative research design was systematically chosen as the best option to net the richest data and to capture the essence of the lived experience of the Native American participants. Rigorous techniques were employed throughout to ensure the highest quality results honoring the research community's demand for a study that is credible and trustworthy with transferable results. Peer review was of value during the coding and analyzing stages of the study.

The participants of this study are Native Americans who have spent many of their formative years living on a reservation thereby experiencing reservation life and developing their life story in this context. This lived experience is different from my own requiring intentional

care to be taken to ensure a high degree of ethical and cultural competence throughout every phase of the research. My responsibility to respect the participants does not end with the interview. The results of this study belong to the communities who supplied the data and will be used to inform programs and policies concerning educational goal achievement among Native Americans.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This qualitative narrative study was conducted to explore the lived experiences of Native Americans who grew up on a reservation and completed much of their elementary and secondary schooling on a reservation. To this end the study was framed by the following three-part research question.

RQ1: What resilience resources exist for Native American participants which contributed to their educational goal achievement?

RQ1a: What intrinsic and extrinsic protective and promotive factors were they able to access on the reservation?

RQ1b: What are the personal, familial and community factors that contributed to their success?

This chapter presents the themes of resilience which emerged from the participant narratives in this research study and answers the research question. The names of participants and all parties, locations, reservations and schools have been either changed or sanitized in order to protect participant identities.

Participants

The participants who provided the data for this study represent a range of ages and degrees attained. The six participants in this study are from three different reservations in the United States. All three of these reservations have poverty rates well above that of the rest of the U.S. The percentage of individuals on these reservations who hold a Bachelor's degree or higher is well below the U.S. rate. Table 3 shows these statistics as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau. The reservations are not listed by name rather by state (South Dakota, North Carolina, Montana)

in order to further protect the identity of the participants. See appendix E for notes on the

percentages listed in this table.

Table 3: U.S. Census Data on Reservation Education Rates

	South Dakota	North Carolina	Montana	U.S.
Reservation Poverty Rate	43.1	16.1	29.9	12.7
Reservation Percent of persons with BA or Higher	13.6	12.0	13.8	30.9
Poverty Rate of Entire State	13	14.7	12.5	N/A
Statewide Percent of persons with BA or Higher	27.8	29.9	30.7	N/A

Adam

It is not unusual to find Adam on his skateboard either on a skate park or any road at the

Ivy League institution where he is currently pursuing his undergraduate degree in psychology. If

life circumstances were the only determinants of where a person goes to college Adam would not

be here. He skates to cope with the pressures of being a young man from an impoverished

reservation studying alongside his piers some of whom he describes as having trust funds and

jobs waiting for them whether they do well or not. He skates to deal with adversity, building his

emotional resilience with every trick he masters. He is a 21 year old single man and self-described introvert. He felt weird talking so much about himself during the interview and finds it a hassle to hold conversations with people he doesn't know. Perhaps this is why he found so much peace in skateboarding – a sport one can do alone. Reading became very important to him in an effort to overcome being placed in a lower level reading group after a teacher informed his parents that he probably wasn't going to become a good reader or a very good student. How wrong they were.

Adam spent his entire young life on his home reservation in South Dakota and was the youngest of five with four older sisters. He describes his youth as one of privilege relative to other kids on the reservation in part because his biological parents were both living in the same household and both led a sober lifestyle. He recognizes that he did not have the emotional baggage he sees in others who must deal with everything that comes with having an absent parent. An opinionated young man who takes pride in his ability to think for himself, also acknowledges that he needs help from other people and that every person he meets is potentially a resource to his success. He desires to study more deeply the area of Historical Trauma to return to the reservation and help his people in the area of suicide intervention.

Belle

One does not have to talk to Belle very long to see that she is special. Her steady drive and strength combined with a gentle, sweet empathy communicates a level of resilience not often seen among people who come from extreme adversity that is often encountered growing up on a reservation.

She is 42 with a Masters in Human Resources and a Bachelor of Science in Social Sciences. She currently serves in the military and resides in the Washington D.C. area with her

husband and their children. Raised by her grandparents, her grandfather served as mentor and pushed her to go to college. Upon his death, her father stepped in and played a bigger role in her life encouraging her to join the military, a decision she credits not only with providing her a bright future but with saving her life. Her family did not want her to become a statistic, words which have deeper meaning when one looks at the statistics on suicide, substance use and education of AI youth on reservations.

Belle has a deep love for her people. She teaches yoga as a way to not only find peace and relaxation for herself, but so she can pass that feeling of peace on to her children. For Belle, yoga helps her through learning to breathe and connect with her breath, which is infused with her cultural prayer and ceremony. She lost her younger brother in a car accident on the reservation years ago. An avid sportsman Belle now operated a non-profit and holds an annual sporting event on the reservation both to honor his memory and to give other youth an outlet amid the challenges presented by life on a reservation.

Char

Char is a tough, driven and successful 49 year old woman with an Associate of Science in Early Childhood Education, a Bachelor's and a Master's both in Social work. Growing up she had always planned to go to college but found herself wanting for better counseling, preparation and support from the school system. Her perseverance despite obstacles has allowed her a career serving in high levels of government and as an esteemed leader in the philanthropic arena. Char has a strong faith in Creator and relies on Him in times of trouble. She is still pained by the racism she experiences and feelings of not being valued by non-native piers. It hurts her to watch her son experience the same maltreatment.

Dara

Dara is a 34 year old woman with an associate's degree and is currently enrolled in a healthcare communications degree program. She grew up on a reservation in North Carolina. Her own mother went into the military leaving her to be raised by her grandmother. Having children right out of high school forced her to become self-sufficient very early in life. Facing challenges like depression she was able to stay focused on her education with the desire to be a role model who could provide for her children.

Dara knew things did not just happen and that people did not just get handed things. She always had to work "really, really hard". She has a vivid memory of some boys in high school telling her she was not very smart. She informed them that she was going to make it into a big university and she did just that. She went into college straight out of high school supporting herself by working part-time jobs. It was on her to pay for the clothes she wore, her school supplies, gas in her car and all the costs associated with being on your own. She knew no other option but hard work and diligence.

Eric

Eric grew up not having much. He always wondered why he did not have a lot of things. He was raised by his grandparents on his home reservation in North Carolina and he has served diligently and honorably in the military for five years. Successfully pursuing his education has opened new doors for him and for his family. At age 28 and with a completed Associate's degree he is currently pursuing his Bachelor's in Healthcare Communications and takes great pride in being able to complete his undergraduate degree in three and a half years. Being the first in his family to break the educational barrier and get a college degree, Eric is proud to be able to give his kids a lifestyle he never had growing up. The happiness of his children has been a continuing

driving force behind his educational goal achievement as he refers to his college degree as something that can never be taken away.

Fenla

Fenla, a self-described introvert, is a 39 year old woman who holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology who decided very early in life that she wanted to go to college. She found solace in reading, a hobby that was fed by her parent's friends who bought her books as gifts. Whether it was from the daydreams and fantasies found in the pages of her books or from the experience of having an influx of people visiting her home from both on and off her Montana reservation, she developed an idealistic nature where she just always knew that things could somehow be better. She attributes a good deal of her academic success to leadership programs having been made available to her during her youth and she has since gone back into her community to promote these same ideals. With a mother who works in the field education, Fenla was exposed to learning opportunities throughout her young life.

