

HOW INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOLS ARE LIKE  
NEIGHBORHOODS

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2013

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2017

Submitted to the Faculty of the  
Graduate College of the  
Oklahoma State University  
in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for  
the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
July, 2022

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my committee chair, Dr. Sittner, for your expert guidance throughout this entire process. You have been an exceptional mentor, and I am forever grateful for you.

Thank you to my committee members, Dr. Mix, Dr. Whitham, and Dr. Miller, for providing excellent feedback and encouraging me during this journey.

Thank you to Mrs. Burden, who once pulled me aside after class and made me promise that I would never, under any circumstances, allow myself to make an excuse for not reaching my full potential. Mrs. Burden, to you, I owe a debt I can never repay. Thank you.

Thank you to all of my amazing friends, especially Jessie and Kathy, who have supported me from day one. I love you forever. To Martha, Carly, and Brett, you made this journey so much more fun and I cannot thank you enough for the love and support.

Most of all, thank you to my parents. You both allowed me the freedom to question and explore without fear, you filled my childhood with books and ideas, you read to me and had discussions with me. Thank you, mom, for teaching me that compassion is a verb, thank you for loving me, and thank you for demonstrating an unyielding devotion to helping others and a passion for justice. Thank you, dad, for raising me to be steadfast and strong, to “begin knowing you’ve already arrived,” and for being the single greatest human being I have ever known. I could not have done this without you.

Name: CHRISTINE ELIZABETH THOMAS

Date of Degree: JULY, 2022

Title of Study: HOW INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOLS ARE LIKE  
NEIGHBORHOODS

Major Field: SOCIOLOGY

Abstract: Contemporary Indian boarding schools look a lot different than their previous incarnations. It is clear that traditional and long-standing evaluation criteria for conventional public and private schools does not adequately capture the quality and uniqueness of Indian boarding schools, schools that serve many functions beyond that of other educational institutions. In effect, I contend that conceptualizing and operationalizing boarding schools as neighborhoods allows for a more thorough understanding of each school and provides a platform for growth as boarding schools evolve and adapt over time. The goal of this study is to present and empirically examine an argument for conceptualizing and operationalizing Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods, which will provide a clearer framework for evaluation of their effect on student outcomes beyond traditional evaluation criteria for typical public and private schools. Additionally, due to the nature of boarding schools, operationalizing them as neighborhoods avoids some of the common critiques of neighborhood effects research. Fifteen key-informant interviews were conducted with former students and those closely associated with an Indian boarding school. The analysis reveals that informants describe their respective boarding schools like neighborhoods, which corresponds to them being nested within their greater communities, as primary units of social solidarity and cohesion, and as creating psychological unity among residents. Extending the definition of 'neighborhood' beyond its traditional conceptualization will enhance the literature on neighborhood effects. Future research can utilize the tools and techniques typically used to evaluate neighborhoods for the purpose of evaluating Indian boarding schools. This strategy can accommodate the most prominent features of Indian boarding schools, which make them unique from typical public and private schools.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The goal of this study is to present and empirically examine an argument for conceptualizing and operationalizing Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods, which will provide a clearer framework for evaluation of their effect on student outcomes beyond traditional evaluation criteria for typical public and private schools. The traditional evaluation criteria for typical public and private schools does not adequately capture the quality of Indian boarding schools, which serve many functions beyond that of other educational institutions. Additionally, due to the nature of boarding schools, operationalizing them as neighborhoods avoids some of the common critiques of neighborhood effects research. In effect, conceptualizing and operationalizing boarding schools as neighborhoods allows for a more thorough evaluation of each school.

The impetus for this research project is to generate space in sociological literature for work with contemporary Indian boarding schools on the effects of residential context on student outcomes. Since much of the sociological literature concerning Indian boarding schools focuses on previous incarnations, which served different purposes prior to the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, there is little focus on contemporary schools.

Existing literature on early Indian boarding schools acknowledges the role of place in the production and maintenance of inequality by describing the schools as a colonizing force that transmits consequences of these patterns of practice across generations. These consequences are noted by the poorer health outcomes of boarding school attendees and their descendants (Evans-Campbell et al. 2012; Robbins et al. 2006; Wilk et al. 2017). Considering this, work with *contemporary* Indian boarding schools must acknowledge the role of place in the production and maintenance of inequality across multiple dimensions. This does not necessarily mean that contemporary boarding schools still function as a colonizing force, but examining them in this way can help to demystify those processes while allowing for comparison across time, space, and generation. As residential context often determines the contours of the human landscape (Paulsen 2004), we must seek to better understand how people experience space and how those experiences might inform their interaction with and navigation of other aspects of the social world.

The premise of neighborhood effects research is that residential context “influences the health and well-being of individuals in a way that cannot be reduced to the properties of the individuals themselves” (Morenoff and Lynch 2004:406). Neighborhood effects research has been used to better understand why racial and ethnic differences in behavior and outcomes persist beyond explanations at the individual level. Indeed, across racial/ethnic groups, there are major differences in social, behavioral, and health outcomes according to place of residence. These differences can be seen across neighborhoods that are in close proximity but differ radically by their standards of living and access to resources. For example, there is a relationship between access to fresh produce and healthy foods and rates of obesity and diabetes. In neighborhoods with limited access to fresh produce and healthy

foods, there is a higher risk of developing obesity and diabetes (Babey, Diamant, Hastert, and Harvey 2008). This affects people differently according to race because predominantly Black and Hispanic neighborhoods often have fewer grocery stores (Larson, Story, and Nelson 2009; Powell et al. 2007) and residents have to travel farther to the closest grocery store (Zenk et al. 2005). Improving neighborhood access to healthy foods is one way of addressing racial/ethnic health disparities.

As demonstrated by research on residential segregation, place-based disparities are paramount to understanding racial/ethnic health disparities (Morenoff and Lynch 2004). When it comes to historically stratified places, such as Indian boarding schools, an acknowledgement that place and space matter when it comes to a variety of outcomes is crucial. Developing a more complete understanding of why and how residential context produces racial/ethnic inequalities in a variety of places and spaces can inform new intervention strategies for addressing these disparities.

The initial inspiration for conceptualizing and operationalizing Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods is that Indian boarding schools are similar to neighborhoods in three key ways, as a result of their unique histories. The first similarity concerns the long-standing discourse in neighborhood effects research on what constitutes a neighborhood. A more encompassing definition of neighborhood includes institutions serving as the residential context in which groups of people primarily occupy (Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley 2002) Indian boarding schools are examples of such social constructions that accommodate a great deal of residents for short and long periods of time. The second is that Indian boarding schools may subsist more similarly to the ways in which the traditional neighborhood is a rigid dimension of racial stratification (Sharkey 2008) formed by physical

and cultural forces (Chaskin 1997). The third similarity considers how racial stratification and social isolation reinforces the stratification of place (Michelson 1977), which, similar to neighborhoods, can create a boarding school milieu unique to each institution, exposing successive generations to the same or similar residential context as the preceding generation. Since the production and reproduction of local symbols and sentiment persistently shapes the identities, interactions, and movement of residents (Sampson and Sharkey 2008), sending generations of Native children to boarding school exposed successive generations to the same or similar residential context as the preceding generation. As a result, much like neighborhoods (Sharkey 2008), Indian boarding schools can transmit the same inequality produced generations ago to current generations.

Considering the historic injustices and ongoing concerns for child outcomes, conceptualizing and operationalizing Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods can lead to an important step in improving outcomes for Native children. Conceptualizing Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods allows for the consideration that colonization is a continuous process that, once achieved, must be maintained, over time, through institutional mechanisms transmitting consequences of these patterns of practice across generations. It obligates researchers to acknowledge the role of place in the production and maintenance of inequality across multiple dimensions. This is crucial because for each boarding school, like neighborhoods, the production and reproduction of local symbols and sentiment persistently shapes the identities of residents and their descendants (Sampson and Sharkey 2008).

Operationalizing Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods honors the history of the schools while also considering a temporal component critical to understanding neighborhood effects (Sharkey and Faber 2014; Wodtke, Harding, and Elwert 2011). This temporal component is

not just about considering the duration of exposure to neighborhood features, but can also account for intergenerational processes (Sharkey and Elwert 2011), which is critical for any evaluation of the effects of attending Indian boarding school. Conceptualizing and operationalizing Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods, therefore, functions as a means to examine both the context and composition of the schools in a way that traditional evaluation criteria for typical public and private schools does not and cannot. Ultimately, this research project aims to establish that Indian boarding schools can be conceptualized as neighborhoods. Subsequent research should explore operationalizing Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods in order to produce an evaluation tool that can help guide programmatic efforts, based on the variables shown to be most impactful on student outcomes.

Neighborhood effects is a well-developed area of literature. One vein in this area focuses on moving away from a dichotomous perspective on neighborhoods and describing the various ways in which “neighborhood” can be defined. Since there is no universal definition of neighborhood, there has long been a focus on choosing between different definitions and methods of operationalizing neighborhoods. More recently, researchers have called for a more flexible approach to studying the effects of the residential environment by using the terms “residential context” and “residential environment,” which are more useful in capturing the theoretical ideas that underlie the literature than the term neighborhood. This is because the term neighborhood denotes a geographical unit where residents share proximity and circumstance and does not necessarily account for the various mechanisms through which residential context influences the lives of residents. For the sake of this research, however, there is power in the *idea* of the neighborhood. The literature review describes these areas, as well as discusses the temporal dimensions of neighborhoods and the heterogeneity of

neighborhood effects on residents. This background will be used to support an argument for conceptualizing Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods. Based on the information collected in this literature review, the following research question was developed: Can Indian boarding schools be described like neighborhoods? To answer this question, I conducted 15 semi-structured interviews with current and former boarding school faculty and staff, former students, as well as those closely associated with an Indian boarding school, such as Psychologists and community members. Informants were asked a series of questions, developed from key-stakeholder input, concerning their perspectives on contemporary boarding schools and issues facing current students. In-depth interviews allowed for comparison of experiences, attitudes, and beliefs regarding contemporary boarding school attendance and how it relates to fundamental aspects of neighborhood as outlined in Chaskin's (1997) four general definitions of neighborhood.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### **Defining Neighborhood**

As noted by Sharkey and Faber (2014), much of the neighborhood effects literature can be condensed to a single question of whether residential context affects life chances. Although this work implies that the literature can be condensed to arrive at an answer (Small and Feldman 2012), to do so would disregard the complexity of theoretical models and empirical evidence in neighborhood effects research. As a result of framing neighborhood effects in this manner, researchers have focused heavily on choosing between different definitions and methods of conceptualizing and operationalizing neighborhoods (de Souza Briggs 1997; Tienda 1991). Despite this focus, neighborhood effects literature is much broader than any single neighborhood definition (Chaskin 1997; Galster 2008). In a critical review of the literature on neighborhood effects, Chaskin (1997) presented four definitions of neighborhood. The first definition defines the neighborhood in distinctly spatial terms, signifying a primarily residential geographical unit nested within a greater area. The second definition is similar to the first, but instead presents the neighborhood as a defined spatial unit within a greater *urban* area. The third definition of neighborhood also operates within an urban context, and views the

neighborhood as the primary unit of social solidarity and cohesion. Similarly, the fourth definition of neighborhood recognizes how areas of commerce and social connection can create neighborhood boundaries by promoting psychological unity among people. This definition of neighborhood highlights the ethnic and cultural characteristics of residents in creating distinct neighborhood boundaries, alongside spatial features.

Traditionally, neighborhoods are spatially defined (Chaskin 1997) and influences on individual and social functioning (Jenson 2007) are limited to three pathways: institutional resources, relationships, and norms/collective efficacy (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). By attempting to disentangle residential effects from additional salient social factors (Sharkey and Faber 2014), such as families, much of the current body of research attempts to disentangle people from places (Oakes et al. 2015). This conceptualization disregards the immense history extending across generations (Sharkey and Faber 2014). A neighborhood's composition is a vast reticulation of interrelated factors situated in specific contexts of relationships, opportunities, and constraints (Chaskin 1997). Residents share proximity and circumstance (Chaskin 1997), but the onset and persistence of certain behaviors arise from the interaction between individual and community-level factors (Jenson 2007). Likewise, access and availability of resources on the individual-, familial-, and community-level influence outcomes across the life course (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). The neighborhood, therefore, should be characterized as a unit of reference and action (Chaskin 1997) where associated outcomes are compounding functions of residential context, duration of exposure (Timberlake 2007; Turley 2003), and differential vulnerability of individual residents (Sharkey and Faber 2014). Results of failing to account for the multiplicative dimensions

of individual characteristics in relation to the social environment are insufficient and conceptually misleading (Sharkey and Faber 2014). While much of the research on neighborhood effects suggests disentangling context from composition, doing so limits the ability to capture the lived experience of residents. Enhancing this area of research requires exploration beyond a single definition of “neighborhood.”

### **Boarding Schools**

A more encompassing definition of ‘neighborhood’ includes institutions serving as the residential context in which groups of people primarily occupy, and are spatial units within a greater area. Residential boarding schools are examples of such institutions that accommodate a great deal of inhabitants for extended periods of time; although, they are not just places to live, they are where residents call “home” for the school year.

#### *Indian Boarding Schools*

Compared to other residential institutions, Indian boarding schools are considerably unique, with each school occupying its own spatial, temporal, and historical boundaries. Racism and perpetuation of racial stereotypes serve as the antecedent to the forced institutionalization of American Indian children beginning in 1860 - the practice of sending children to boarding school, although it is no longer forced, continues to the present day (Steele and Aronson 1995). The residential school model was originally intended to assimilate Native children by forcibly stripping them of their cultural, linguistic, and familial ties. Indian boarding schools were part of a greater effort to either kill, remove, or assimilate Indigenous peoples. In an effort to assimilate Native children, the Civilization Fund Act of 1819 provided funding to groups, who were mostly religious, to participate in and administer education to American Indians. Prior to this, in

an effort to “civilize” Native children, the Jesuits, as well as other religious groups, established mission schools as early as 1634. Following the Indian Wars, missionaries founded Indian boarding schools. At these schools, children were often far from home and unable to travel to see their families. By 1891, the federal government issued a law making boarding school attendance compulsory. This law allowed officials to forcibly remove children from their homes and place them in the care of boarding school staff. For families who resisted, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs could withhold rations, clothing, and other annuities until compliance was reached. Many children were kidnapped and placed in schools, where they remained until adulthood - that is, if they survived the often brutal conditions of the schools. In these schools, children were subjected to emotional, physical, and sexual abuse that persisted for many years, across numerous generations. It was not until 1978 when the Indian Child Welfare Act gave Native parents the legal right to refuse to send their children to boarding school.