Results

The interview questions for this study were semi-structured allowing for open dialog about the participants' education and lives on the reservations and their decision to attend college. Data analysis was performed by inspection of the rich descriptive words and phrases in the participant interviews as they answered the open-ended interview questions. These interviews and the subsequent data analysis resulted in the emergence of the following themes of (a) pride, (b) desire to give back, (c) family support, (d) mentors, (e) spirituality and cultural connectivity, and (f) words of life. Along with these themes the unexpected theme of race relations surfaced.

Theme Development

RQ1: What resilience resources exist for Native American participants which contributed to their educational goal achievement?

RQ1a: What intrinsic and extrinsic protective and promotive factors were they able to access on the reservation?

RQ1b: What are the personal, family and community factors that contributed to their success?

Themes developed from the data in all sections of the research question. Table 4 shows the sections of the RQ, the codes that were developed from the RQ and the themes that developed in each section.

Table 4: Developed Themes from the Data

Category	Themes	Number of Respondents
Intrinsic:	Pride	4 of 6
Personal	Desire to give back	4 of 6
Extrinsic:		
Family	Family Support	6 of 6
Community	Mentors	4 of 6
	Spirituality and Cultural Connectivity	5 of 6
	Words of Life	6 of 6
Unexpected	Race Relations	3 of 6

Intrinsic, Personal Themes

      Pride. Four of the participants spoke of pride directly with theme of pride being mentioned 21 times in one interview alone. Pride as mentioned by the participants took the form of pride in self as well as another person expressing pride in the participants of this study. Making other people proud was a theme that emerged among the participants. Adam spoke more of pride than any other participant. It was very important for him to make his parents proud. He stated:

> Being able to communicate pride was very strong because whenever I was growing up, one of the most important things that I thought was really cool was making my parents proud, and to this day, I still hold that. They were very selective about what they were prideful of, in a sense, where the more I cared about something, the more pride they showed for that thing…I do think very highly of myself. I do believe that, in any goal that I have, I can go out and accomplish it.

Similarly, Eric spoke of making others proud:

> I have four kids and I became a father at 17 years old. I had to grow up quick and basically [my Grandmother]…telling me not to worry about the kids, because they're in good hands and that just keep working hard because they'll be proud of me for what I'll be completing.

Eric also exhibited pride as a representative of his tribe.

> It seems like it's flown by, but I was just putting in the work and just getting the grades and basically, earning something that can never be taken away, is a bigger accomplishment for me, just because I have never seen any of my family members

accomplish that. That's what's driving me is just not only in my representing myself, I'm

also representing my tribe as well.

In the context of self-pride Adam states:

My father believes in himself very much, my mother as well. I want to say it's an

inherited thing, a natural thing for myself as a [his specific tribe] person, to believe in

myself. To have pride in myself is-- It's inherent for me to believe in myself almost.

Pride in individuality. The ability to express their individuality showed up in the

interviews as a benefit which allowed the participants to avoid following the crowd into negative

behavioral patterns and an appreciation for reading and education. Char went so far as to refer to

herself as rebellious. Fenla found her individuality beneficial: "Honestly, I'm an introvert. I think

that made me less likely to follow the crowd, I guess. I preferred staying at home and reading,

actually." Adam prides himself in his individualistic nature:

In terms of how that always helped me to be successful is being really individualistic and

being really comfortable being by myself really helped me to be really analytical and

critical about a lot of things. Helped me to form my own opinions about a lot of things in

the sense that whenever I was younger, I was always really opinionated and had really

specific opinions about a lot of things…Being able to be comfortable with myself. To

think by myself and to trust in my own judgements and to trust my thought process.

Trusting my critical thinking was really important. It also enabled me to read a whole lot

whenever I was growing up as a kid…I remember in the third grade was where I really

started to develop that individuality. I started to read a lot more on my own. That same

individual strength, I think, is what still made me want to go to the college.

Desire to give back. Participants spoke of having the desire to give back to their family and community through service or being a good example for future generations to follow. Fenla spoke of going back in to her community to promote the same ideals she was presented which helped her achieve her educational goals.

> Adam's strong sense of community was clear: I see myself going back to the community, doing research, being involved in the community… my orientation towards my community, because that's basically what I wanted to do since the seventh grade, was do psychological, experimental-- Become an experimental psychologist. Do psychological research on the reservation to help mitigate stuff like suicide ideation…Now, that I know more about it, I want to go into understanding historical trauma. My entire life up to this point, and then in the future, is all about being community-oriented and having that-- That being a very protective factor where I was like, "I know that this community is hurting, and out of this hurt, comes a lot of hatred and comes a lot of internalized hatred.

Belle continues to give back to her community and her family and she refers to her community orientation as a "higher calling". She wants to share the coping mechanisms she has accessed.

> It came full circle to where we have a non-profit…to help our youth and to be involved in them, and have the role of an aunt, a mother, a sister to the young people on our rez…My husband-- He got me a gift card to a yoga studio, and that helped me through learning to breathe and connect with my breath, which is infused with [my traditional] culture with prayer and our ceremony. I wanted to share that beautiful feeling with our youth and then my children…[to] give our youth and my children breathing exercises and yoga to help

with any anxieties they may have or difficult situations they encounter because it's helped

me so much in my life and learn to pray as well with that.

Dara has survived a battle with depression and continues to thrive in her medical career

and desires to use that knowledge to help her people.

I still want to be that person from our community. I want to be an advocate. I want to be

informative. I want to be able to like-- It's really easy for people around here to say,

"That's not our problem. Let somebody else do that." I want to be a help. I want to be

here for my people.

Extrinsic Themes

A theme emerges as an outcome from analyzed data (Sandana, 2016) when there is

common mention among participants. Extrinsic themes would be those which emerge from the

participants' narrative making mention of having been impacted by outside influences. These

themes could include community, family, and life circumstances which impacted their desire to

go to college after high school.

Family support. The most pervasive theme was a strong family support system. All of

the participants referenced having strong family support which helped them achieve their

educational goals. Adam sums up the role of family very well:

That very strong familial core was very important to my success, I feel like, because I

didn't always have to worry about other things in the home. I was able to be empowered

in the sense that I could examine and think about all the other things in my life without

being-- I was able to be focused on my education. I could be focused on the things that I

cared about without having to worry about other things that were happening in my house,

which I know that other children in my class that were in very volatile abusive situations,

they always had to deal with that. They were always worried about that in a sense of-- I

could see that there was this other thing that was also controlling their attention that I

didn't have. In that sense, I was able to focus a lot more of my attention on school. My

family, in creating that family life for me, was very instrumental to my current academic

success.

Belle also speaks of her family's contribution to her success:

The role my family has served in my success is my-- my entire family, I would say more

so my father, had served a big part of my success of joining the military and pushing me

to foresee just a bigger picture than graduating high school and saying that that was the

best match for me for who I was and being more strict than most parents would be.

I was raised by my grandparents, which my grandfather had that role in my life of

mentoring me and pushing me on to college. Then when he passed, my father stepped in

and-- I think their biggest concern for me was becoming a statistic.

Char states that family support was the number one resilience factor which helped her

achieve her educational goals "As far as resiliency, I think it's always back to family".