While the schools are no longer serving in the same capacity, the effects of residential schooling are noted among generations of boarding school survivors and attendees (Wilk, Maltby, and Cooke 2017). The institutional model of these schools continues to have enduring effects including health problems, substance abuse, suicide, and disintegration of families and communities (Robbins et al. 2006; Wilk et al. 2017). Beyond the effects of historical trauma, boarding schools have “profound effects at every level of experience from individual identity and mental health, to the structure and integrity of families, communities, bands, and nations” (Wilk et al. 2017). While boarding school attendance, for some former students, was considered a benefit (Davis 2001), for many others, the schools represented the gross abuse of power and the

attempted destruction of Native peoples entirely (Colmant et al. 2004). Research suggests that, overall, those who have attended boarding school and those whose parents or grandparents attended boarding school suffer higher rates of negative health outcomes both compared to the general population and to other American Indians who did not attend boarding school (Evans-Campbell et al. 2012; Wilk et al. 2017). Furthermore, boarding schools, according to Brave Heart et al. (2011), are mechanisms for transferring collective trauma from generation-to-generation. This transferring of collective trauma is known as historical trauma, which is related to unresolved grief and mental health issues (Brave Heart et al. 2011; Lajimodiere and Carmen 2014).

Indian boarding schools were established as instruments for the assimilationist goals of Euro-American culture. Native children were forcibly removed from their homes, their families, and their communities - often by means of kidnapping - and forced to reside in and receive an education from these institutions. Students were regularly subjected to physical, sexual, emotional, and spiritual abuse and neglect (Eagle Woman et al. 2016). Within these institutions, Native children were exposed to a disciplinary regime incumbent on destroying Indigenous cultures. Compulsory education, therefore, served as the “civilizing” or assimilating force through which colonization supplanted Native ways of being (Wexler 2006).

Through the use of surveillance, documentation, punishments, and rewards, the eminent system enforced adherence to structural norms resulting in the ultimate self-perpetuation of these colonizing forces (Wexler 2006). Foucault (1975) described the process of disciplinary power, which relies on hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and examination. To ensure compliance and indoctrination to normalized

standards, the boarding school structure and the system of education regulates cognition and behavior through constant surveillance, documentation, and punishment or rewards (Wexler 2006). This foundational precept is not in addition to or adjacent to the institutional features of Indian boarding schools, it is inherent.

In accordance with Foucault's (1975) sentiment, disciplinary power is produced and reproduced within the boundaries of each boarding school as it necessitates the individualization of Native students enacted by the establishment of universal standards in order for institutions to enforce and perpetuate adherence to normative standards. Moreover, the creation of the *individual* is a product of power relations (Foucault 1975) that is, alone, an oppressive force and, itself, a form of governance. As echoed by Foucault (1975), the creation of the *individual* removes the bonds of context, and thus renders each person as a distinct object to be shaped by the unmoving structures of moral regulation. As this process is highly efficient and effective in establishing both external and internal forms of control, the newly formed *individual* then practices self-surveillance in accordance with the external power structures that have encouraged internalization of external systems of cognition and behavior (Wexler 2006).

These mechanisms of assimilation require individualization through a disciplinary process. This process of individualization contributes to a "colonization of consciousness." As this individualization process alone is oppressive (Reynolds 2004) and itself a form of governance (Reynolds 2004). Through compulsory education, the individualization of Native students serves only the needs of the power structures within the colonizing society (D'Angelo and Douglas 2010; Reynolds 2004). In reference to the *Colonization of Consciousness*, the internal gaze becomes the criteria by which those

who are oppressed within the structure evaluate their own cognition and behavior within the system (D'Angelo and Douglas 2010; Reynolds 2004). This point is echoed by Writer (2008), who describes how the “current institutions and systems are designed to maintain the privilege of the colonizer and the subjugation of the colonized and to produce generations of people who will never question their position within this relationship” (7). These processes are self-perpetuating, and through these mechanisms of external and internal control, the colonizing agent supplanted Native ways of being from the inside, out (D'Angelo and Douglas 2010).

According to Thornton, Collins, and Daugherty (2006), schools are significant social, cultural, and environmental locations for student development. Since these institutions reflect and reinforce the dominant culture, minority students are often marginalized by the restrictive force of the status quo (Thornton et al. 2006). Education, according to Wexler (2006), is a primary colonizing agent by prescribing *normalized* standards of cognition and behavior serving to support assimilationist goals. The influence of colonization on pedagogical practice depends on and is characterized by the individualization of production relations within power structures of the colonizing society (Wexler 2006). Upon the founding of the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), their principles reflected assimilation as the explicit goal of education (Wexler 2006).

Education as a societal structure provides the foundation on which to affix a system that functions as a primary colonizing agent. Education, in this sense, has lasting implications (D'Angelo and Douglas 2010). Since the BIE was created on the basis of assimilationist goals, their colonizing influence likely persists in contemporary institutions. To maintain these colonizing objectives, structures and systems must

establish a standard of “normality” to which they evaluate members in relation to these standards (D’Angelo and Douglas 2010). By establishing a standard of normality, institutions regulate the boundaries of thought and action, which perpetuates the ideological underpinnings of the foundational structures. To produce these standards of normality in education requires the structuring of relations in space and time, thereby structuring the nature and function of knowledge and action (D’Angelo and Douglas 2010). As a result, these standards of normality necessitate the marginalization of alternative patterns of cognition and behavior (Reynolds 2004); consequently, indoctrinating students to accept the status quo (Reynolds 2004). Likewise, as standards of normality structure relations by imposing boundaries on cognition and behavior, students’ adherence to these structural and systemic norms are evaluated in relation to their peers’ adherence to these structural and systemic norms (D’Angelo and Douglas 2010). The resulting system promotes and sustains assimilationist practices and inoculates students to the realization that they have internalized these structural values (D’Angelo and Douglas 2010). While Indian boarding schools of the past were created for the expressed purpose of assimilation and cultural genocide, contemporary Indian boarding schools, however, function a bit differently. Although the colonizing influence of their creation remains, contemporary Indian boarding schools now serve many purposes beyond their original intent.

As a function of their current incarnation, boarding schools provide homes to thousands of Native children across the United States. Most children are from impoverished families and homes where substance abuse and domestic violence are commonplace (Kenney and Singh 2016; Lillie-Blanton and Roubideaux 2005); therefore,

attending boarding school may be the most viable option for children who have been exposed to significant adversity (Eagle Woman et al. 2016), and who, perhaps, would otherwise be placed in non-Native foster care placements (Ward 2014). The argument has been made, however, that boarding school attendance is detrimental to healthy development and has negative consequences across the life-course (Kaspar 2014; Manson et al. 1989; Dick, Manson, and Beals 1993; Henderson et al. 1998). Black Elk, a medicine man of the Oglala Lakota (Sioux), once revealed, “The life of a man is a circle from childhood to childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves.” For American Indians, the effects of boarding school attendance endure across generations - their children are not blank slates, they are not a fraction of anything, they are born embedded into the fabric of a steadfast cultural lineage marred by abhorrent violence (Carpenter 2016). Now, boarding schools can provide homes to children who find a village, a community, in these unlikely sanctuaries, “a word which here means a small safe place in a troubling world. Like an oasis in a vast desert or an island in a stormy sea” (Silberling 2004, 00:22:25). Thus, boarding schools, often nested within reservations, may subsist more similarly to the ways in which the traditional neighborhood is a rigid dimension of racial stratification (Sharkey 2008) formed by physical and cultural forces (Chaskin 1997).

### *School Evaluation*

Typical public schools are evaluated based on federal and state standards. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2018) the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), requires every state and district to publish a report card. There are basic standards. The

first standard that ESSA requires is that every state and district include on their report card how much money is spent per student for every school, including how much money is from federal sources and how much money is from state and local sources. Report cards must also include the results of annual statewide tests in reading/language arts, math, and science, as well as the percentage of all students and each subgroup of students who participate in standardized testing. Schools must also note the number and percentage of students with significant cognitive differences who are administered an alternative test. Each school's test results must also be presented in comparison to each other school's, and the district's and state's average results. In addition, report cards must report state results on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading and math assessments for grades four and eight. Graduation rates are also included in report cards. If rates of postsecondary enrollment are available, that information is included in the report cards, as well. In addition to these standards, the ESSA requires that state and district report cards include the most recent information about the following: in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, school-related arrests, referrals to law enforcement, chronic absenteeism, and incidents of violence, including bullying and harassment. Finally, report cards must include information about the number and percentage of inexperienced school faculty, teachers with emergency certifications, and teachers who are teaching subjects outside of subjects they are licensed to teach.

While the ESSA includes explicit requirements for ensuring students in each state have the same opportunities, it also supports state efforts to establish high standards, develop aligned assessments, and construct accountability systems for districts and

schools. In addition to federal standards outlined by the ESSA, states are required to establish their own accountability standards. Ultimately, all of the information included on the report cards is meant to provide parents with useful information evaluating schools' progress (U.S. Department of Education 2018).

The BIE serves 183 elementary and secondary schools, located on 64 reservations in 23 states, and approximately 42,000 students. Of these, 58 are BIE operated and 125 are tribally operated. Of the at least 25 remaining Indian boarding schools, some are tribally controlled and others are controlled entirely by the BIE. Exact information on these schools is currently not available. The BIE also funds off-reservation boarding schools and peripheral dormitories near reservations for students attending public schools. The BIE has an Agency Plan, which is a guide for school improvement. ESEA standards of assessment and accountability are implemented in all BIE-funded schools. Amended under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the BIE schools are evaluated by their implementation of college and career ready standards in math and English language arts, next generation science standards, and English language proficiency development standards. Moreover, each state is required to have implemented a set of high-quality student academic assessments. For BIE schools, assessments are administered in the following ways: math and reading or language arts in grades three through eight and eleven, and science in grades five, eight, and eleven. Additional BIE accountability indicators include academic proficiency on state assessments, four-year cohort graduation rates, progress of English language learners, science as an additional academic indicator for K-8 schools, information on chronic absenteeism, and a minimum of 95 percent assessment participation rate benchmark, based on enrollment (Bureau of

Indian Education 2020). The availability of data on each school, however, is dated, incomplete, and absent for some schools altogether.

### **How Boarding Schools are like Neighborhoods**

#### *Typical Evaluation Criteria and Boarding Schools*

The early Indian boarding schools can be described as an island of despair torn from the landscape of national progress; they are a place that is physical, human, legal, and spiritual, and embodies the history, dreams, and aspirations of Native peoples (Pommersheim 1995). These schools were established for the expressed purpose to “kill the Indian but save the man” in order to indoctrinate their children to the dominant culture (Adams 1995). Colonization is a continuous process that, once achieved, must be maintained, over time, through institutional mechanisms transmitting consequences of these patterns of practice across generations. Considering this, we must acknowledge the role of place in the production and maintenance of inequality across multiple dimensions. This does not necessarily mean that contemporary boarding schools still function as a colonizing force, but examining them in this way can help to demystify those processes while allowing for comparison across time, space, and generation. As residential context often determines the contours of the human landscape (Paulsen 2004), we must seek to better understand how people experience space and how those experiences might inform their interaction with and navigation of other aspects of the social world.

Describing these institutions through typical variables used to evaluate typical public day schools produces misleading results that encourage the treatment of *similar* institutions as the *same*. Day schools, which are non-residential educational institutions where students receive instruction during the day. Residential schools can be strictly

residential or both a residential and day school. Additionally, not all residential schools have a school located on campus. As a result, these schools send their residents to nearby public schools. Although these schools function similarly, each boarding school occupies its own spatial, temporal, and historical boundaries. Since children are growing up in these residential institutions, it is primarily within these institutions where features of the social and spatial environment become salient in the lives of residents. Within dynamic boundaries imbricated in the strata of the local ecology (Arcaya and Figueroa 2017; Alcantara and Gone 2007), mechanisms such as institutional features, social support, and exposure to stress become salient in the lives of residents (Sharkey and Faber 2014).

#### *Conceptualizing Boarding Schools as Neighborhoods*

Inferring from Sharkey (2008), Indian boarding schools are extreme examples of racial stratification, and the ways in which social isolation reinforces the stratification of place (Michelson 1977) by limiting students' exposure to mainstream patterns of life in favor of ecologically structured norms, preventing the cultivation of extra-institutional social capital (O'Keefe et al. 2014; Alcantara and Gone 2007), and reducing the number and diversity of options for intra-institutional social capital-building. These conditions create a boarding school milieu unique to each institution, exposing successive generations to the same or similar residential context as the preceding generation (Sharkey 2008). Demonstrated by the poorer health outcomes experienced by boarding school attendees and descendants of boarding school attendees (Wilk et al. 2017; Hambrick et al. 2016), forced institutionalization in boarding schools and the continuation of sending children to boarding school profoundly affects American Indians on individual, familial, and community levels (Wilk et al. 2017); current incarnations,

however, continue serving as mechanisms for transferring collective trauma from generation-to-generation (Brave Heart et al. 2011).

Recent discourse concerning neighborhood effects reflects the imminent expansion of what constitutes a ‘neighborhood’ by incorporating a variety of social, spatial, and temporal dimensions not yet explored by this area of research (Sharkey and Faber 2014). Traditionally, the neighborhood is defined as a geographic unit of action in which residents share proximity and circumstance (Hallman 1984). Within each spatial unit, smaller units can be subdivided by both physical and metaphysical boundaries (Chaskin 1997) related to how residents use and experience space, the sets of relations concentrated within an area, and differential access to resources. As a spatial unit, the notion of neighborhood is a useful construction for establishing geographic boundaries. As a social unit, the notion of neighborhood is a useful construction for understanding the social parameters perceived by residents. Although there are various definitions and operationalizations of “neighborhood,” there remain significant methodological and substantive challenges (Galster 2008). Nevertheless, excessive emphasis on establishing exact definitions of neighborhood diverts attention and resources from the various ways in which different dimensions of residential context become salient in the lives of residents (Logan 2012). Extending the definition of ‘neighborhood’ beyond its traditional conceptualization to include diverse places and spaces where groups of people reside will enhance the literature on ‘neighborhood effects’ in both breadth and depth of erudition. An apt definition of ‘neighborhood’ demonstrates an appreciation for the underlying principles of neighborhood effects literature. Acknowledging the connotative significance of residential context allows for a more accessible conceptualization beyond the

immediate denotation of ‘neighborhood’ and reconciles some of the limitations to further cultivation of neighborhood effects research (Sharkey and Faber 2014). A more encompassing definition of ‘neighborhood’ includes institutions serving as the residential context in which groups of people primarily occupy (Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley 2002). Indian boarding schools are examples of such social constructions that accommodate a great deal of residents for short and long periods of time. The BIE has a mission to provide quality education opportunities to students, in accordance with “a tribe’s needs for cultural and economic well-being, in keeping with the wide diversity of Indian tribes and Alaska Native villages as distinct cultural and governmental entities” (2021).