Family as role model. In addition to the support and protection provided by family, there was a

theme of family modeling positive behaviors for the participants. Dara speaks of her Grandmother:

My grandmother worked as a licensed practical nurse while I was a child. I wasn't around

while she was at school doing that, but I just knew that that was something that she had

had to go after. I was always playing with a stethoscope somewhere in her nursing

uniforms and things like that. I always felt I wanted to do something in healthcare, and if

I wanted to do something in healthcare then I needed to go to school for it. Then my aunt,

she went to college later on in life and she was going to school for emergency medical

science as well…I got to watch her go up the channels and went from a Secretary to on

the ambulance and to a supervisor. That motivated me watching them and seeing them go

to school. I babysat for her a lot of times when she had her kids and needed to get to

class. Watching them really helped motivate me, showed me what it was, and that it was

possible. They didn't make any excuses anytime. There was something hard going on,

with kids especially. You just made it happen.

Fenla's family encouraged education and modeled steady employment. Her family also

took her off the reservation giving her a different perspective which she says contributed

to her resilience.

Both of my parents strongly supported education and they spoke a lot of the importance

of education. Also, they led, basically, a sober lifestyle. I had a lot of protective factors

that I feel some of my peers perhaps didn't…My mom was a counselor, and my dad was

employed with the tribe. They really encouraged education. I'm the only child in the

family that holds a bachelor degree right now.

The sober lifestyle of parents was instrumental in both protecting the participants and

providing a good example for them to follow. Fenla stated: "Drugs and alcohol are really bad on

the reservation." Adam spoke of the protection afforded him by the sobriety of his parents:

There was never any over traumatic domestic violence in the house. Both my parents

were sober and they were very dedicated to controlling who was around us as children, so

I was hardly ever in positions where I was around a lot of drug use or a lot of violence or

a lot of any kind of volatile environment that would lead to some traumatic event or some

event that I personally couldn't handle.

Practical needs satisfaction. This theme involved finding ways to combat the practical

and logistical barriers to attending school. It became clear that these students needed more than

just the intrinsic motivation and external encouragement to desire higher education but were also in need of the practical support involved with daily needs like childcare, food, and housing.

Eric had the confidence of knowing his kids were in the care of his grandmother as he attended classes. Char became a mother before going to college and spoke of the benefit derived from housing programs being available to her. "I think programs that did help me were not through education. They were like housing. I was able to get into low-income housing, without low-income housing, I could not have survived in order to go to college." Dara benefitted from similar family support enabling her to attend college classes.

> While I was in college the first time around and my grandmother watched my children
> when they were young so I could get to school before they got into daycare and things
> like that or if I needed her to pick them up, she would help pick them up. My dad helped
> a little bit.

Mentors. Mentorship took place for the participants in a variety of settings. For some participant's mentors were present in the classroom while others found mentors in extra-curricular programs and learning opportunities. Char mentioned friends who served as role models and encouragers but stated that she didn't have any mentors in school at all. Adam had more than one mentor who contributed to his resilience.

> I've had a number of mentors just because-- I mentioned before my ability to talk with
> my teachers and now my professors, where I've always had, other than my family, a huge
> number of people in my corner cheering for me…I've always had mentors. I remember in
> daycare, there was this one guy [name redacted] who would speak [my tribal language]
> with me and thought me how to tie my shoes. I remember he taught me how to make my
> first paper airplane, which is very cool…Then getting to elementary school, having

teachers that knew who I was, were invested in my education, was really interesting and

awesome. I remember my first real person that I considered to be a mentor of mine was in

fourth grade. There was this teacher who everyone said was this super strict, difficult

teacher. One of the things that she said was like, "You have to read. You have to read

every single day. You have to be good at spelling.

Adam also had a teacher's aide who turned out to be a mentor who contributed to his educational

goal achievement.

There was a teacher aide for her in the fourth grade who, he was also the IT person for

our school but he could teach. I remember [the teacher's son] had passed away or

something, so she had to take some time off. Then [the teacher's aide] became our

teacher [and] after-school activities coordinator. He had an idea where we all had these

reading goals, which I mentioned where if you read a lot, you would take these tests. You

would get points, but you also had a reading level of books that you were supposed to be

reading that were within that level.If you pass your reading goal, or whatever it was-- If

you pass 100% of your goal, what he would do is he would take a bus full of all the kids

who passed their goals, go to the local Borders, which is a bookstore, I don't know if

you'll have it. Then each person had a $20 credit or a $10 credit to buy any book that they

wanted. That was another aspect where I guess it made students want to learn what they

wanted to learn, rather than what was presented to them. I remember I went there and

there was this book that had a shiny sword on the front. I remember thinking, "That's a

cool sword. I want that book," so I got that book. I remember going to him and I was like,

"Which of these books can I get?" He looked at them and he knew who I was and he

knew that I liked reading at that point and he said, "Don't tell any of the other kids, but I'll

buy you all of these books, because I know you'll read them. That's got to be-- The deal, is if I buy you this $30 (USD) worth of books, you have to read every single book and I'm going to make sure that you're reading them."…That act of kindness, I guess, was very important to me because it was like I owed him a debt, and paying this debt to him was reading the books and enjoying the books.

In addition to her grandmother serving as a mentor, Belle spoke of another mentor who encouraged her to pursue higher education:

Another mentor in my life was Miss Sam. She's from [my] tribe, and she lives out in California. She is very huge on family, and my whole family is big on family. Family is the most important thing and family time, quality family time.

She was my mentor in the sense to where she's like, "Go to law school. I'll support you. We will help you. We will be there"…I thought, "I don't have the smarts to go to law school or apply". She's like, "Take a prep course. Go for it".

Fenla also had several mentoring relationships which enhanced her desire to achieve her educational goals.

I do feel I had a lot of adult role models in my life. A lot of teachers that looked out for me. In particular, in high school, I had a math teacher. She really went out of her way for me. She pushed me harder than a lot of the other teachers. I had a B+ in her class, an 89 and she wrote me up for it. I was upset because I wasn't flunking, but she said she knew I was capable of more…Having somebody like her in my life to push the idea of not settling. Then, once again, I have a lot of relatives, family, friends that talk to me about the importance of education and making good decisions. I participated in a lot of

extracurricular youth activities where we did travel, so some of my supervisors and other peers became role models for me as well.

Learning programs and opportunities. Extra-curricular programs provided elements of resilience for the participants in their quest for educational goal achievement. Sporting activities played a role for two of the participants. Eric found playing stickball was beneficial. Adam speaks of the benefits he gained from his love of both skateboarding and golf. Fenla found mentors in leadership programs she describes as "geared for youth. I think mostly to give leadership skills and opportunities, I guess, just to experience different events, youth gatherings off the reservation." She accessed valuable resilience resources by engaging in leadership programs as both a participant and as a mentor for others. "Even just being aware that programs existed specifically for Native students that were interested in-- I was interested in medicine." She goes on further to describe their impact:

> [My parents] were really open-minded and they took us places, so we got to travel. I just want to speak to that too, the exposure of going off-reservation…I guess I became accustomed to interacting with people that weren't, basically [people of the same tribe]. I became friends with non-Indians…I feel like fostering those relationships early on did help…Other than that, I think I would have been too scared because there's so many rules off the reservation. I became accustomed to things are done differently when you go other places...Well, one of my first paying jobs, I guess you could say, I was a youth mentor. I was involved in one of the youth mentor programs. I do feel like that gave us a group of other mentors and peers that had agreement to live within certain parameters. To live healthy and go and learn leadership skills and we did traveling. Once again that

exposure to have other opportunities and to see that, I guess the world's bigger than just the reservation…

Spirituality and cultural connectivity. These would seem to be two separate categories in the mind of the researcher, however, among the participants they were mentioned in tandem to such a degree that it would be inappropriate to separate them. Belle stated that prayer through ceremony added to her resilience, "I always found comfort and healing in prayer, and then through yoga". Adam found medicine men to be a source of strength who kept him close to his spiritual roots.

> The medicine men that helped me re-engage with my own culture whenever I was a freshman in high school, that now, every time I'm home in the summer, I'll try to do a vision quest. They are very much responsible for my own spiritual understanding and my own connection with my past and my own ancestry, which I think is another very important aspect to my own security and my own personal strength to keep on existing in a place like [an Ivy League institution] where those things clearly aren't valued.

Adam also finds solace and strength through his traditional language.

> The medicine man said-- He said, "You need to find ways to be closer to home without actually being home. The best way that you can do that, other than through prayer, is by speaking [the tribal language]," because in [his tribal] spirituality we believe that whenever-- We have a spirit in us and we have the human. We always say we're spirits on a human journey not humans on a spiritual journey.
>
> We also have this belief that, as [tribal] spirits, our first language, no matter what, is [our traditional tribal language], and that we just learn how to speak English. It's like a muscle that we don't use so it goes down. We lose its ability but we are all born with it. We have

this belief that we are all born fluent in [our traditional tribal language] but as we grow up, because we don't use it, we forget words. We're never ever learning [this tribal language], instead, we're just remembering this lost skill that we used to have whenever we were born-- Before we were born, whenever we were a spirit.

He said that whenever-- No matter where you are in the world, if you speak your language, if you speak [the tribal language], even if it's just to yourself, or if it's to your white friends that have no idea what you're saying, as long as you're speaking our language, our spirits back here will hear you and we will know where you are, and our ancestors will know where you are, and no matter what, you will never be lost. As long as you are speaking our language, you will always be accounted for, and you will always be supported and you will always be found.

Belle was also encouraged by a medicine man from her tribe.

When I was in high school, I was taking [tribal} culture courses, and one of the spiritual leaders, he was a teacher as well at [the reservation high school]. It was my junior year, and I took a huge interest in the [tribal] culture and the laws and the tribal government. He saw the crowd that I was hanging out with, and he pulled me aside and shared with me a powerful message I didn't really understand at the time, and I just brushed it off. He just said, "You take a big interest in helping your people and understanding and learning about your people, and the government, and the culture". He goes, "One day, you're going to be back here helping your people". I didn't really truly understand that…I just brush it off, and he'd ask me. He's like, "What are you doing hanging out with these people, this group of friends?" Now I look back, I think he saw that I needed more

guidance of where I was going with being connected more so with the [traditional tribal] way of life.

Char states:

Also, I'm thinking having a sense of culture and spirituality and being able to turn to The Creator in times of trouble, being able to turn to others for prayer and support has really made a difference. I think having connections to community also has been supportive when you feel like there are some cheerleaders out there who are waiting for you, makes a difference.

Dara expresses regret at the thought of not taking advantage of opportunities to learn about her culture as a young person on the reservation.

There wasn't a lot of that in my house growing up. I've learned a lot of things, cultural things later in life. I sent my children to the emergent school so that I could learn more of the language, so that I could hopefully learn a little bit more about my culture. Where I went to school off the reservation, I didn't really get taught things like that. I was part of a couple of groups in high school. We would travel around, have meetings every month with different schools with other Indian students. Then, I don't think any of us took it as serious as we could have, because if I was now my age and what I want to know, if I had to do it over, I would ask more questions. I would be more like, apt to say and want to learn, instead of just goofing.

Eric expressed something very similar in that he did not access cultural connectivity as an element of resilience in his pursuit of higher education but is appreciating it more now as an adult.

A lot of the elders talked to me about preserving the culture of our lifestyle. It's hard

trying to do that with my kids now just because of the busy environment me and my wife

have. Our daughter she could do well in Cherokee language program and kind of stay up

with it. Well, we try to surround them with it as much as possible we go to stomp dances

and try to just get them involved with it as much as possible and tell them the importance

of it.

Like Dara and Eric, Fenla also expresses regret at not learning more about her tradition

when it comes to language. She did, however, find that engaging in ceremony kept her

away from negative behaviors.

I had always wished though that language played a bigger part. I took classes in high

school and then also in college at my local tribal college trying to learn the language. I do

feel like if that was a bigger, a bigger component, I think that the youth would have a lot

of pride because that's part of our identity…I was raised that you don't participate in--

Drugs and alcohol are really bad on the reservation. You don't participate in those

activities if you're going to participate in ceremony. That was one of the things I felt kept

me away, I guess, from a lot of the peer pressures. In high school, I did for about a year, I

guess, succumb to those peer pressures. Then again, finding my way back out, I had my

parents, they were really supportive.

Words of life. The power of positive words can improve motivation, alleviates tress and

even impact neurological functioning (Newberg & Waldman, 2012). Participants shared how

positive words spoken to them by others contributed to their resilience and promoted their

pursuit of higher education. This theme was woven throughout the narratives of the participants

as they recalled how mentors, teachers and family members spoke positive words to them adding

to their resilience and desire to go to college. Adam was among those participants who were fortunate enough to have family who spoke life to them. In addition to his family he recalls teachers who encouraged him to pursue higher education.

> Like I said my family is very strong about communicating pride. They are always the first ones to tell me how proud they are of me, which is very cool because it keeps me very focused on my goals now, now that I am at school…I remember the most important thing he ever said to me was, that I could go to any college that I ever wanted to go to as long as I wanted to try. Because my parents always were like, "You have to go to college," but that was the first time that someone really sat me down and said, "You have endless potential to go to anywhere that you want and you're already on a path to go to anywhere you want. Just keep doing what you already are doing and you'll end up at somewhere like [an Ivy League institution]."..I do think very highly of myself. Not in a way that I think I'm better than anyone else, but it comes from my mentors and my parents and my community, the people around me saying that, "You have the potential to do this, you have the power to do this."…That was very strong for me because it empowered me to think of myself as someone that did have the potential and did have the ability to do it. Then, all these years later, I ended up doing it, and I'm at [an Ivy League institution] now.

As a woman, Char was encouraged by words from her father.

> My father had told me that women are stronger than men because we are the life-givers and that every human on this planet came through a woman, and that we are also smart and strong, and those words have always carried me through education and beyond.

Dara had one high school teacher who stuck out in her mind as having played the role of mentor in her education.

I remember the first quiz that I took in her class, I got a 100 on it. When she handed it back to me, she made me feel good. She was just like, "Way to go. You're really smart and you're going to do great things." Basically is how I felt when she told me. I think that's when it clicked in my brain that I could do good stuff, that I could make good grades, that I was smart…Then whenever she told me that, when she said that to me, and I didn't know her, I'd not had any of her other classes, I was shocked. I was like, "Whoa, does she say this to everybody?" From that point on, I really started buckling down and working harder, and felt like I was actually capable of whatever I wanted to do, that I would be able to go to school wherever I wanted to go to school if I felt like it.