In 1830, the Indian Removal Act was signed into law authorizing the forcible relocation of approximately 60,000 Indigenous peoples from their ancestral homelands in the southern United States to federal territory west of the Mississippi River. By 1851, the federal reservation system was created through the United States Congress passing of the Indian Appropriations Act. The reservation system, like the ghettos created to isolate Black populations, was created, through government policy, to separate Native people from American society (Massey and Denton 1993). Plots of land were “reserved” for Native people, on which they could live apart from the white settlers occupying their sacred land. Ultimately, the United States government aimed to colonize, contain, and control Native people for the purpose of land acquisition (Deloria and Lytle 1984); thus, the reservation system merely served as a means of subjugation. Consequences of forced migration and segregation persist into the present-day reality of life on reservations (Dennis and Momper 2012). A marked disconnect between Native cultures and the

dominant American culture influences levels of perceived discrimination and feelings of safety in one's community, which are associated with poorer health outcomes (Williams and Mohammed 2009; O'Keefe et al. 2014). Likewise, racism and perpetuation of racial stereotypes serve as the antecedent to the forced institutionalization of American Indian children beginning in 1860. The practice continues, in part, to the present-day.

Generations of Native children were forced to attend boarding schools, and while enrollment is no longer compulsory, many Native children continue attending boarding school. Contemporary boarding schools, on the other hand, look a lot different than their previous incarnations. The proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child," conveys a sense of community responsibility for the upbringing of children. For American Indian children, traditional perspectives on child rearing refer to community interdependence; a circle of caring (Gerlach 2008). While boarding school attendance, for some former students, was considered a benefit (Davis 2001), for many others, the schools represent the gross abuse of power and attempted destruction of Native cultures entirely (Colmant et al. 2004).

Through sending generations of Native children to boarding school, American Indians were effectively isolated from mainstream American society. Similarly, as a rigid dimension of racial stratification (Sharkey 2008), segregated neighborhoods are formed by physical and cultural forces (Chaskin 1997) limiting residents' ability to cultivate extra-neighborhood social capital and reduces the number and diversity of options for intra-neighborhood social capital-building (Sampson 2012). Because networks provide access to valuable resources, the disparity between initial advantages and disadvantages multiplies as those who have fewer social ties are unable to access the same number or

quality of resources as those who have more social ties (DiMaggio and Garip 2011). Forming vast social networks within and extending beyond spatial boundaries, boarding schools (Dennis and Momper 2012; Pattillo 2003), much like neighborhoods (Sampson 2012), are connected by associations between and among individuals and groups. Since residential context informs the contours of all behavior (Paulsen 2004) and social processes are interconnected (Wodke et al. 2016; Oakes et al. 2015), the production and reproduction of local symbols and sentiment persistently shapes the identities, interactions, and movement of residents (Sampson and Sharkey 2008).

Conceptualizing Indian boarding schools as ‘neighborhoods,’ therefore, functions as a means to examine both the context and composition of Indian boarding schools without attempting to “disentangle mutually constitutive, inextricably linked, synergistic, and coevolving elements” (Oakes et al. 2015:85). Contemporary Indian boarding schools, however, are unlike the urban neighborhoods described in much of the neighborhood effects literature, because they are not the product of “natural” processes. They are neither a homogeneous group within a broader heterogeneous landscape, nor are they an ethnic enclave (Chaskin 1997) resembling Native ancestral villages or tribal menages. They are distinct places (Pommersheim 1995). For each boarding school, production and reproduction of local symbols and sentiment persistently shapes the identities of residents and their descendants (Sampson and Sharkey 2008); considering a historical component, particularly among American Indians, consequences of the resulting residential context should not be assessed without conceptualizing stratification, inequality, and contextual mobility as an intergenerational process (Sharkey and Elwert 2011).

*Operationalizing Boarding Schools as Neighborhoods*

Methodologically speaking, operationalizing boarding schools as neighborhoods reconciles some of the limitations to further cultivation of neighborhood effects research. Drawing broadly from previous studies (Manski 1993, 1995, 2000; Duncan, Connell, and Klebanov 1997; Duncan and Raudenbush 1999; Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley 2002; Durlauf and Cohen-Cole 2004), Galster (2008) describes the methodological challenges noted in neighborhood effects research presented as six themes: defining the scale of neighborhood, identifying mechanisms of neighborhood effect, measuring appropriate neighborhood characteristics, measuring exposure to neighborhood, measuring appropriate individual characteristics, and endogeneity.

First, as noted previously, there are many different definitions of neighborhood. One perspective views the neighborhood as spatial, and another perspective views the neighborhood as social. An integration of these two perspectives views the neighborhood as social, economic, and psychological, at various geographic scales. Suttles (1972) conceptualized four scales of neighborhood with which households engage: block face, community of limited liability, expanded community of limited liability, and sector of a city. As noted by Galster (2008), the challenge logically follows of how to operationalize the neighborhood at multiple scales. The issue that arises, however, is high correlation across scales, as well as the high variance across individual perceptions of neighborhood boundaries. Second, identifying mechanisms of neighborhood effect include three broad categories of variables: endogenous, correlated, and exogenous. Endogenous neighborhood effects are those that are social externalities, such as aspects of socialization, social norms, social networks, relative deprivation, stigma, exposure to violence, and economic development spillovers. Correlated neighborhood effect

mechanisms vary by larger structural forces in the metropolitan area. Examples of correlated neighborhood effect mechanisms include spatial mismatch, local institutional resources, public services, external stigma, and environmental contamination and pollution. Exogenous neighborhood effects include ethnicity, religion, or race, for example. Third, measuring appropriate neighborhood processes that have behavioral impacts, such as job accessibility, institutional resources, public services, networks, peer groups, role models, feelings of relative deprivation and competition, and stereotypes. The issue is finding the appropriate measurement tools and finding available data. Fourth, measuring exposure to neighborhood mechanisms. For example, the degree to which individuals are exposed to neighborhood processes, including the extent of impact and duration of exposure. Fifth, measuring appropriate individual characteristics; that is, personal characteristics that are correlated with both the outcome of interest and observed characteristics of the neighborhood where the individual resides during a particular time. The major challenge is compiling the data concerning such individual characteristics. Sixth, endogeneity means that some individual characteristics and associated neighborhood characteristics may be mutually causal. For example, those who wish to purchase a home may try to avoid neighborhoods with poor quality of life. As a result, the empirical implication is multicollinearity among certain variables.

Drawing from the above literature, the goal of this project is to demonstrate that Indian boarding schools can be described like neighborhoods. The next section will describe the methods used to answer the question: can Indian boarding schools be described like neighborhoods?

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The methodology utilized in this study was key-informant interviews of individuals who have worked in or attended an Indian boarding school, as well as community members who are closely associated with a boarding school. The qualitative methods chosen to serve the research aims of this study will accommodate the cultural, linguistic, and contextual characteristics of the population-of-interest. The appropriate qualitative methods, as noted by Macy, Renz, and Pelino (2014), acknowledge the nuances of complex dynamics between the historical, political, and cultural context of Indian boarding schools and all of the factors that place children in the care of these facilities and the factors that influence them in their daily lives. To emphasize and honor the experiences, attitudes, and beliefs of informants, Macy et al. (2014) suggests qualitative methods that prioritize individual experience and shared-meaning essential to crafting an effective research strategy. These semi-structured interviews were conducted in a relaxed, private setting where informants are encouraged by the principal researcher, as well as by the surrounding environment, to feel comfortable disclosing their attitudes and beliefs regarding boarding school attendance, and their experiences both within and

outside of the boarding school. Time flexibility was necessary for facilitating a trusting, cooperative environment between the principal researcher and the informant. Because informants had outside obligations and responsibilities, it was critical that interviews allowed for time-flexibility (Ward 2014). Interview questions were flexible and were meticulously developed. The prepared questions featured careful consideration for the population-of-interest with regard to their values, norms, and beliefs, and how those influence the use and interpretation of language (Nagy Hesse-Biber 2017). While probing played a role in these in-depth interviews, informants were allowed to help guide the direction and purpose of the conversation. In this way, the principal researcher did not wholly direct the narrative, but allowed for divergence in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail (Pope and Mays 2006). As noted by Nagy Hesse-Biber (2017), these semi-structured interviews served as opportunities for a meaning-making partnership, which utilized an interpretive, knowledge-producing conversation style. This approach allowed for the principal researcher to cultivate practical and meaningful insight into attitudes and beliefs regarding boarding school attendance and the factors that influence residents' outcomes through the perspective, experience, and language of informants who are shaping the overarching narrative by sharing their experiences in and beyond boarding school (Nagy Hesse-Biber 2017).

### **Sampling Procedure**

The proposed study recruited participants by establishing contact with faculty, staff, and former students of Indian boarding schools, as well as community members closely associated with a boarding school. A combination of convenience and snowball sampling was used. The inclusion of faculty and staff only emerges from the rationale

that faculty and staff of boarding schools would be able to provide insight into what sorts of factors influence the daily lives of residents without having to interview current students, who are a protected population. The interviews did not include current residents of boarding schools for the following reasons: (1) children are considered a protected population, (2) Native children attending these schools are often under the explicit care and guardianship of the institutions, and (3) because of this, the principal investigator was hesitant to acquire permission to gain access to these children by means of their institutional guardians as this practice seems exploitative. Moreover, teachers, counselors, and administrators spoke more broadly about the school, resources, challenges, and successes.

To participate in the current study, informants must be current or former students or current or former employees of an Indian boarding school or a community member closely associated with a boarding school. Due to the population size and emphasis of the proposed project, recruitment commenced using a non-probability method of convenience sampling. Sampling was facilitated by the existing relationships forged over many years between the principal researcher and various tribes across Oklahoma and elsewhere.

In this regard, initial informants were recruited by the principal researcher's professional association and affiliation with tribal members and organizations. Exclusion criteria consist of the inability to completely participate in data collection or adhere to interview requirements. Eligibility criteria for the proposed study include the following:

1. Informants must be former students or currently or formerly employed by an Indian boarding school or community member closely associated with an Indian boarding school.
2. Participants must be able and willing to consent.
3. Participants must be over the age of 18.

To gain access to those closely associated with an Indian boarding school, snowball sampling was utilized. Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where existing study informants recruit other informants from among their friends, family, and acquaintances (Nagy Hesse-Biber 2017). The primary benefit of snowball sampling was allowing for former students and current faculty and staff to communicate with their peers, which helped to convey trustworthiness of the principal researcher and credibility to the study. Since the population-of-interest is, historically, underserved and hard-to-reach, snowball sampling allowed for greater access to a subgroup of a population with already limited accessibility.

While there are no specific guidelines on how or at what point qualitative inquiry has acquired enough information that additional themes are no longer emerging, this study required a minimum of 15 informants, according to Morse (1994), to realistically reach saturation. Thirty informants, however, is the ideal standard for reaching saturation. In qualitative research, data saturation is an indicator of an effective sample size (Hennink, Kaiser, and Marconi 2017) and the emphasis is on the sample adequacy than sample size (Bowen 2008). In one study assessing code saturation, researchers found that saturation was achieved by nine interviews (Hennink, Kaiser, and Marconi 2017), which supports the claims of another study that achieved data saturation between seven and 12

interviews (Guest, Bunce, and Johnson 2006). Although the concern is for the quality and richness of data, it is important to note, however, that, even among experts, there is not an agreed upon minimum or interviews necessary to accomplish research goals. In a review paper for the National Center for Research Methods, qualitative methods experts, such as Adler and Adler, agreed that while between 12 and 60 interviews are typically recommended, Howard Becker suggests that a single interview is adequate in order to establish that something is possible, and that it only takes a few interviews to show that a phenomenon is more complex. Becker goes on to note that more qualitative interview numbers are necessary for instances of comparison of groups and experiences (Baker and Edwards 2017). For this research project, the goal is simply to demonstrate that something is possible – that Indian boarding schools can be described like neighborhoods.

Though boarding school students and employees can be culturally, linguistically, and geographically diverse, what unites them as former students or employees of these institutions may result in the data appearing to have reached saturation. Since, according to Dey (1999), saturation can be fulfilled as emerging themes and similar experiences, attitudes, and beliefs begin repeating. For the purpose of this research endeavor, “saturation” refers to data saturation, which relates to the extent to which new data repeat during the data collection phase of the project (Nagy Hesse-Biber 2017).

Furthermore, the role of the principal researcher was considered throughout the entirety of the research process. As a non-Native researcher, I consistently maintained and practiced standards of reflexivity (Bonevski et al. 2014).

## **Data Collection**

In-depth interview data allowed for comparison of experiences, attitudes, and beliefs regarding contemporary boarding school attendance and the factors affecting outcomes of current attendees. According to Nagy Hesse-Biber (2017), in-depth, semi-structured interviews are utilized to amass a substantial amount of rich information with a consistent, issue-oriented approach. The interview guide can be found in Figure 1. These in-depth interviews were participant-guided to some extent, though probes were used. Probes were necessary for the facilitation of a productive and high-quality interview (Nagy Hesse-Biber 2017). These probes, which further explore areas of interest, were prepared ahead of time with consultation from key stakeholders. Furthermore, the objective of the in-depth interviews was to collect qualitative data regarding the experiences, attitudes, and beliefs regarding social and structural factors influencing boarding school residents' outcomes, and the interview questions were developed in collaboration with stakeholders, of whom, examined the interview guide with careful consideration to the use of language and cultural appropriateness (Attkisson and Greenfield 1996). Main stakeholders included leaders of tribal mental and behavioral health programs, current and former teachers, and other community leaders. With regard to stakeholder input, the interview guide was carefully constructed to vary in tone and style to best accommodate informants. The in-depth interviews provided a wealth of detail-rich information. Additionally, interview questions explored the general experience of former students and faculty and staff employed at boarding schools, as well as overall attitudes and beliefs about contemporary boarding school attendance. The interview questions were also constructed with consideration for the four general definitions of neighborhood provided by Chaskin (1997). Interviews will be audio-recorded, depending

on the mode of interview (i.e., in-person, Zoom, or Facetime).