Eric received some words from a commander in the military later in life before he went to college:

One thing I can help you with that question is one of my commanders, he told, he said, "Surround yourself with good people and good things will happen." Ever since then, I've always keep good people around me, positive people. It's just a positive environment because bad environment is not good for me, is not good for the kids or my wife. Just try to stay optimistic.

In addition to the teacher who told her not to settle, Fenla received words of life from several people in her circle. The act of speaking words of life to an individual and its impact on education is displayed powerfully in a memory Fenla has that goes all the way back to elementary school:

I believe I was in fourth grade when they had a young Cheyenne girl probably about, I'm guessing about 19 or 20, come speak to us about going to college. I guess being as young as I was seeing a tribal member come in and talk to us about the importance of education

and deciding. She told us, "You need to decide now that you want to go to college and start thinking about what you want to do." She's like, "Don't wait until you're in high school to start doing that."…I guess of all the little kids, maybe I took it super serious. Like, "Wow, I have to decide this." That was one of the first factors that put me on the trajectory of college. I've also gone back to my community or surrounding communities while I was in college and tried to promote the same ideal.

Unexpected Theme

This study was focused on resilience from a strengths-based perspective. The research and interview questions intentionally did not ask participants about the deficits or challenges on reservations in an effort to focus on the positive elements of resilience related to their educational goal achievement. With questions framed in this context of positivity the unexpected theme of race relations emerged concerning challenge of pursuing higher education goals.

Race relations. For this theme to pierce through as it did without provocation indicated that it is an important element which should be addressed related to participants' educational goal achievement. The theme of race relations includes expressions by the participants concerning individual and systemic racism from a culture other than their own as well as racial stereotypes they described as being assigned by people of their own tribe.

Individual. Char experienced racism in her time with people off of the reservation:

Being with racist people and not being valued definitely was bad…I felt racism growing up and I can see it even today. We laugh about it today because it's not affecting my life, it's just that I sit with friends and we notice it and it was like, "Oh my God, I can't believe this," but it is.

Systemic. Belle spoke of racism that she had to fight against as an adult "At our school, our children had to deal with what we felt was racist curriculum." The racism experienced by Char was also systemic and intergenerational:

> One thing my grandfather told me is that I have to work twice as hard as everyone else because I'm Indian. The racism that he faced and that I faced and that my son faced and that we still see today is tough. Growing up and feeling that racism on a regular basis, you have to prove yourself even more so than white people and other races, mostly white people, because black people have their own struggles and so do Latinas, but as a Native person, I had to work harder and I still do. It was a good token of wisdom that carried through my whole life, which is probably why I've had the path that I've had and the opportunities that I've had, everything that I've done from working in [high levels of government] to working in philanthropy now. You have to work hard, harder than everybody else, stay longer than everybody else. That was probably one of the biggest ones is that you have to work twice as hard, and as a woman as well, but mainly as a Native person.

Stereotype threat. Adam made a most impactful and detailed statement on racial stereotypes held by pier members of his own tribe:

> In high school, because I was a skateboarder and because I did have these attitudes towards education that were flawed, I hung around with people who also didn't care about school at all. They actively would make fun of people who were good at school and trying at school. I got into every single Ivy that I applied to and the only one I didn't apply to was Columbia-- No, Penn because I didn't know Penn was an Ivy. I got into everywhere except Penn and I remember whenever the school found out because I didn't

tell anyone. I only told my parents and my mom and I was like, "Please don't put this on Facebook. Please don't tell anyone. This just stays in our family."…Then, my school found out because the school had-- With the people that were my recommenders and stuff and they were notified as well. They wanted to sell my story for donations. Do a whole video on me and a whole press release, so that they can keep getting donations from these white donors who wanted to contribute to this Catholic mission school on the rez…I very much wasn't about that, about selling my story or whatever. Also, what fed into that is that I didn't want my friends to find out and judge me for it. We kept that quiet. Then, later on, when the news stations found out, they asked me too. I said, "No, I don't want that kind of attention," because, like I mentioned before, these extended relatives as well as the friends that I hung out with, and these were friends that I looked up to and I cared very much about what they had to say--What happened was whenever they did find out, is I remember going to the skate park, going and trying to say hello to my friends, and they said that-- My family had said it to me too, but what they had said was like, "[Adam]'s white now. He's too good for us. Let's not hang out with him." I remember them actively leaving the skate park and I had to skate by myself for that afternoon. I don't want to curse, but that messed me up for a really long time…because that was senior year and it messed me up all the way through the summer and then all the way through my sophomore and first year of college. Now, I have moved past it and I can understand it, but it messed me up for a long time, where being at [this Ivy League institution] was synonymous with being white. In my head, being white meant I was disconnected from my community, disconnected from my ancestors…Being disconnected from my community was particularly important, because I see myself going

back to the community, doing research, being involved in the community. And if my community can't identify with me, then I can't be actively identifying with them. Therefore, my relationship with them is very limited, but that relationship that I have with my community is the pillar of which I stand on to enable me to feel comfortable and to be successful here at school…If I don't have that, then all of the emotional investment, all of the care that I have about my education is out the door because then what am I doing it for? They, by saying that to me, "[Adam]'s white now," that ate so much about my own insecurities, about my own knowledge of my culture, about my own understanding of what it meant to be [of his tribe], what it means to be Native, that it messed me up for such a long time. But it didn't stop me from coming to [this Ivy League university]. It didn't stop me from wanting to try in my classes and do well in my classes…The factors that, I think, made me still want to come to [this Ivy league university] and want to come to school was, I understood that saying I'm white now just because I'm seeking a higher education was problematic because it was this form of internalized racism. Where seeing intelligence or seeing evidence of intelligence was associated with being white, and that there was this internalized association with being Native as being dumb. If you weren't dumb then you weren't Native, and if you weren't Native than you weren't one of us. They were working through all these-- Their own insecurities and their own internalized beliefs about their own identities.

Char was able to overcome the threat of stereotype as a woman and a Native person:

My grandmother has given me things like the permission and encouragement to dream and to be whatever I want to be, to do whatever I want to do, and not to let things such as

cultural norms or other things that binds me as a woman or as a Native woman or as

whatever, just not to let those hold me back in any way.

Protective and Promotive

The current literature does not have a uniformed definition or delineation between

promotive and protective factors. This study showed much the same definitional

challenge when the questions were answered by the participants. There were, however,

some themes which emerged which were clearly noted as protective or promotive by

participants. The theme of stable family was identified by some as protective. Dara stated

"My grandmother was very protective. She sheltered me from a lot of people and things".

Adam identified being community oriented as protective. Belle was protected by family,

transparency (between her and her spouse), and prayer through ceremony. Eric identified

a current protective factor to be the pressure to be a good example to his children.

The most common resilience factor noted as promotive was words of life

(outlined above) spoken to participants. Dara pointed out that there do exist great teachers

on the reservation and more are needed like the mentor who spoke positive words of life

to her in her time in school there. Fenla's memory of her experience with positive words

in fourth grade to be her promotive resilience factor. Adam lists a few additional things

he believes to have been promotive in his pursuit of education:

> A big promotive factor for me that now continues to boost, I guess, me and my pursuit of
>
> my education, aside from making my parents proud, aside from helping my community,
>
> and aside from my own mentors, keeping in line with their expectations of me, is I do
>
> think very highly of myself.

Belle experienced a sense of promotion toward education through "family and working with the youth back home and I feel the higher calling to go and help my people." For Eric, he found the same pressure to set a good example for his children to be both his number one protective and promotive factor.

> Just wanting to better myself, break that barrier for my family that's never accomplished and graduating high school college just breaking down that wall and just tell them, hey our family can do it and my kids can see that and they can go on and accomplish that as well.

Summary

After analyzing the data, six themes and one unexpected theme related to the research question emerged. This chapter presented those themes and the answers to the research question. The similarities among the narratives concerning resilience factors among the participants presented family support in its various forms as the most prevalent resilience factor in the lives of the participants. The positive words spoken into the lives of the participants were shown to have had great power and influence in the decision to pursue their educational goals past high school.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to understand Native American life experiences which fostered resilience and how resiliency resources contribute to their educational goal achievement. This chapter presents a summary discussion of the findings and the implications considering the relevant literature and theory reviewed in chapter two. The methodological and practical implications of the study are presented and the way they impact families, educators, the developers of programs affecting Native American youth on reservations, and the students themselves. An outline of the study delimitations and limitations is also presented followed by recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

The overarching question posed by this study was: What resilience resources exist for Native American participants which contributed to their educational goal achievement? As a result of the data collected, the following discussion briefly addresses this research question. The subsections of the research question were designed to prompt insightful answers into the areas of participants' lives concerning intrinsic factors and extrinsic factor of self, family, and community. The themes which emerged out of participant narratives are briefly restated below.

Themes

The presenting themes of resilience resources accessed by the Native American participants which contributed to their educational goal achievement were (a) pride (b) desire to give back (c) family support (d) mentors (e) spirituality and cultural connectivity and (f) words of life.

The first theme revealed the intrinsic element of pride. This pride took a number of forms: pride in self, pride in being a member of their respective tribe, the good feeling when family and community members express pride in the participants and the intrinsic desire to make others proud. All the participants spoke with a sense of pride when discussing their educational accomplishments. A second theme closely related to tribal pride developed revealing a desire to give back. Almost all the participants expressed a desire to give back to their family and/or their community by returning to engage in programs on the reservation or being a good role model for their own children. Some have completed their degree and are already actively engaged in giving back to their community by organizing youth programs and serving in youth leadership programs while others plan to return to their respective reservations in the future once they finish their degree.

The third and most prominent of all presenting themes is the importance of family support. Family members of the participants who provided support contributed to the resilience of participants in their educational goal pursuit. This support took the form of setting a good example for participants. The importance of seeing parents and other family members place value on education worked to enhance the view of education by participants. When, as young people, the participants were able to live in a household that valued sobriety on a reservation where alcohol abuse was rampant they felt safe and protected. Without having to worry about their immediate safety due to the perils which follow parental alcohol abuse they could focus more attention on their present and future education. To attend college, the participants found that they needed help with basic needs like food and shelter as well as reliable childcare. Family members who helped top satisfy these practical needs also provided resilience in the participants' quests for their educational goals.

The fourth theme identified from the collective narratives was that of mentors present in the lives of the participants. This theme emerged with mentors coming to the students who had the role of teachers, program leaders, and family members. Positive examples in participant's lives and the availability of learning programs and opportunities added to their resilience. Presentations in and out of the classroom provided encouragement to students as it gave them the idea that higher education was for them and that in fact could reach their goals. This was particularly helpful when the presenter was Native American. Fenla found it beneficial just to know that there were programs available for Native American students who wanted to go to college. Next was the theme of spirituality and cultural connectivity. These two emerged as interconnected when brought up by participants who described the resilience benefits derived from traditional cultural ceremony and prayer.

The sixth and final theme was one which ran as an undercurrent throughout each of the extrinsic areas mentioned. Words of life spoken to participants were remembered in surprising detail. They described the words, who spoke them and how those words made them feel in the moment. Each participant who mentioned this theme could clearly articulate how it contributed to their resilience as it related to their educational goal achievement.

Discussion

This section serves to link the current literature detailed in Chapter Two with the present study. The initial section of Chapter Two reviewed literature concerning the contextual challenges of living on a reservation where Native American students face unique challenges based on Historical Trauma, poverty, the potential isolation and other challenges of reservation life.

Empirical Literature

Historical Trauma (HT). The concept of Historical Trauma (HT) incorporates historical oppression in some definitions to include not only intergenerational experiences but also current daily experiences like poverty and discrimination (Burnette & Figley, 2016) and was mentioned by name in Adam's narrative. He expressed a desire to study more deeply the area of Historical Trauma to return to the reservation and help his people particularly in the area of suicide intervention. Loss of language is an area covered in the scales and measurements of HT. A number of participants expressed regret in not learning their native language and some are even studying their respective traditional native languages now to incorporate into their lives in order to stay connected with their culture and build resilience for themselves and their children.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health. A study by Lowe, Liang, Henson, & Riggs (2016) found that by 12th grade 80% of youth are active drinkers. Alcohol abuse was a theme which surfaced among the participants with Eric speaking of his own and his brother's struggle with alcohol. Participants hailed the sobriety of their parents as a factor in their resilience as it related to their education. Participants' mental health was maintained to a degree sufficient for them to achieve their educational goals as a result of strong family and sobriety confirming research by Burnette and Figley (2016) where family satisfaction, parental warmth, family income and education, and coercive parenting, family trauma and stressful life events, and family violence were all factors found to affect substance use and mental health among native Americans.

Theoretical Literature

Resilience and Education. The results of this study support the current research on resiliency theory which defines resilience as the process of effectively negotiating, adapting to,

or managing significant sources of stress or trauma and as a process of adapting well in the face of adversity and significant sources of stress (Clinton & Hawkins, 2011, p. 165; Windle, 2011). All the participants expressed having to overcome obstacles and challenges related to their lived experiences as a Native American youth. The prevalence of contextual challenges on the reservations in this present study make it easy to understand why Native American students are underrepresented on college campuses.

The results of this study uncovered themes which reinforced the concept analysis of resilience identified by Windle (2011): a significant adversity or risk, the presence of assets or resources which can offset said adversity, and positive adaptation or avoidance of a negative outcome. Participant narratives revealed that the reservation context where they grew up and were educated presented significant adversity and risk. The themes which emerged shed light on the presence of assets and resources which offset adversity and the participants were able to positively adapt, avoid negative outcomes and achieve their goal of pursuing their educational goals.

Promotive and Protective Factors. This study offers a novel contribution to the existing research in the form of a clearer definition of promotive and protective factors as they relate to this population. Although there still existed among the participant narratives some ambiguity between promotive and protective factors with some resilience factors fitting into both categories, family support was deemed clearly protective while words of life were equally clearly noted as promotive as related to participants' educational goal achievement.

Implications

Theoretical

Throughout this study participants spoke with pride and enthusiasm during the portions of their narratives concerning their strengths thus corroborating the benefit of strengths-based approach to this research project. Resilience theory is enhanced further by this study in light of a strength based approach working well with the present Native American participants. Strengths-based resiliency theory further corroborates the belief that strengths-based perspective is an appropriate framework for prevention-based programming developed in support of Native American youth and more research needs to be performed (Aschenbrener & Johnson, 2017).