**Figure 1: Interview Guide**

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1. How are you connected to a boarding school?
  2. How long have you been associated with boarding schools?
  3. What are the ages of children who attend your boarding school?
  4. How many students per year?
  5. What are the strengths of your school? What does it do well?
  6. How does your school support tribal culture?
  7. Does your boarding school send kids to public schools? *If yes, what are their experiences in public school as kids from “boarding school?”*
  8. Is the number of staff adequate to meet needs? *What is the reason for that?*
  9. In what ways do staff work together to promote good student outcomes?
  10. What services are available to students?
  11. Are students exposed to positive role models in the boarding school?
  12. Are cliques prominent in your boarding school? What sorts of cliques are there? Do you think cliques serve a purpose or do you think they cause problems?
  13. How are students involved with the external community?
  14. How do nearby communities view the boarding school?
  15. Do students see themselves as “boarding school kids?” *How so?*
  16. In what ways do students work together?
  17. Do students feel school spirit? *How so?/Why not?*
  18. Are boarding school kids treated differently from local kids?
  19. On a scale of 1-10, how do you rate the facilities (living conditions, safety, nutrition) of your boarding school?
  20. On a scale of 1-10, how do you rate the administration (leadership, staffing, training, responsiveness, funding) of your boarding school?
  21. On a scale of 1-10, how do you rate the social environment (friends, positive support, role models, sports, games, events) at your boarding school?
  22. On a scale of 1-10, how do you rate the academic quality of your boarding school?
  23. And finally, what do you think it is important for me to know about boarding schools?
- 

**Data Management Plan**

This study was conducted by Christine Thomas, the principal investigator, under the guidance of Dr. Kelley Sittner of the Department of Sociology at Oklahoma State University. If participants agreed to participate in this study, they were asked to

participate in an interview, which lasted between 30 minutes and one hour. Participants received no compensation for participation in this study. The information provided by participants was confidential. This means that their names were not collected or linked to the data in any way. Only their current or former positions as former students or current or former employees were recorded. The researchers were unable to remove their data from the dataset once participation was complete. The information collected through interviews was stored in an encrypted, cloud-based storage system. The audio recordings were transcribed using Otter.ai. The recordings were then deleted after the transcription was complete and verified. The process took approximately two weeks from when the interviews were originally recorded.

For participants who could not meet in-person or who did not feel comfortable meeting in-person, interviews were held via Zoom, Facetime, or over-the-phone. For interviews that were conducted in-person, the following steps were taken to reduce the risk of Coronavirus infection:

- *Screening:* Researchers and participants who show potential symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath, etc.) did NOT participate in this study at that time.
- *Physical distancing:* Whenever possible, we would maintain at least 6 feet of distance between persons while conducting the study.
- *Mask/Covering:* Researchers wore, and participants were advised to shield their mouth and nose with a cloth face cover or mask during the study, even when maintaining at least 6 feet of distance. Tissues were available to cover coughs and sneezes.

- *Handwashing*: Researchers and participants used a hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- *Disinfecting materials*: When feasible, researchers cleaned and disinfected surfaces between participants, using an EPA-registered disinfectant or a bleach solution (5 tablespoons of regular bleach per gallon of water) for hard materials and by laundering soft materials. Disinfected materials were handled using gloves, paper towel, plastic wrap or storage bags to reduce the chance of re-contamination of materials.
- *Electronics*: Alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70% alcohol were used to disinfect shared touch screens, mice, keyboards, etc. Surfaces were then dried to avoid pooling of liquids.

### **Data Analysis Strategy**

The interviews were semi-structured, face-to-face (when possible) interviews where informants were asked a series of questions concerning their perspectives on contemporary boarding school attendance and the issues facing current students. Fifteen interviews were conducted, recorded, and transcribed. Following transcription, interviews were coded through open-coding and then through more focused, concept-driven coding (Nagy Hesse-Biber 2017). Each interview was reviewed for themes and subthemes derived from Chaskin's (1997) four general definitions of neighborhood [Figure 2]. After each interview was reviewed, all interviews were interpreted for results. The process of interpretation included coding and descriptive summaries, utilizing a primarily deductive approach. NVivo was used for identifying patterns and frequencies of themes and subthemes. Ultimately, this project aims to answer the question: can Indian boarding

schools be described like neighborhoods?

**Figure 2:** Coding Frame

Category	Definition
<i>Subcategory</i>	
Community	The boarding school as part of the greater community
Solidarity	
<i>Collective Action</i>	Action taken by a group whose goal is to achieve a common objective
<i>Cooperation</i>	An individual behavior that benefits a group or collective
<i>Interdependence</i>	Being dependent upon one another; mutual dependence
<i>School Spirit</i>	Feeling a sense of agency, belonging, and investment in your school
<i>Shared Beliefs</i>	Beliefs unique to the boarding school that are shared by residents
<i>Shared Practices</i>	Practices unique to the boarding school that are shared by residents
Cohesion	
<i>Acceptance</i>	Feelings or actions of acceptance among residents
<i>Care</i>	Feelings or actions of care among residents
<i>Participation</i>	Participating in group activities
<i>Trust</i>	Feelings or actions of trust among residents
Psychological Unity	
<i>Shared Culture</i>	Cultural beliefs or practices shared by residents
<i>Shared Ethnicity</i>	Racial and ethnic characteristics shared by residents
<i>Shared Identity</i>	Common identity shared by residents

The coding frame for this research [Figure 2] was developed using aspects of the four definitions of neighborhood provided by Chaskin (1997). The first definition describes the neighborhood in distinctly spatial terms, signifying a primarily residential geographical unit nested within a greater area. The second definition is similar to the first, but instead presents the neighborhood as a defined spatial unit within a greater *urban* area. The third definition of neighborhood also operates within an urban context, and

views the neighborhood as the primary unit of social solidarity and cohesion. Similarly, the fourth definition of neighborhood recognizes how areas of commerce and social connection can create neighborhood boundaries by promoting psychological unity among people. This definition of neighborhood highlights the ethnic and cultural characteristics of residents in creating distinct neighborhood boundaries, alongside spatial features. Drawing from these definitions, dimensions of solidarity (Douwes, Stuttaford, and London 2018; Bulwa 2022), cohesion (Wongpakaran et al. 2012), and psychological unity (Chaskin 1997), as well as being part of a greater community, were used to generate codes for examining the data. In the following section, I will detail the findings from the 15 interviews, answering the question: can Indian boarding schools be described like neighborhoods?

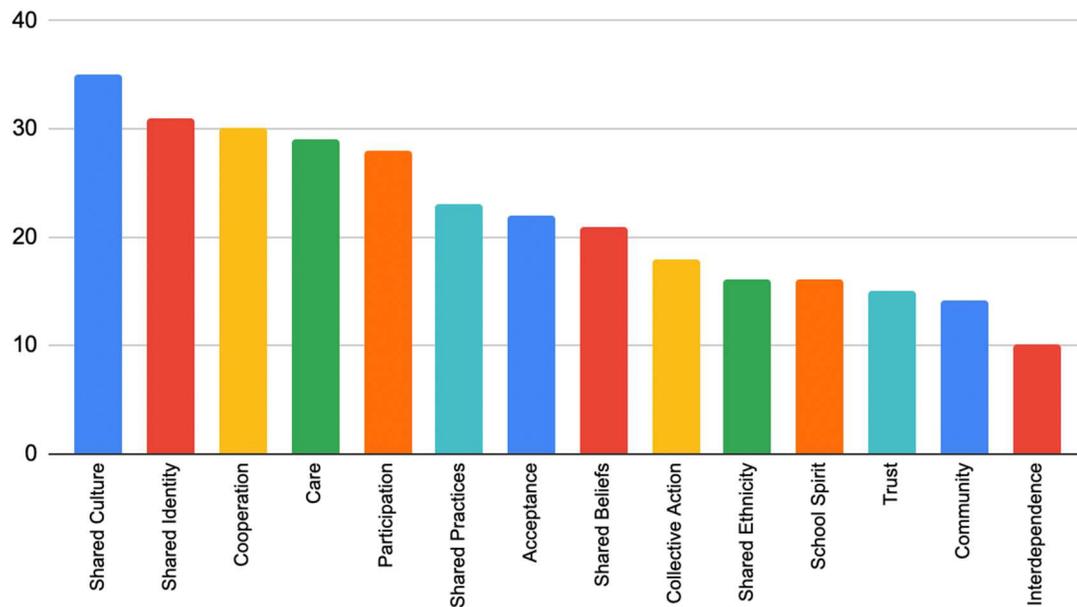
## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

To answer the question: can Indian boarding schools be conceptualized as neighborhoods, the coding themes were established from the four general definitions of neighborhood provided by Chaskin (1997). The first definition describes the neighborhood in distinctly spatial terms, signifying a primarily residential geographical unit nested within a greater area. The second definition is similar to the first, but instead presents the neighborhood as a defined spatial unit within a greater *urban* area. The third definition of neighborhood also operates within an urban context, and views the neighborhood as the primary unit of social solidarity and cohesion. Similarly, the fourth definition of neighborhood recognizes how areas of commerce and social connection can create neighborhood boundaries by promoting psychological unity among people. This definition of neighborhood highlights the ethnic and cultural characteristics of residents in creating distinct neighborhood boundaries, alongside spatial features. Drawing from these general definitions of neighborhood, the following coding themes were established: the boarding school as part of the greater community (community), the boarding school as the primary unit of social solidarity (solidarity) and cohesion (cohesion), and the boarding school promoting psychological unity among people (psychological unity). The

sub-themes were established from dimensions of each theme. Since the coding frame highlights four major themes, the findings are organized according to these themes. The purpose is to examine the ways in which Indian boarding schools can be described like neighborhoods.

Figure 3: Coding Frequency



## Community

Drawing from Chaskin’s (1997) first and second definitions of neighborhood, which describes the neighborhood in distinctly spatial terms, signifying a primarily residential geographic unit nested within a greater area, and the neighborhood as a defined spatial unit within a greater urban area, the coding theme, *Community*, was created. This view of the neighborhood is considered by neighborhood researchers as minimal. It does not consider the social attributes that characterize a neighborhood and foster a sense of solidarity, cohesion, and psychological unity. It merely views the neighborhood as “a limited territory within a larger urban area where people inhabit dwellings and interact socially” (Hallman 1984:13). While these definitions emphasize

the neighborhood as existing within an urban context, the reality is that not all neighborhoods are located in urban areas. Instead, the coding theme, *Community*, is derived from these definitions in a way that appreciates the value placed on how neighborhoods are nested within larger communities. Taking this into account, in the coding frame [Figure 2], this coding theme is defined as the boarding school as part of the greater community.

For this theme, it was important to acknowledge all the ways in which informants, from their various positions, viewed the boarding school as part of the larger community or not a part of the larger community. Overwhelmingly, former students, teachers, counselors, staff, and school administration viewed their respective boarding schools as part of a greater community. Most notably, informants viewed their boarding schools as integral to their greater communities. In one interview, in response to the question, “How do nearby communities view the school or the dormitory?” a Counselor with 11 years of experience with a boarding school of approximately 100 students per year suggests that the boarding school is not only a part of the greater community, but a resource to the community:

I feel like there is a positive reception to our kids, because they’re seeing all the good things that they do. And so I know, maybe back when our dormitory started in 1954, maybe back in the day, in the 1970s and 80s, it might have been a little bit different. But I feel like modern and present day, they see a lot of good things that our students do. And they’re a good resource to the community.

Even though contemporary schools differ tremendously from their original incarnations, this sentiment of the schools being part of a greater community is echoed by a Project Director with five years of experience with a boarding school of 150-200 students per year in response to the question, “What are their experiences in public school as kids from the boarding school?”: “Well, it’s always been here. So, I mean, it’s been

here since 1891. So, they see it as a part of their community.” Noting that the schools have been a part of these larger communities for over 100 years was something that appeared frequently throughout interviews, especially among administration who were more familiar with the schools’ histories and those who had lived in these communities for generations.

Another aspect of community that is important to note is that neighborhoods are not only geographically located within larger communities, but there are social ties that extend across these communities, linking people together through shared activities and spaces. Also, for context for the following quote, it is important to note that some boarding schools have both dormitories and a school on campus, with the schools serving either both day students and boarders. Other schools only have a dormitory on campus and send their residents to nearby public schools. In the same interview as above, in response to the question, “How are students involved with the external community?” the Project Director with five years of experience with a boarding school details occasions when boarding school students are engaging with their greater community:

Since they go to public school, they play sports and they’re in the band. They do everything with that school. So that’s a big connection to the community. A lot of times, we’re in the parades in the community as well. We’d have floats in the parade. Pre COVID, we would also take them to trick-or-treat in the community. So they’re very out in the community, they get to do things. We’re hoping once COVID restrictions lift, to do more with the Unity Council. Maybe sponsor a flower garden in the town or just do some more community outreach.

Throughout 10 of the 15 interviews, informants referenced *Community* 14 times [Figure 3] as exemplified by the above quotes. In the interviews, informants often made a point to discuss the ways in which the boarding schools were part of their greater communities. In particular, informants repeatedly made reference to how long the boarding school had been in the community. Other times, references came in the form of

community service projects, participation in community activities, and being recognized by other community members as an entity that can contribute to community goals; in other words, the boarding school as a primary unit of social solidarity and cohesion.

### **Solidarity**

Drawing from Chaskin's (1997) third definition of neighborhood, which describes the neighborhood as the primary unit of social solidarity and cohesion, the coding theme, *Solidarity*, was created. In neighborhood effects literature, the neighborhood is often seen as a primary unit of solidarity and cohesion because it is the place where residents share not only a common locality, but also form distinct units through common history, heritage, and culture (Golab 1982). Although social solidarity and cohesion are often used interchangeably (Cole and Miller 1965), there are theoretical and substantive differences between the two terms (Evans and Evans 1977); moreover, in Chaskin's (1997) third definition of neighborhood, he refers to them as distinct concepts, which I follow in my coding scheme. As a result, the coding theme, *Solidarity*, was created using a multi-dimensional approach to solidarity with consideration for various measures of solidarity present in sociological literature. *Solidarity*, in this case, is made up of six dimensions: *Collective Action*, *Cooperation*, *Interdependence*, *Shared Beliefs*, *Shared Practices* (Mishra and Rath 2020), and *School Spirit* (Bulwa 2022). These six dimensions are not only supported by sociological literature on solidarity, but are similar to the ways in which solidarity is described in neighborhood effects literature. In a study identifying the dimensions of solidarity in a neighborhood, solidarity is described as a catalyst for action that reflects the values, goals, and common expectations of residents. Solidarity is also described as affecting residents' attitudes towards each other and reduces conflict

(Sadeghi, Lotfi, and Bagherzadeh 2020). This understanding of solidarity contributed to the inclusion of the dimensions collective action, shared beliefs, and shared practices. When assessing neighborhood solidarity as a contributor to neighborhood well-being, Cramm and Nieboer (2014) defined solidarity using a 10-item scale, which asked questions relating to cooperation and interdependence. This understanding of solidarity contributed to the inclusion of the dimensions cooperation and interdependence. Drawing from both of these understandings of solidarity, the sub-theme, school spirit, was also included as it is specific to the school context and similar to dimensions of solidarity cited in neighborhood effects literature. School spirit is often an indicator of student engagement (Holdsworth 2015), which is similar to the other sub-themes, but, again, specific to the school context. Moreover, school spirit, like neighborhood pride (Sieber, Cordeiro, and Ferro 2012), is an important factor for neighborhood identity and social solidarity. Altogether, this theme was referenced 118 times throughout the interviews.