Empirical

The research in Chapter Two which focused on the challenges relating to Native Americans and educational goal achievement (substance abuse, needs satisfaction, mental health and Historical Trauma) was reinforced in the narratives of participants when they discussed the obstacles they had to overcome to get to a place where they had sufficient resilience resources to make it to college. As discovered in this study, participants were able to recognize available resilience resources and apply the benefits to their lives in a magnitude great enough to overcome the obstacles mentioned (poverty, racism, etc.). The degree of their resilience proved to be sufficient to protect them from negative potential outcomes and promote them to achieve their educational goals past high school.

Practical Implications

The practical implications of the present study are perhaps the most apparent as these implications have meaning for any educators, program developers, and families who encounter

Native American students on reservations as well as the student themselves. The implications for each of these stakeholders result in the following recommendations:

Educators. As reported in this study there are great teachers on reservations who have been identified as having been invested in the education of their students. They have spoken encouraging words into the lives of students which have had lasting impact in their educational goal achievement. Equally powerful are the words of disbelief in the abilities of students. Both the positive and negative words are remembered for years as evidenced by the clarity of recall among the participants. Encouraging Native American students early in their education the belief that education past high school is for them just as much as it is for any other people group.

Families. Caretakers who set a good example for youth on reservations are a huge asset for a child as they are building their resilience. Sober living in an atmosphere of protection are deemed to be particularly helpful. If parents are absent, the extended family and even the larger community as family can provide support sufficient enough for young people to feel empowered and cared for. This safety and security protects youth on reservations from being what one participant referred to as "another statistic" and can promote them to achieve their educational goals.

Program Developers. Noted among the participants were several programs they found beneficial as they constructed their resilience**.** School and tribal budgets need to provide sufficient funding for extra-curricular sporting activities and youth programs. These activities provide much more than just a place for kids to exert physical energy. Participants noted that sporting programs helped them in building resilience. Leadership was an important theme when discussing programs that provided opportunities for participants to be mentored and in turn assume a leadership position and mentor others. Of note was the importance of off-reservation

activities. Fenla stated "Once again that exposure to have other opportunities and to see that, I guess the world's bigger than just the reservation." Organized programs can protect students from negative influences by giving youth something positive to do on the reservation. On a recent trip to a reservation one youth commented that there was nothing to do there except to drink or do drugs.

Students. Participants in this study expressed the value of youth programs in their contribution to their resilience as they could see a bigger vision for themselves and look past the present contextual challenges redefining what educational future was available for them. These programs do no good unless the students believe that education is really for them and appropriate the opportunities presented to their life. Students on reservations need to take advantage of available programs and take responsibility for their choices. They can succeed academically despite the challenges of life on a reservation. The participants of this present study are evidence of that. Reading books at a young age promotes independent thinking even when their peers may have tendencies to go another direction. It is imperative that students do not attribute their desire for higher education to a desire to leave their traditional culture behind. One can be Native American and well-educated without losing their traditional cultural virtues and values.

<div align="center">

Delimitations and Limitations

</div>

Though conducted with a careful research design this study has delimitation set forth in the planning process. First only those people who had graduated from high school were included. This was done in order that they would be able to speak with the authority of one who has accomplished the subject at hand – pursuing their educational goal achievement past high school.

Interview questions were carefully constructed to avoid mentioning any deficits or challenges experienced by participants concerning their time spent on their respective

reservations on order to adhere to the chosen strengths-based approach. Were any deficits or challenges to be mentioned they would have to be brought up by the participants to avoid the researcher directing the tone of the conversation to deficits they believe to exist. This is also the rationale behind a qualitative narrative study as opposed to a standardized scale or questionnaire. It was the desire to elicit think rich descriptions from the view of the participants rather than direct and limit them to topics chosen by the researcher.

Participants had to be an enrolled member of a tribe and experienced at least 70% of their schooling on a reservation. This was required to ensure they had adequate exposure to reservation life and education systems. These criteria were self-reported to avoid offending any participants or insinuating they were not who they claimed they are. Limitations are potential weaknesses of the study that cannot be controlled. They may be related to the design, the analysis, or the sample (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, geographical location, etc.).One limitation of the present study is that reference to reservation contextual challenges is general in nature as all reservations are different with some experiencing good economic development while others are ripe with poverty. It is the latter which presents the challenges overcome by resilience this study sought to uncover.

All the reservations in this study were from the United States limiting the results to that geographical area. The present study did not limit the study to one area of the United States to increase the number of potential participants. This decision netted participants from geographical areas too far away to travel for interviews due to time and financial constraints. The cost and time factors although real considerations were among the last things to be considered as recommended by Patton (2002). Therefore, all interviews were conducted using an online

platform called Zoom limiting the ability for the researcher to evaluate non-verbal communications that might not present online.

Recommendations for Future Research

In consideration of the study findings, limitations, and the delimitations placed on the study, the following are recommendations for future research. Qualitative studies work well in obtaining deep rich description in a narrative culture. A future mixed methods study could still reach these descriptions and involve scales for hope, substance use, historical trauma to see if there is any correlation between their respective scores and participant's pursuit of educational goals.

A comparative study between reservations and non-reservation communities in the U.S. with comparable income and education rates would shed light on whether possible financial and funding shortages may be a root cause of poor education rather than living on a reservation. Replicating this study in only a non-reservation community would also pose interest to see if the results translate to other cultures and communities.

A follow up quantitative or mixed methods study could be performed affording the opportunity to take these results, reinforce this research. Since programs providing leadership, educational opportunities, off-reservation trips, and sports were shown to be important in building resilience among the participants, funding and program development should be focused in these areas. Programs that focus on cultural connectivity and family support would also be beneficial. Research done on a reservation 1) should be for the benefit of the people being studied, 2) address a specific need as the people being studied determine, and 3) be a benefit for them in the future for their knowledge, policy and development, or possibly even for the purpose of procuring external funding (Whitbeck, Sittner Hartshorn, & Walls, 2014). Since quantitative

study results may be preferred or requested when seeking program funding, a mixed method design is recommended as future research. Mixed methods research designs result in multiple forms of data drawing on all possibilities (Creswell, 2014).

The performance of similar studies on one reservation limiting participants to that reservation's tribe would narrow the scope and add value to results by allowing the researcher to describe more detailed ceremonies, traditions, demographic statistics and details specific to that region and tribe. His information could be used by that tribe to seek funding for their educational system. Permission would need to be sought from the reservation's research review board should one exist and if obtained the tribal name might be used in the study giving the reader a better understanding of the tribe's needs.

There was not a consistent representation of any family constellation among the participants. Some were raised by one or more of their grandparents, some had a single parent household while others were raised by two parents or a step-parent. Isolating this variable in future resilience and education research could yield interesting results.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

This qualitative narrative study drew from the data collected from the rich narratives of six participants all of whom shared their stories of being educated on a reservation and what resilience factors they drew upon which impacted their decision to pursue the educational goal of a college degree. From the voices of the participants, it is discovered that (a) pride (b) desire to give back (c) family support (d) mentors (f) spirituality and cultural connectivity and (g) words of life are resilience building factors they accessed on the reservation which protected them from negative effects of adverse conditions and promoted their desire to achieve their educational goals.