### *Collective Action*

The first dimension, *Collective Action*, is facilitated by solidarity (Hechter 2001). In the coding frame [Figure 2], *Collective Action* is defined as action taken by a group whose goal is to achieve a common objective. Throughout the interviews, informants shared various examples of collective action, some of which overlapped with other coding themes and sub-themes, such as *cooperation*, *interdependence*, and *participation*, but were distinct instances in which boarding school students and staff were engaging in collective action. During the analysis, two themes of collective action emerged. The first theme regarding collective action is viewing the boarding school as a primary unit of social solidarity. The second theme regarding collective action is describing specific

occasions where students and staff engaged in collective action. In response to the question, “How do staff work together to promote good outcomes for students?” one example of the first theme regarding collective action is from a former Superintendent with 20 years of experience with a boarding school of approximately 175 students per year:

Of course, each little division was pretty tight knit, you know, “That’s my kids,” and we’re going to take care of most kids. But you know, the bigger picture was, “Hey, it’s all of us as one entity.” We’re all working toward the common goal of helping our students and helping them to be productive members in society when they leave.

This informant emphasizes the unity among students and staff to accomplish group goals and other common objectives. This characterization of the boarding school as a distinct unit of reference and action aligns, not only with the definition of the coding theme, *Collective Action*, but with Chaskin’s (1997) third definition of neighborhood, which states that the neighborhood is the primary unit of social solidarity and cohesion. Further, in response to the question, “How are students involved with the external community?” an example of the second theme regarding collective action is from the same former Superintendent who described a particular instance of collective action:

We appreciate getting the recognition and thank yous from other people out in the community that they appreciate what our students do, whether it’s a trash pickup on the highway, and there was four or five miles adopted by the community and our kids are going to be out there and staff will be out there with them. We are out there, you know, with them, doing it...we’re all in this together and working together toward a common cause.

Throughout eight of the 15 interviews, informants referenced *collective action* 18 times [Figure 3] as exemplified by the above quotes. In the interviews, informants specify two themes regarding collective action: the boarding school as a collective and specific examples of collective action. Informants cited examples of collective action either through community service projects, collective efforts for school-wide goals, or collective academic endeavors like having every student test on grade-level or above in

mathematics and reading. In a few cases, informants made a point to describe a boarding school as an entity, or a primary unit of reference and action. Overall, the interviews revealed that students and staff regularly engaged in collective action, whether it be for school or community goals.

### *Cooperation*

The second dimension, *Cooperation*, is a characteristic of social solidarity and is “automatically produced through the pursuit of each individual of his own interests” (Durkheim 1933: 200). When a group or community is high in solidarity, their unified worldview gives rise to cooperation (Flora and Flora 1975). In the coding frame [Figure 2], *Cooperation* is defined as an individual behavior that benefits a group or collective. Throughout the interviews, there are various examples of informants citing instances of cooperation among students, in particular. These examples of students engaging in individual behavior that benefits a group were most prominently noted by teachers and school administrators. For example, in response to the question, “How do students work together?” the former Superintendent with 20 years of experience with a boarding school stated:

I think they work together in a lot of ways. Whether it's peer tutoring, whether it's the ag program, whether it's sports, whether it's at the public school and they're working together on a team, or whether it's here at the boarding school and they're doing stuff in the evenings, as a group. A lot of times, we would have some of the older students pair up and help the elementary students. And that seemed to go well, because a lot of these kids really look up to those older students. And sometimes, those older students could get the kids to do more than some of us adults could at a certain point. So I think working together with peer tutoring and having the older students work with the younger students was great. We were all working toward that common goal.

Other examples of cooperation, particularly among staff, for the benefit of students were also noted. In response to the question, “How does staff work together to promote good student outcomes?” a teacher with four years of experience with a

boarding school and who usually has about 12 students in the classroom per year, expressed experiences of cooperation with fellow teachers and school administrators:

We share a lot of things that maybe, in the past, has worked for prior students in that, you know, as we get the students from a different class, and we share things that have been successful with a particular student in an area that they struggle, not just academically but emotionally and things like that. So, we get to know these students very well. And we really work together to share successes and things that work and things that don't work.

Similarly to the ways in which boarding school teachers, staff, and school administrators work together and demonstrate cooperation for the benefit of students, boarding school staff and school administrators also work together with teachers and school administrators from nearby public schools. Again, this is important to note because some boarding schools do not have schools on their campuses and instead send their dormitory residents to local public schools. In response to the question, “How do staff work together to promote good student outcomes?” the Project Director with five years of experience with a boarding school portrayed the relationship between one such boarding school as highly cooperative with the public school staff and school administrators, stating:

We work together as we are all on the same page. We meet together on their grades to make sure that they're passing if they're not needing extra support. We attend all the school functions and school meetings, as well as IEP meetings.

Throughout eight of the 15 interviews, informants referenced *cooperation* 30 times [Figure 3] as depicted by the above quotes. In the interviews, informants indicate two themes regarding cooperation: cooperation among students and cooperation among staff and administrators for the benefit of students. Often, cooperation came in the form of individual actions, of students working together. Additionally, given that cooperation is a requisite for collective action and interdependence, there were cases in which *Cooperation* overlapped with the themes and sub-themes of *Collective Action*,

*Interdependence*, and *Participation*. Overall, the interviews showed that students, staff, and school administrators at both boarding schools and nearby public schools are all cooperating to benefit students and the boarding school as a whole.

### *Interdependence*

The third dimension, *Interdependence*, is underlied by social solidarity (Durkheim 1933; Moxley 1973). In the coding frame [Figure 2], *Interdependence* is defined as being dependent upon one another or mutual dependence. When conceptualizing interdependence, it is important to acknowledge different types of interdependence. One type is similar to the interdependence created between two people by marriage. Another type highlights the interdependence of organisms in an ecosystem, like how foxes are dependent on rabbits for prey and rabbits are dependent on vegetation for sustenance. This type of interdependence harkens back to early neighborhood research. As was the dominant analogy of the time, the city was viewed as an organic entity with various neighborhoods that existed in interdependence and symbiosis (Frisbie and Kasarda 1988). Both understandings of interdependence are complementary and both are important.

Multiple times throughout the interviews, informants referenced the type of interdependence that is created between two people who care for one another. The other type of interdependence, a larger system of interdependence, however, was most prominent in the analysis and most relevant to the concept of social solidarity. Examples of interdependence mostly concerned the ways in which students and staff rely on one another for daily functioning of a boarding school. In response to the question, “How do staff work together to promote good student outcomes?” this interdependence can be thought of as shared responsibilities as stated by the Counselor with 11 years of

experience with a boarding school who said, "...It's kind of a holistic approach to education and taking care of students. From our kitchen staff who cook to our maintenance person, we all have shared responsibilities." In response to the question, "How do students work together?" corroborating this understanding of interdependence through shared responsibility is a Counselor and Director of Behavioral Health with 12 years of experience with a boarding school and working with current and former boarding school students who detailed how the children and the staff are dependent upon each other for daily functioning of the boarding school:

They were given chores to do in each section that they were in, so they had people who swept the floor, and I think they were all responsible for making their own beds and stuff like that. But we had people who helped out in the kitchen and did other things like help out with maintenance. So I think they worked fairly well together like that. And then some of the older kids would help some of the younger kids with homework and stuff and those kinds of things.

Throughout seven of the 15 interviews, informants referenced *interdependence* 10 times [Figure 3] as exemplified by the above quotes. In the interviews, informants characterized both forms of interdependence, but especially emphasized the interdependence among students and staff for daily functioning of boarding schools. Additionally, given that interdependence requires cooperation and contributes to the development of trust, there were cases in which *Interdependence* overlapped with *Cooperation* and *Trust*. Overall, the interviews revealed that students and staff demonstrated interdependence.

### *School Spirit*

The fourth dimension, *School Spirit*, represents a sense of belonging, common identity, and community in a student body. Most importantly, however, school spirit contributes to a sense of social solidarity that resists a culture of individualism and self-

isolation (Bulwa 2022). *School Spirit* is also derived from the sense of “we-ness” that is produced by social solidarity (Baum 1974). In the coding frame [Figure 2], *School Spirit* is defined as feeling a sense of agency, belonging, and investment in your school. This sub-theme was created specifically for use within the context of a school. In response to the question, “Do students feel school spirit?” the traditional idea of “school spirit” is mentioned in one interview by a Psychologist with six years of direct experience and 30 years of indirect experience with a boarding school of approximately 200 students per year:

They may not feel the school spirit of “Go, go Notre Dame,” but they’re very proud of where they are and who their school is. And that translates to and connects to their tribe. They’re proud of their heritage, their tribe, they’re proud of their tribal membership. And they are. While many times they would rather be home, they’re also grateful to be a part of that boarding school community that allows them a sense of belonging and a sense of togetherness and a sense of family that they wouldn’t normally have.

Involvement in extracurricular activities was something repeatedly mentioned as a driving force behind school spirit. In another interview, in response to the question, “Do students feel school spirit?” the Counselor with 11 years of experience with a boarding school describes how the sense of “we-ness” that is produced by social solidarity can also be produced through involvement with extracurricular activities:

I think they have school spirit, especially if they are involved in extracurricular activities, and so they feel that tie-in to their school. So yes, they do. And then the school does really well incorporating activities and making sure that they get out.

Throughout 13 of the 15 interviews, informants referenced *school spirit* 16 times [Figure 3] as depicted by the above quotes. In the interviews, informants characterized most boarding schools as having school spirit, especially when students are able to participate in extracurricular activities like sports, school clubs, and arts programs. Overall, the interviews show high degrees of school spirit among students who attend boarding schools and faculty of boarding schools. In particular, multiple teachers

remarked that teaching at a boarding school is the most rewarding experience they have had throughout their teaching careers and that they love their schools.

### *Shared Beliefs*

The fifth dimension, *Shared Beliefs*, is fundamental to social solidarity (Evans and Evans 1977; Hechter 2001). When a group has solidarity, unified beliefs and practices are necessary conditions of solidarity (Evans and Evans 1977). For the sake of coherence in the analysis, *Shared Beliefs* and *Shared Practices* are separated. In the coding frame [Figure 2], *Shared Beliefs* are defined as beliefs unique to the boarding school that are shared by residents. To avoid too much overlap between *Shared Beliefs* and *Shared Culture*, in particular, this sub-theme is explicitly about beliefs unique to the boarding school that are shared among residents, faculty, and staff. In one interview, in response to the question, “What are their experiences in public school as kids from the boarding school?” the former Superintendent with 20 years of experience with a boarding school described how newer students had to assimilate into the school’s culture by learning the beliefs shared by students, faculty, and staff:

Well, you know, I think when I first came to the boarding school, there’s always going to be a little bit of division there, because you’re taking outsiders in and bringing them into the boarding school where they’re all trying to learn the school’s way and try to learn to cooperate with one another and get along with one another.

In another interview with a Counselor with 20 years of experience with a boarding school of approximately 200 students per year, in response to the question, “Do students feel school spirit?” a specific example of this assimilation process was recounted:

A story I used to tell is of how it was the first of the year. The kids were coming in. We have our returning students. We had a girl that came in and she's part of a gang. And we had enrollment that night. I went over to the dorms to check on things and there was a ruckus in the main part of the girls dorm and I went down there with the dorm supervisor and we had the superintendent there. We had to separate the two girls because the girl was part of the gang and she was trying to make the other girl join her gang. And the other girl was like “No, you’re out of here. This is our home and you’re not going to bring that stuff

in here. So either you get rid of your gang stuff and become like we are or you're gone.”  
So yeah, it was home.

Throughout nine of the 15 interviews, informants referenced *shared beliefs* 21 times [Figure 3] as exemplified by the above quotes. In the interviews, informants cited various instances of shared beliefs among students, faculty, and staff. Most notably, informants revealed the importance of these shared beliefs unique to the boarding school in maintaining the boarding school as a pleasant and welcoming place to live for residents. Overall, the interviews revealed that there are many beliefs unique to each boarding school that are shared amongst residents, faculty, and staff, and that these shared beliefs contribute to the maintenance of a shared boarding school culture, which facilitates other dimensions of social solidarity and cohesion.

### *Shared Practices*

The sixth dimension, *Shared Practices*, is fundamental to social solidarity (Evans and Evans 1977; Hechter 2001). When a group has solidarity, unified beliefs and practices are necessary conditions of solidarity (Evans and Evans 1977). Again, as mentioned above, for the sake of coherence in the analysis, *Shared Beliefs* and *Shared Practices* are separated. In the coding frame [Figure 2], *Shared Practices* are defined as practices unique to the boarding school that are shared by residents. To avoid too much overlap between *Shared Practices* and *Shared Culture*, in particular, this sub-theme is explicitly about practices unique to the boarding school that are shared among residents, faculty, and staff. In one interview, in response to the question, “Are boarding school kids treated differently from local kids?” a former student who attended a boarding school for four years with approximately 400 other students detailed how the school had particular practices that were shared by all dorm students:

When school's over, they [the students] had a certain regimen, so they had to go ahead and start going back and getting reading for what they call "Power Hour" and start studying and just kind of keep on their little regimen they had going for themselves.

In another interview with the former Superintendent with 20 years of experience in a boarding school, in response to the question, "What do you think is important for me to know about boarding schools?" a specific example of these practices and how they are viewed by students was described:

It just branches out. It touches so many different levels, not just the boarding school, but the community. When kids go back home and then sometimes they want to tell their cousins about the boarding school because they love this place, but then there's some kids that say they don't want to go back because they see it as a prison where we have to go to bed at 10:30 or whatever it is, and they have to go to tutoring and go to breakfast, you know.

Throughout six of the 15 interviews, informants referenced *shared practices* 23 times [Figure 3] as depicted by the above quotes. In the interviews, informants detailed various instances of shared practices among students, in particular. Most prominently, informants recounted the importance of these shared practices unique to the boarding school in their daily functioning, involving rituals and routines that structured their daily lives. Overall, the interviews showed that there are many practices unique to each boarding school that are shared amongst residents, especially, and that these shared practices contribute to the rituals, regimens, and routines that structure their daily lives in a boarding school, which facilitate other dimensions of social solidarity and cohesion.

### **Cohesion**

Drawing from Chaskin's (1997) third definition of neighborhood, which describes the neighborhood as the primary unit of social solidarity and cohesion, the coding theme, *Cohesion*, was created. Although similar, the difference between solidarity and cohesion is that cohesion is the state of working together while solidarity is a more formal bond of unity or agreement between individuals, united around a common goal. Generally, in

neighborhood effects literature, cohesion is characterized as a condition of group solidarity or the social forces that bind people together (Schacter 1968). Smith (1975) stresses that when discussing neighborhoods, the definition of cohesion should be one that it is a condition of a group and not of individuals. From this, a multi-dimensional approach to cohesion was developed with consideration for traditional neighborhood measures of cohesion and group-level measures of cohesion. In developing a neighborhood social cohesion tool, Stafford et al. (2003) suggests using both structural and cognitive aspects of social cohesion. Considering what is presented in neighborhood effects literature and what makes sense within the context of Indian boarding schools, *participation* was chosen as a structural aspect of social cohesion and *acceptance, care,* and *trust* were chosen as cognitive aspects of social cohesion. All of these dimensions of cohesion are also reflected in a measure of group cohesion called the Group Cohesiveness Scale (GCS), which consists of two domains: cohesion and engagement (Klocek, Rihacek, and Cigler 2020) that are considered to be representations of the unidimensional group cohesiveness construct (Wongpakaran et al. 2013). Altogether, this theme was referenced 94 times throughout the interviews.

### *Acceptance*

The first of the cognitive aspects of social cohesion that affects the quality of social interactions that take place within neighborhoods is a sense of acceptance. Stafford et al. (2003) describes it as a sense of belonging or attachment through contact with others, which residents increase through interactions with others, providing them with meaningful social roles and a sense of being received as members of a group. In one interview, in response to the question, “Do students feel school spirit?” the Psychologist

with six years of direct experience with a boarding school and 30 years of indirect experience with a boarding school echos this dimension of cohesion by referencing the sense of belonging students often feel as part of the boarding school:

While, many times, they would rather be home, they're also grateful to be a part of that boarding school community that allows them a sense of belonging and a sense of togetherness and a sense of family that they wouldn't normally have.

In the coding frame [Figure 2], *acceptance* is defined as feelings or actions of acceptance among residents. In another interview with the Counselor with 20 years of experience in a boarding school, in response to the question, “What do you think is important for me to know about boarding schools?” this same sentiment of group acceptance and approval appears:

They're just kids, they just need help and they just need to learn what it was to be a kid and not be just labeled as soon as they walk in the door. So we let them know that people do care about them and do love them and want them to become the best they can be.

Throughout 10 of the 15 interviews, informants referenced *acceptance* 22 times [Figure 3] as exemplified by the above quotes. In the interviews, informants described various forms of acceptance among peers, teachers, counselors, and other staff. Often, acceptance came in the form of accepting others who are different either ethnically, culturally, or linguistically. Other times, acceptance looked like friendship and “having each other’s backs.” Overall, the interviews revealed that respondents demonstrated an openness to one another and a desire to make everyone feel welcome and accepted into the boarding school.

### *Care*

The second of the cognitive aspects of social cohesion that affects the quality of social interactions that take place within neighborhoods is caring relationships. Stafford et al. (2003) describes it as practical help. Examples of practical help include being able

to rely on others for help with everyday activities, including help through informal networks. In one interview, in response to the question, “How do students work together?” a former student who attended a boarding school for four years with over 200 other students recalls instances of reliance among peers for help with everyday activities:

So, in the dorms. Whenever I lived there, it was very much a nice community, like, we weren't supposed to, but we would share clothes, like we would help each other do each other's hair and makeup. Just like if somebody had something big coming up, and one person didn't have it, everybody would get together and help each other. We would figure out how to get that person what they needed for whatever it was. We just helped each other. We would figure out ways to just be together as a group and make sure we had everything we needed.

Wongpakaran et al. (2013) refers to this dimension of cohesion as an affective measure of engagement, which is part of a unidimensional assessment of group cohesion. In the coding frame [Figure 2], *care* is defined as feelings or actions of care among residents. In response to the question, “Are cliques prominent in the school?” in another interview with a Teacher with five years of experience in a boarding school with 8-10 students in the classroom per year describes occurrences of care amongst students:

Whenever they come here, the minute a kid comes here, and they're new, because sometimes kids, you know, they do come here during the school year after the school year has already started. And these kids just automatically take care of them. It's amazing. Especially the older kids. Our older kids take care of the younger kids. They're very, very good to them and protective of them. They do their hair in the morning. The older girls do the younger girls' hair in the morning. You know, look cute and get them ready for school.

Throughout 12 of the 15 interviews, informants referenced *care* 29 times [Figure 3] as depicted in the above quotes. In the interviews, informants described various forms of care among peers, teachers, counselors, and other staff. Regularly, informants described instances of care among students, citing how well they take responsibility for one another and show concern for the safety and well-being of fellow students and staff. Especially among teachers, this sometimes even took the form of paying special attention to one another and checking in to make sure others are doing well and are successfully

meeting their goals. Generally, the interviews revealed that students, teachers, counselors, school administration, and other staff all display acts of caring and special regard for others in the boarding school, especially toward students.

### *Trust*

The third of the cognitive aspects of social cohesion that affects the quality of social interactions that take place within neighborhoods is a sense of trust. Stafford et al. (2003) discusses generalized trust, which derives from social interaction with people who are known personally and even those who are not known personally. They claim that at the neighborhood level, trust is required for people to act for the common good. In one interview, in response to the question, “How do students work together?” the Teacher with five years of experience in a boarding school and who usually has 8-10 students in the classroom each year described a general sense of trust among students as demonstrated by their reliance on one another: “They’re much more reliant on each other because they’re together 24/7. Whenever they leave the classroom, they go to the dorm and they’re still together...It’s not just like acquaintances.”

Wongpakaran et al. (2013) refers to this dimension of cohesion as an affective measure of cohesion. In the coding frame [Figure 2], *trust* is defined as feelings or actions of trust among residents. In another interview, in response to the question, “What are their experiences in public school as kids from the boarding school?” the former Superintendent with 20 years of experience in a boarding school, corroborates the general sense of trust, not just among students, but trust of staff among students:

...some of the students have never been away from home before so it takes them a little while to understand the benefits of all of what we’re trying to do to prepare them for the future. But on the whole, it was a good situation. Most of everything that we do here, we try to work with the hearts of these kids and they can see that.

Throughout nine of the 15 interviews, informants referenced *trust* 15 times [Figure 3] as depicted in the above quotes. In the interviews, informants recounted a general sense of trust among students and staff. Often, trust was described as students relying on one another and staff recognizing the importance of their words and actions aligning. Other times, trust was demonstrated by collaboration, cooperation, conscientiousness, and willingness to contribute to group goals among students. A number of these instances overlapped with the sub-themes, *Cooperation*, *Interdependence*, and *Care*, but were distinct instances in which informants discussed feelings or actions of trust among residents and school staff. Overall, the interviews revealed that students and staff demonstrated a general trust for one another and willingness to build authentic trust overtime, through meaningful relationships.

#### *Participation*

The only structural aspect of social cohesion taken from the four presented by Stafford et al. (2003) is participation, which is described as participation in organized associations with others in the neighborhood. These organizations include religious groups and social clubs. In one interview, in response to the question, “How do staff work together to promote good student outcomes?” a former dorm staff member with four years of experience in a boarding school of approximately 110 students residing in the dorms explains how one boarding school encouraged participation in organized associations with other residents:

One of the things we did was bring in an arts program, which was something special for the dorm kids to be able to do this drama club at night and perform for the whole school. It made them set apart and be separate. And so after I had left there, it was something special for the dorm kids, something that was all their own.

Wongpakaran et al. (2013) refers to this dimension of cohesion as a behavioral measure of engagement, which is part of a unidimensional assessment of group cohesion. In the coding frame [Figure 2], *participation* is defined as participating in group activities. In another interview with the Teacher with four years of experience in a boarding school and who usually has about 12 students in the classroom per year, in response to the question, “Do students feel school spirit?” the same sentiment of feeling a sense of participation appears:

We have a lot of little activities. We let them even put things up on the wall, whether it be during testing time or Red Ribbon Week. We just have a lot of things that we are promoting to get kids involved. Like, we make posters and we do things like that. And so it keeps them engaged. That’s important. I feel like that helps with their morale and things like that as well.

Throughout 11 of the 15 interviews, informants referenced *participation* 28 times [Figure 3] as exemplified by the above quotes. In the interviews, informants described multiple and diverse examples of participation, particularly with regard for student participation in collective activities. The activities ranged from organizations, such as social clubs, sports, and academic teams, to school field trips, to decorating for holidays, to even participation in community service projects. A number of these instances overlapped with the sub-theme, *Collective Action*, but were distinct instances in which students were participating in group activities.

### **Psychological Unity**

Chaskin’s (1997) fourth definition of neighborhood recognizes how areas of commerce and social connection create neighborhood boundaries by promoting psychological unity among people. This definition of neighborhood highlights the ethnic and cultural characteristics of residents in creating distinct neighborhood boundaries, alongside spatial features. Psychological unity is a condition of harmony, which requires

agreement, particularly agreement on neighborhood boundaries. Considering the importance of the ethnic and cultural characteristics of residents, as well as the shared identity created through the production and maintenance of neighborhood boundaries, the coding theme *Psychological Unity* was created. *Psychological Unity* is made up of three dimensions derived from Chaskin's (1997) fourth definition of neighborhood: *Shared Culture*, *Shared Ethnicity*, and *Shared Identity*. This theme and sub-themes are also supported by Keller's (1968) description of how neighborhoods create psychological unity through shared culture, ethnicity, and identity among residents. This psychological unity, according to Keller (1968) unites residents by making them feel like they belong together. Altogether, this theme was referenced 82 times throughout the interviews.

#### *Shared Culture*

The first dimension, *Shared Culture*, refers to the cultural characteristics of residents that help to create distinct neighborhood boundaries. In the coding frame [Figure 2], this sub-theme is defined as the cultural beliefs or practices shared by residents. For this sub-theme, it was important to identify instances when informants were describing, not only a shared culture unique to the boarding school, but a shared culture among students of the same tribes or tribal groups. In one interview, in response to the question, "What do you think is important to know about boarding schools?" the former student who attended a boarding school for four years with approximately 400 other students described a general sense of shared culture unique to the boarding school:

There is a culture of how the boarding school is like a home environment because even if you don't live on campus, that is still the home for a lot of people. So you can't start destroying part of the campus or do graffiti or something that you would do to places that you didn't really care for as much but here everybody cares about everyone and everything in the sense that it is a home environment. So why would you mess up anything or tear stuff down? So I guess you could say there's the environment of self-care and taking care just because it was a home environment plus it's smaller, so you kind of get to know each other and almost have your own society within a society.

Also important to note was when informants were describing instances of shared culture that transcends tribal affiliation and is recognized as more common characteristics of Indigenous people. This type of shared culture is detailed in the following example, in response to the question, “Do students feel school spirit?” given by the same former student:

The whole culture behind Native American students is that we're more reserved in anything we do. We're not necessarily rowdy when it comes to pep rallies, because a lot of the times pep rallies were not necessarily dead, but unless there's a lot of laughter with activities, there wasn't much cheering or any form of rowdiness. It wasn't within the culture. It's more of a Native American thing, in general. So we never did anything that was, I guess you could say, spontaneous or with attitude. Everybody was more calm, cool, collected, and level-headed.

Throughout nine of the 15 interviews, informants referenced *shared culture* 35 times [Figure 3] as depicted by the above quotes. In the interviews, informants described various examples of shared culture. Again, these examples ranged from culture that was shared among all boarding school students, to culture shared among students more generally, despite ethnic and tribal backgrounds. Overall, the interviews revealed that among students, especially, there were many instances of shared culture contributing to psychological unity.

### *Shared Ethnicity and Race*

The second dimension, *Shared Ethnicity*, refers to the ethnic characteristics of residents that help to create distinct neighborhood boundaries. In the coding frame [Figure 2], this sub-theme is defined as the racial and ethnic characteristics shared by residents. More generally, informants described situations in which students recognized their shared race and/or ethnicity, but also discussed situations in which others in the surrounding community identified students based on their shared race. Although race and

ethnicity are distinct concepts, they are combined here to address both but also to acknowledge how they are easily conflated by those outside of the neighborhood. To be clear, race, in this case, is referring to the racial category “American Indian,” which includes people who have origins in the Americas and who maintain tribal affiliation or community attachment (U.S. Census Bureau 2020). Ethnicity, on the other hand, refers to belonging to a common national or cultural tradition. For American Indians, this can be complicated. Ethnicity can be viewed as tribal affiliation, cultural practices, language, or shared history, but these do not apply to all American Indians. Often, ethnicity is seen as your primary tribal affiliation and the specific practices, language, and history associated with that group, despite overlap with other groups.

Notably, references to a shared race also highlight the importance of community through common racial ties. In response to the question, “How do staff work together to promote good student outcomes?” the former student who attended a boarding school for four years believed that “since the population there is Native American, there is a sense of community.” In response to the questions, “What are the strengths of the boarding school? What does it do well?” another former student who attended a boarding school for four years with approximately 200 other students echoes this belief by stating, “What I feel like the boarding school does well is it gives you a Native American community to be in.”

Moreover, this distinction between race and ethnicity is important, especially in the boarding school context, because of how the schools are operated. Some schools are tribally operated and may or may not allow students from other tribes to attend their schools. Other schools are operated by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) and allow

students from all tribes to attend their schools. All of the schools referenced in the interviews were composed of students from different tribes. This means that all of the students at each school share a common race, but do not always share the same ethnicity. It is important to acknowledge that the term “American Indian” is a general term for people who share similar political, cultural, and economic positions in relation to mainstream society in the United States (Champagne 2014). Even the term ethnicity is not quite appropriate to describe the different tribal cultures as American Indians do not quite form an ethnic group because “they are composed of thousands of independent nations, communities, and cultures that have very different and specific identities” (Champagne 2014). However, I use the term ethnicity to approximate the concept distinct from race. Although the informants were careful to avoid cultural homogenization, some informants referenced instances of shared ethnic practices that transcended tribal affiliation. In response to the question, “How does your boarding school support tribal culture?” one such example of this is from the former dorm staff with four years of experience in a boarding school:

I think that one thing is that they’re all Native Americans. So they all identify as Native Americans. So that was that part of the culture. And then the rest of it with the counseling and stuff they had on site, they did a lot of traditional healing and a lot of traditional activities. And each child got to bring in what they did traditionally.