Participants shared their experiences even uncovering some of the contextual challenges of living on a reservation they faced throughout their youth and challenges they still face today as Native Americans. In light of these obstacles, they accessed resilience resources sufficient to achieve their educational goals and become an example for generations to follow. The two most prominent resilience factors for the participants were family support and words of life. When combined together with the other resilience factors, these can not only instill hope, but can change the way Native American youth view themselves when evaluating their potential in achieving their educational goals. Adam sums up his responsibility in developing resilience beautifully as he refers to a saying from his people:

> You are the dream that your ancestors dreamed, you are the product that they
>
> envisioned whenever they were running from Custer and them." That, to me, is
>
> very strong because I do see myself as the product of a long heritage of resilience.
>
> It's like, who am I to break that resilience by giving up? Who am I to not believe
>
> in myself after this long line of people, long line of ancestors as well as living
>
> people--who am I to break their belief in me?

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Resilience is the main area of the study I am interested in exploring with you. When I say resilience, I am referring to factors in your life that have helped prevent negative outcomes and motivate success. Can you take a minute to think about your personality, your temperament, and your personal traits and talk about any of those that have been important in helping you be successful?

2. Another aspect that is related to resilience, is the role of your family. Can you talk about the role your family has served in your success?

3. What about external relationships (consider mentors, teachers, individuals in the community)? Who are the people (if any) who have contributed to your success or helped you avoid negative outcomes?

4. Ok, thank you. You have given me a good idea of the internal assets and of the external assets, like family, friends and leaders that have contributed to your success. Two other areas I want to explore with you related to resilience are protective factors and promotive factors.

5. Let's talk about protective factors. Think about a situation that you have encountered that had the potential to be stressful, and problematic to you, especially in your pursuit of your college degree. Let me give you a minute to recall a situation like that.

6. In reflecting on that potential "bad" situation, can you recall any of the resilience factors you mentioned earlier that protected you from experiencing a negative outcome? What knowledge, wisdom, or insight do you draw from during a difficult situation?

7. Another area I want to explore is promotive factors related to resilience. This is different than protective factors in that promotive factors encourage you to a desirable outcome beyond merely avoiding the negative. After that difficult situation, you made choices about how to deal with the situation and move beyond a potential bad outcome. Can you talk about how you have been able to continue moving towards your college degree, or achieve it, despite the many challenges you have faced along the way? What drives you to push forward?

Appendix B: Informed Consent

Native American Resiliency Resources

and Educational Goal Achievement

Diane Sharp
Liberty University
Department of Community Care and Counseling/School of Behavioral Sciences

You are invited to be in a research study on educational goal achievement among Native Americans. You were selected as a possible participant because you are an enrolled member of a Native American tribe, 18 years of age or older, completed at least 70% of schooling K-12 on a reservation, and have achieved or are in the process of completing a college degree. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Diane Sharp a doctoral candidate in the Department of Community Care and Counseling/School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to explore the individual and community factors that contributed to your educational success.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in an interview. This will take approximately one hour and a half to two hours to complete and will be audio and video recorded.
2. Review a transcript of the interview for accuracy and notify me of any inaccuracies. This transcript should be made available to you within a week following the interview.
3. Review the final write up with the themes identified from your interview to see if they resonate with your experience.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include the use of this study to inform future research and educational policies and programs for Native American youth.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. The only exception to this would be the mandatory reporting to the appropriate authorities of any statements made that imply harm to self or others and/or abuse of a minor, elderly or dependent adult. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. I may share the data I collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers; if I share the data that I collect about you, I will remove any information that could identify you, if applicable, before I share the data.

- Participants will be assigned a pseudonym. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. Audio and video will be sent with your name redacted. Transcriptionist will sign a confidentiality agreement binding them to keep your information confidential. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- I cannot assure participants that people who refer the participants to me will not share that information with persons outside of the study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph and let them know that you wish to withdraw. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Diane Sharp. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at 910-476-2400 and/or dsharp1@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. William Bird at wbird@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio and video record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Signature of Investigator

Appendix C: Recruitment Script

Hello [Potential Participant]:

My name is Diane Sharp.

I was referred to you by [name of individual who recommended this participant]. I am a graduate student in the Department of Community Care and Counseling/School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University and I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The purpose of my research is to explore the individual and community factors that contributed to the educational success of some Native American individuals, and I am contacting you to invite you to participate in my study.

Requirement criteria are that you are of an enrolled member of a Native American tribe, 18 years of age or older, completed at least 70% of schooling K-12 on a reservation, and have achieved or are in the process of completing a college degree, and have achieved or are in the process of completing a college degree.

If you choose to participate you will be asked to:

1. Participate in an interview within the next couple of weeks. This will take approximately one hour and a half-two hours to complete and will be audio and video recorded.
2. Review a transcript of the interview for accuracy and notify me of any inaccuracies. This transcript should be made available to you within a week following the interview.
3. Review the final write up with the themes identified from your interview and check it for accuracy, notifying me of any inaccuracies.

Your name and/or other identifying information will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential.

Is this something you'd be willing to help me with?

If yes: Thank you! I know your time is valuable and I appreciate you sharing some of it with me. (Proceed to schedule the interview). A consent document will be provided via email. Please sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview or before the interview via email.

If they need to think about it: If you decide whether or not to participate contact me at 910-476-2400 or dsharp123@gmail.com with your decision.

If no: Thank you for your consideration!

Appendix D: Transcription Confidentiality Agreement

For Study:

Native American Resiliency Resources

And Educational Goal Achievement

[Insert IRB log number when assigned]

I, [name of transcriber], agree to transcribe data for this study. I agree that I will:

1. Keep all research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than Diane Sharp the researcher on this study;
2. Keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession. This includes:
   - using closed headphones when transcribing audio and video taped interviews;
   - keeping all transcript documents and digitized interviews in computer password-protected files;
   - closing any transcription programs and documents when temporarily away from the computer;
   - keeping any printed transcripts in a secure location such as a locked file cabinet; and
   - permanently deleting any e-mail communication containing the data;
3. Give all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to the primary investigator when I have completed the research tasks;
4. Erase or destroy all research information in any form or format that is not returnable to the primary investigator (e.g., information stored on my computer hard drive) upon completion of the research tasks.

_____   _____

Signature of transcriber   Date

_____   _____

Signature of principal investigator – Diane Sharp   Date

Appendix E: Notes on Table 3

Table 3:

The rates of poverty were obtained from the U.S. Census bureau website. There is a note of caution on the Quick Facts portion of the site that some of the methodologies in calculating rates and percentages may vary from one region to another. Statistics on the specific reservations were obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau website and the precise link sanitized to protect the identity of the participants.

For statewide statistical information on South Dakota, Montana and North Carolina: https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/nc,sd,mt/PST045218

For national rates cited concerning the United States as a whole: https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2017/cb17-51.html

Appendix F: List of Abbreviations

AI/AN - American Indian/Alaskan Native

HT – Historical Trauma

U.S. – United States

Appendix G: IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

October 29, 2018

Diane E. Sharp
IRB Approval 3447.102918: Native American Resiliency Resources and Educational Goal Achievement

Dear Diane E. Sharp,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

   6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

   7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

(Name Redacted)
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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