Throughout nine of the 15 interviews, informants referenced *shared ethnicity* 16 times [Figure 3] as exemplified by the above quotes. In the interviews, informants described various instances of shared race and ethnicity, recognized by the students themselves and the surrounding community members. Another important point is that descriptions of shared race and ethnicity often involved discussions of why students attend contemporary boarding schools when contemporary schools, unlike their former

incarnations, do not make attendance compulsory. One informant, in particular, emphasized the importance of boarding schools in providing stable homes for Native children, but also acknowledged the role of tradition in contemporary attendance. In response to the questions, “What do you think are the strengths of the boarding school? What does it do well?” the informant, a Counselor and Special Education Coordinator with a lifelong connection (50+ years) to a boarding school of approximately 150 students claims:

In my opinion, it provides a place for Native American students, a lot of whom are at risk for not completing school. A lot of them don't have a stable home life. This is not the total population because we have a lot of higher income students who attend here because it's traditional for their family.

### *Shared Identity*

The third dimension, *Shared Identity*, refers to the shared identity created through the production and maintenance of neighborhood boundaries. In the coding frame [Figure 2], this sub-theme is defined as the common identity shared by residents. Throughout the interviews, informants described various instances of shared identity. Four common themes emerged when analyzing descriptions of shared identity: (1) students seeing themselves as “boarding school kids,” (2) others outside of the boarding school viewing students of a boarding school as “boarding school kids,” (3) residents of the dorms in relation to day students, and (4) boarding school students in relation to children who live in the surrounding community.

The first theme associated with shared identity among residents is whether or not students of a boarding school self-identify as “boarding school kids.” In response to the question, “Do students see themselves as boarding school kids?” this theme is apparent in the response of one informant, the Counselor and Special Education Coordinator with a

lifelong connection (50+ years) to a boarding school, who said, “Yes, they do see themselves as ‘boarding school students.’” This claim is corroborated by the former student, who attended a boarding school for four years, who commented, “I felt like a ‘boarding school kid’ because I lived there. That was my community.”

The second theme associated with shared identity among residents is whether others outside of the boarding school identify students of a boarding school as “boarding school kids.” In response to the question, “What are their experiences in public school as kids from the boarding school?” this theme is evident in the response of one informant, the Teacher with four years of experience with a boarding school, who said, “A lot of times, they’re referred to [by community members] as ‘Oh, they’re, you know, they’re from the boarding school’ or ‘They’re the boarding school kids’ and things like that.”

The third theme associated with shared identity among residents is an identity formed in relation to students who also attend the school but are not residents of the campus dormitories. These students are often called “day students” and the students who live on campus are often called “dorm students.” In response to the question, “Do students see themselves as boarding school kids?” this shared identity, among dorm students, is clear in the distinction made by the former dorm staff member with four years of experience with a boarding school:

The dorm kids felt a distance. When I was working there, they felt a distance from the day kids as the dorm kids. So that’s how we refer to them. So, of course, every part of themselves has that. But during the daytime and stuff like that, no, they’re integrated and they mesh together.

The fourth theme associated with shared identity among residents is an identity formed in relation to children who do not reside at a boarding school. This theme is particularly important for boarding schools that either only serve as dormitories or only

have an on-campus school for lower grades. This means that some boarding schools send residents to public schools in the surrounding community. One example of a shared identity among boarding school residents is clear in the distinction made by the Project Director with five years of experience in a boarding school in response to the question, “What are their experiences in public school as kids from the boarding school?”: “When the older group starts going to public school, there is an absolute difference. They are called “town kids” and they are called “boarding school kids.” That’s how they’re called. It’s apparent.”

Throughout 11 of the 15 interviews, informants referenced *shared identity* 31 times [Figure 3] as depicted by the above quotes. In the interviews, informants recounted various examples of shared identity among students, whether it be an identity amongst themselves, imposed on them by others, or formed in relation to another group. Overall, the interviews revealed that students do share a common identity as a result of their attendance at a boarding school.

### **Unexpected Findings**

While the results of this study overwhelmingly meet expectations and adequately answer the research question, there was one result that was unexpected. Although informants described boarding schools as distinct units of reference and action that serve as the primary units for social solidarity and cohesion, foster psychological unity among residents, and are nested within greater communities, informants also described boarding schools in terms that did not always align with the idea of neighborhood. For example, the idea of the boarding school as a family was mentioned 22 times throughout nine interviews. In response to the question, “Do students feel school spirit?” one informant,

the Psychologist with six years of direct experience with a boarding school and 30 years of indirect experience with a boarding school, referred to this idea of a boarding school family:

While, many times, they would rather be home, they're also grateful to be a part of that boarding school community that allows them a sense of belonging and a sense of togetherness and a sense of family that they wouldn't normally have.

In the following section, I will discuss the key findings, according to major themes derived from Chaskin's (1997) four general definitions of neighborhood, provide an interpretation of the findings, explain the implications of conceptualizing Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods, address the limitations of the research methodology, and recommend future directions for subsequent research based on this evidence that Indian boarding schools can be conceptualized as neighborhoods.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Historically, despite a focus on choosing between different definitions and methods of operationalizing neighborhoods (de Souza Briggs 1997; Tienda 1991), neighborhood effects literature is much broader than any single definition of neighborhood (Chaskin 1997; Galster 2008). Instead of focusing specifically on neighborhoods, some researchers suggest using the terms “residential context” or “residential environment” to better capture the theoretical ideas that underlie the literature (Sharkey and Faber 2014). This is because the term neighborhood denotes a geographical unit where residents share proximity and circumstance (Chaskin 1997) and does not necessarily account for the various mechanisms through which residential context influences the lives of residents (Sharkey and Faber 2014). For the sake of this research, however, there is power in the *idea* of the neighborhood. Much of the neighborhood effects literature can be condensed into a single question of whether residential context affects life chances (Sharkey and Faber 2014). Overwhelmingly, the research supports, yes, residential contexts do affect life chances by affecting such outcomes as physical health (Arcaya et al. 2016), mental health (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2003), and

academic achievement (Sharkey and Faber 2014). Studying neighborhood effects allows researchers to better understand the mechanisms through which different dimensions of residential context become salient in the lives of residents.

Although there are various definitions and operationalizations of “neighborhood,” excessive emphasis on establishing exact definitions of neighborhood diverts attention and resources from the various ways in which different dimensions of residential context become salient in the lives of residents (Logan 2012). Extending the definition of “neighborhood” beyond its traditional conceptualization to include diverse places and spaces, where groups of people reside, will enhance the literature on neighborhood effects in both breadth and depth of erudition. A more encompassing definition of neighborhood includes institutions serving as the residential context in which groups of people primarily live (Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley 2002). Indian boarding schools are examples of such social constructions that accommodate a great deal of residents for short and long periods of time. Moreover, since children are growing up in these residential institutions, it is primarily within these institutions where features of the social and spatial environment become salient in the lives of residents.

Conceptualizing Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods not only carves out a space in existing literature on the effects of residential context, but allows for the operationalization of these institutions as neighborhoods for the purpose of evaluation of their effects on student outcomes beyond traditional evaluation criteria for typical public and private schools. Because these schools serve many functions beyond that of other educational institutions, operationalizing Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods acknowledges that it is primarily within these institutions where features of the social and

spatial environment become salient in the lives of students, which traditional evaluation criteria for typical public and private schools does not adequately capture. This is important because traditional evaluation criteria for typical public and private schools only assess academic outcomes, student demographics, cost per student, student discipline and violence, absenteeism, and teacher qualifications. Indian boarding schools, however, are not evaluated by national and state standards; instead, they are only assessed on their academic outcomes, absenteeism, and participation rate. If these institutions, the BIE, tribal leaders, and parents wish to better understand the quality of these schools, then other measures should be developed that can adequately capture the unique aspects of each school. Therefore, conceptualizing and operationalizing Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods can capture these differences and provide a more thorough understanding of each school and help guide programmatic efforts, according to the variables shown to be most impactful on student outcomes. For example, as residential context often determines the contours of the human landscape (Paulsen 2004), we must seek to better understand how students experience space and how those experiences might inform their interaction with and navigation of other aspects of the social world. Ultimately, the goal is to produce an evaluation tool that can help guide programmatic efforts, based on the variables shown to be most impactful on student outcomes.

Conceptualizing and operationalizing Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods also allows for the consideration that colonization is a continuous process that, once achieved, must be maintained, over time, through institutional mechanisms transmitting consequences of these patterns of practice across generations. It obligates researchers to

acknowledge the role of place in the production and maintenance of inequality across multiple dimensions. This does not necessarily mean that contemporary boarding schools still function as a colonizing force, but examining them in this way can help to demystify those processes while allowing for comparison across time, space, and generation.

Based on this logic, the following research question was developed: Can Indian boarding schools be described like neighborhoods? To answer this question, data were collected using semi-structured interviews. Altogether, there were 15 interviews of informants with varying experiences with Indian boarding schools, which provided various perspectives of contemporary boarding school experience from different positionalities. According to Kovach (2021) researchers should consider what informants can bring to the study as opposed to having a random sample. A variety of perspectives is important because the boarding school, like a neighborhood, is viewed from different perspectives based on an individual's position.

The sample consisted of one Psychologist, two community members, one former Dorm Staff, two former students, two Counselors, one Counselor and Special Education Coordinator, one Counselor and Director of Behavioral Health, one former Superintendent, one Project Director, and three Teachers [Figure 4]. Data were analyzed using coding themes based on Chaskin's (1997) four general definitions of neighborhood. The first definition describes the neighborhood in distinctly spatial terms, signifying a primarily residential geographical unit nested within a greater area. The second definition is similar to the first, but instead presents the neighborhood as a defined spatial unit within a greater *urban* area. The third definition of neighborhood also operates within an urban context, and views the neighborhood as the primary unit of social solidarity and

cohesion. Similarly, the fourth definition of neighborhood recognizes how areas of commerce and social connection can create neighborhood boundaries by promoting psychological unity among people. This definition of neighborhood highlights the ethnic and cultural characteristics of residents in creating distinct neighborhood boundaries, alongside spatial features. Drawing from these general definitions of neighborhood, the following coding themes were established: the boarding school as part of the greater community (community), the boarding school as the primary unit of social solidarity (solidarity) and cohesion (cohesion), and the boarding school promoting psychological unity among people (psychological unity). Since Chaskin (1997) provided four general definitions of neighborhood, the key findings are organized according to these definitions.

**Figure 4:** Informant Information

Informant	Relationship	Years of Experience	Students Per Year
1	Psychologist	30 years	~200
2	Community Member	34 years	Unknown
3	Community Member	34 years	Unknown
4	Former Dorm Staff	4 years	~110
5	Former Student	4 years	~400
6	Former Student	4 years	200+
7	Counselor	20 years	~200
8	Former Superintendent	20 years	~175
9	Project Director	5 years	150-200
10	Counselor	11 years	~100
11	Teacher	1 year	193
12	Counselor/SPED Coordinator	50+ years	~150
13	Teacher	5 years	8-10 in classroom
14	Teacher	4 years	12 in classroom
15	Counselor/Director of Behavioral Health	12 years	Unknown

## Key Findings

### *Community*

Chaskin's (1997) first and second definitions of neighborhood are fairly similar. The first definition describes the neighborhood in distinctly spatial terms, signifying a primarily residential geographical unit nested within a greater area. The second definition presents the neighborhood as a defined spatial unit within a greater *urban* area. While these definitions emphasize the neighborhood as existing within an urban context, the reality is that not all neighborhoods are located in urban areas. Instead, the coding theme,

*Community*, is derived from these definitions in a way that appreciates the value placed on how neighborhoods are nested within larger communities, but still with distinct spatial boundaries.

Overwhelmingly, the results suggest that former students, teachers, counselors, staff, and school administrators viewed their respective boarding schools as long-standing, integral segments of the larger communities within which they are nested. Another aspect of community that was supported by the analysis is that neighborhoods are not only geographically located within larger communities, but there are social ties that extend across these communities, linking people together through shared activities and spaces. Examples of this involve participation in community service projects, participation in community activities, such as parades, trick-or-treating, and recreation, and being recognized by other community members as an entity that can contribute to community goals, as well as to the local public school goals, for those schools who send residents to nearby public schools.

#### *Solidarity and Cohesion*

The third definition of neighborhood also operates within an urban context, and views the neighborhood as the primary unit of social solidarity and cohesion for those residing in the neighborhood (Chaskin 1997). Again, while this definition emphasizes the neighborhood as existing within an urban context, the focus in this study is on how neighborhoods are nested within larger communities. To explore this definition in the analysis, the concepts of solidarity and cohesion were extracted from this definition to better understand whether or not Indian boarding schools can be described like neighborhoods. To clarify, although similar, the difference between solidarity and

cohesion is that cohesion is the state of working together while solidarity is a more formal bond of unity or agreement between individuals, united around a common goal.

The concept of solidarity was analyzed along six dimensions: collective action, cooperation, interdependence, shared beliefs, and shared practices (Mishra and Rath 2020), as well as school spirit (Bulwa 2022). In regards to collective action, the results indicate that not only do students regularly engage in actions to achieve common objectives, like community service projects and collective efforts for school-wide goals, but informants characterized the boarding school as a distinct unit of reference and action, suggesting that the boarding school, like a neighborhood, is a primary unit of social solidarity. Moreover, concerning a requisite for collective action, cooperation, was prominent in the analysis. The analysis supports that students, teachers, counselors, staff, and school administrators all display individual behavior that benefits a group or collective. Throughout the interviews, there were instances of cooperation among students and among staff and administrators for the benefit of students. Further, the data suggest that boarding school residents are dependent on one another through shared responsibility, particularly for daily functioning of the school, which requires cooperation. With concern for shared beliefs, the analysis supports that there are many beliefs unique to each boarding school that are shared amongst residents, faculty, and staff, and that these shared beliefs contribute to the maintenance of a shared boarding school culture, which facilitates other dimensions of social solidarity and cohesion. Similarly, regarding shared practices, the data suggest that there are many practices unique to each boarding school that are shared amongst residents, in particular, and that these shared practices contribute to the rituals, regimens, and routines that structure their

daily lives in a boarding school, which facilitates other dimensions of social solidarity and cohesion. Finally, the results indicate that residents of Indian boarding schools feel a sense of agency, belonging, and investment in their schools. Informants characterized most boarding schools as having school spirit, especially when students are able to participate in extracurricular activities like sports, school clubs, and arts programs.

The concept of cohesion was analyzed along four dimensions: acceptance, care, participation, and trust (Klocek, Rihacek, and Cigler 2020; Stafford et al. 2003; Wongpakaran et al. 2013). In regards to acceptance, the results indicate that feelings and actions of acceptance among peers, teachers, counselors, and other staff are common in boarding schools. Examples of acceptance include accepting others who are different, friendship, and “having each other’s backs.” Overall, the analysis revealed that students and teachers, alike, demonstrated an openness to one another and a desire to make everyone feel welcome and accepted into the boarding school. Moreover, the analysis supports that students, teachers, counselors, school administrators, and other staff all display acts of caring and special regard for others in the boarding school, especially toward students. Regularly, informants described instances of care among students, citing how well they take responsibility for one another and show concern for the safety and well-being of fellow students and staff. Further, the data suggest that, within boarding schools, there are various opportunities for participation in group activities, particularly with regard to student participation in student organizations, social clubs, sports teams, school field trips, decorating for holidays, and community service projects. Finally, the results indicate that students and staff demonstrated a general trust for one another and willingness to build authentic trust overtime, through meaningful relationships. Often,

trust was demonstrated by collaboration, cooperation, conscientiousness, and willingness to contribute to group goals among students.

### *Psychological Unity*

The fourth definition of neighborhood recognizes how areas of commerce and social connection can create neighborhood boundaries by promoting psychological unity among people. This definition of neighborhood highlights the ethnic and cultural characteristics of residents in creating distinct neighborhood boundaries, alongside spatial features (Chaskin 1997). To better understand whether or not Indian boarding schools can be described like neighborhoods, the concept of psychological unity was extracted from this definition.

The concept of psychological unity was analyzed along three dimensions: shared culture, shared ethnicity, and shared identity (Chaskin 1997). Concerning shared culture, the results indicate that among students, especially, there were many instances of shared culture contributing to psychological unity. These examples ranged from culture that was shared among all boarding school students, to culture that was shared among members of the same tribes or tribal groups, to culture shared among students more generally, despite different ethnic and tribal backgrounds. Moreover, the analysis supports that, within boarding schools, there are various instances of shared race and ethnicity, whether it is recognized by the students themselves or the surrounding community members. Some instances of shared ethnic practices even transcended tribal affiliation. Finally, the data suggest that, overall, students do share a common identity as a result of their attendance at a boarding school. These shared identities included identities amongst themselves, identities imposed on them by others, and identities formed in relation to another group.

## **Indian Boarding Schools as Neighborhoods**

In the literature review, the initial rationale for even considering pursuing this research question was that Indian boarding schools may be similar to neighborhoods in three key ways, as a result of their unique histories. The first was that a more encompassing definition of neighborhood includes institutions serving as the residential context in which groups of people primarily occupy (Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley 2002), which Indian boarding schools are examples of such social constructions that accommodate a great deal of residents for short and long periods of time. The second was that Indian boarding schools may subsist more similarly to the ways in which the traditional neighborhood is a rigid dimension of racial stratification (Sharkey 2008) formed by physical and cultural forces (Chaskin 1997). The third considered how racial stratification and social isolation reinforces the stratification of place (Michelson 1977), which, similar to neighborhoods, can create a boarding school milieu unique to each institution, exposing successive generations to the same or similar residential context as the preceding generation (Sharkey 2008).

With these considerations in mind, Chaskin's (1997) four general definitions of neighborhood were used to explore whether or not Indian boarding schools can be described using concepts fundamental to the construction of neighborhood. Indeed, the results of this study indicate that boarding schools can be described like neighborhoods, regardless of the definition used. The analysis revealed that former students, teachers, counselors, psychologists, staff, administrators, as well as community members described their respective boarding schools as being nested within their greater communities, as primary units of social solidarity and cohesion, and as creating psychological unity

among residents. These results meet the initial expectations and impetus of this research project by showing that Indian boarding schools can be described using the same concepts used to define neighborhoods.

This study fits well with the existing research in that recent discourse concerning neighborhood effects reflects the imminent expansion of what constitutes a ‘neighborhood’ by incorporating a variety of social, spatial, and temporal dimensions not yet explored by this area of research (Sharkey and Faber 2014). This study contributes to the larger body of literature by expanding the definition of ‘neighborhood’ beyond its traditional conceptualization to include Indian boarding schools. Including Indian boarding schools in the literature on residential context (neighborhood effects) allows for a greater understanding of how diverse places and spaces influence the lives of residents. As a result, this expansion of what is considered a ‘neighborhood’ enhances the literature on ‘neighborhood effects’ in both breadth and depth of erudition. Moreover, conceptualizing Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods carves out a space in existing sociological literature for work concerning Indian boarding schools. Finally, conceptualizing Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods obligates researchers to acknowledge the role of place in the production and maintenance of inequality across multiple dimensions when focusing on Indian boarding schools. As a result, this study lays the foundation for adding to the discourse that colonization is a continuous process that, once achieved, must be maintained, over time, through institutional mechanisms transmitting consequences of these patterns of practice across generations. This does not necessarily mean that contemporary boarding schools still function as a colonizing force,

but examining them in this way can help to demystify those processes while allowing for comparison across time, space, and generation.

Although the focus of the interviews was on the neighborhood context of Indian boarding schools, several informants described the Indian boarding school context in an unexpected way. In some instances, informants described boarding schools in terms that did not always align with the idea of neighborhood. For example, the idea of the boarding school as a family was mentioned 22 times throughout nine interviews. The definition of family is debated among researchers and policymakers as how we define family has significant consequences in people's lives. Moreover, definitions of family communicate societal beliefs about what is "normal" and "acceptable." Nevertheless, a family is generally considered the basic unit in society, which consists of a socially recognized group of two or more individuals joined by kinship. In Sociology, a more traditional definition of family describes it as a social group who lives together, shares finances, and includes adults of both sexes, as well as at least one child (Murdock 1949). More contemporary Postmodern Sociologists, instead, characterize the family in much broader terms, allowing for single-parent families, same sex partners, multigenerational families, and extended families.

The presence of referring to the boarding school as a family was an unexpected finding in the analysis, but does not alter the overall results of this study for three reasons. The first reason is that boarding schools, as individual entities, do not meet the standards for what is considered a family unit. The second reason is that students who attend these schools already have families who live in communities outside of the boarding school. The third reason is that it seems, despite the references to the boarding school as a family,

that informants were not necessarily referring to the definition of what a family unit is, but the idea of family in terms of the close relationships shared with others. Auspiciously, this perceived closeness with others corresponded with dimensions of neighborhood, such as interdependence, acceptance, care, trust, and shared identity.

### **Implications**

These results build on existing literature concerning the conceptualization and operationalization of neighborhoods. Traditionally, the neighborhood is defined as a geographic unit of action in which residents shared proximity and circumstance (Hallman 1984). As a spatial unit, the notion of neighborhood is a useful construction for establishing geographic boundaries. As a social unit, the notion of neighborhood is a useful construction for understanding the social parameters perceived by residents. Although there are various definitions and operationalizations of neighborhood, there remain significant methodological and substantive challenges (Galster 2008). Nevertheless, excessive emphasis on establishing exact definitions of neighborhood diverts attention and resources from the various ways in which different dimensions of residential context become salient in the lives of residents (Logan 2012). Despite a historical focus on specific definitions of neighborhood, neighborhood effects literature is much broader than any single definition of neighborhood (Chaskin 1997; Galster 2008).

These results fit with the recent discourse concerning neighborhood effects that reflects the imminent expansion of what constitutes a neighborhood by incorporating a variety of social, spatial, and temporal dimensions not yet explored by this area of research (Sharkey and Faber 2014). Extending the definition of neighborhood beyond its traditional conceptualization to include diverse places and spaces where groups of people

reside will enhance the literature on neighborhood effects in both breadth and depth of erudition. This research contributes to this growing area in neighborhood effects research, because it includes institutions serving as the residential context in which groups of people primarily occupy (Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley 2002). This is why Chaskin's (1997) four general definitions of neighborhood were chosen to guide the analysis. Chaskin's (1997) four general definitions of neighborhood recognize the neighborhood as both a spatial and social unit, do not focus on exact definitions of neighborhood, and demonstrate an appreciation for the underlying principles of neighborhood effects literature. While Sharkey and Faber (2014) recommend abandoning notions of neighborhood for the terms "residential context" and "residential environment," the four general definitions of neighborhood were used to guide the analysis because there is power in the *idea* of neighborhood.

Not only do the results of this study contribute to a clearer understanding of what sorts of places and spaces can be conceptualized as neighborhoods, but the results should be taken into account when trying to better understand how features of the residential environment of Indian boarding schools influence the lives of residents. We know that the Indian boarding schools of the past had profound effects at every level of experience, from individual identity and mental health, to the structure and integrity of families, communities, bands, and nations (Wilk et al. 2017). We know that those who have attended boarding school and those whose parents or grandparents attended boarding school suffer higher rates of negative health outcomes, both compared to the general population and to other American Indians who did not attend boarding school (Evans-Campbell et al. 2012; Wilk et al. 2017). Furthermore, according to Brave Heart et al.

(2011), Indian boarding schools, especially those of the past, are mechanisms for transferring collective trauma from generation-to-generation. This transferring of collective trauma is known as historical trauma, which is related to unresolved grief and mental health issues (Brave Heart et al. 2011; Lajimodiere and Carmen 2014). Research also suggests that even in contemporary boarding schools, the institutional model of these schools continues to have enduring effects, including health problems, substance abuse, suicide, and disintegration of families and communities (Robbins et al. 2006; Wilk et al. 2017). What is more obscure to researchers, school faculty and staff, and tribal leaders is to what extent do contemporary boarding schools influence the physical health, mental health, academic achievement, and life chances of students.

Evaluating these institutions in the same way we evaluate typical public and private schools likely produces misleading results and does not provide a thorough representation of the institutional mechanisms salient in the lives of residents. Since children are growing up in these institutions, it is primarily within these institutions where features of the social and spatial environment become salient in the lives of residents. To better evaluate the impact of different features of the residential environment on the lives of students, the ultimate goal of this research is to, not only create a space within sociological literature for work with Indian boarding schools, but to provide a framework for the development of an evaluation tool. The proposed evaluation tool would use the framework of how neighborhoods are evaluated, for the purpose of guiding programmatic efforts, based on the variables shown to be most impactful on student outcomes.

Conceptualizing Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods, therefore, functions as a means to examine both the context and composition of Indian boarding schools without attempting to “disentangle mutually constitutive, inextricably linked, synergistic, and coevolving elements” (Oakes et al. 2015:85). Conceptualizing and operationalizing Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods also allows for the consideration that colonization is a continuous process that, once achieved, must be maintained, over time, through institutional mechanisms transmitting consequences of these patterns of practice across generations. It obligates researchers to acknowledge the role of place in the production and maintenance of inequality across multiple dimensions. This is crucial because for each boarding school, like neighborhoods, the production and reproduction of local symbols and sentiment persistently shapes the identities of residents and their descendants (Sampson and Sharkey 2008). Further, this method of evaluating boarding schools honors the history of the schools while also considering a temporal component critical to understanding neighborhood effects (Sharkey and Faber 2014; Wodtke, Harding, and Elwert 2011). This temporal component is not just about considering the duration of exposure to neighborhood features, but can also account for intergenerational processes (Sharkey and Elwert 2011).

### **Limitations**

While this study concludes that Indian boarding schools can be described like neighborhoods, it is beyond the scope of this study to provide a precise measurement tool for the evaluation of Indian boarding schools. Future researchers are tasked with specifying the details of Galster’s (2008) six themes of methodological challenges noted in neighborhood effects research. Although this study did collect information pertaining

to defining the scale of the neighborhood, identifying mechanisms of neighborhood effect, measuring appropriate neighborhood characteristics, measuring exposure to the neighborhood, measuring appropriate individual characteristics, and endogeneity, it was not the expressed purpose of the project, nor did it contribute to answering the research question. Therefore, what can be concluded from this study is that Indian boarding schools can be described like neighborhoods. What cannot be concluded from this study is whether or not it is practical or reasonable to operationalize them as neighborhoods. Again, the purpose of this research was to establish that it is reasonable to conceptualize Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods, but it does not provide evidence supporting whether or not operationalizing them as neighborhoods will be productive.

Future researchers are also tasked with the challenging process of initiating contact with tribes and the BIE, as well as school administrators, parents/guardians, and students and fostering trusting relationships over time. This process will be difficult for a variety of reasons, the most prominent reasons involve access to the contact information of the relevant parties and garnering interest among key stakeholders. Another potential issue is gaining access to information regarding minors who are under the care of the schools. While this presents an issue with tribal IRBs, it is also a logistical ordeal, requiring extensive coordination in addition to extensive ethical concerns.

The most prominent limitations associated with the research design are those inherent to qualitative data collection and analysis. For example, qualitative research is not statistically representative because the responses are perspective-based. Alternatively, quantitative research may not be robust enough to explain such a complex issue. However, what is typically seen as a limitation of qualitative research is exactly why this

methodology was chosen to answer the research question. For example, qualitative research is open-ended and participants have control over the content. This is important as it centers the subject-matter experts in the meaning-making process. Other limitations include issues with sample size, sample demographics, and data collection.

In regards to sample size, while there are no specific guidelines on how or at what point qualitative inquiry has acquired enough information that additional themes are no longer emerging, this study met the minimum requirements of 15 interviews to realistically reach saturation (Morse 1994). In the analysis, data saturation was apparent as themes and similar experiences, attitudes, and beliefs began repeating (Dey 1999). Given the small sample size and diversity of the sample, data saturation was surprisingly apparent early on in the interview process. Despite their different positions in relation to a boarding school, informants echoed similar sentiments in response to the interview questions. Although there were slight variations, which is to be expected and is valuable, the informants consistently touched on the same themes of the boarding school as part of the larger community, the boarding school as the primary unit of social solidarity and cohesion, and the boarding school as fostering psychological unity. Because the boarding school, like the neighborhood, is not a static entity and is experienced through a variety of perspectives, it is important to recognize the similarities and differences across informants' responses. In a metaphorical sense, it is like viewing the same painting but from different vantage points. There are differences in perspectives, yes, but they are ultimately describing the same painting. Those differences offer nuance and richness. For the purposes of this research project, those subtle differences were not within the scope of the research question. With consideration for the research question, informants reported

similar experiences and observations that supported the themes and sub-themes defining the neighborhood. There was, however, one particular difference in informants' perspectives, which is addressed in the section on unexpected findings. Moreover, it is important to note that with regard to saturation, there appeared to be overall saturation of themes and sub-themes, but this does not mean that there was saturation of perspectives. By this, I mean that, while the sample was quite diverse, there were only two former students, for example. This means that I may have not reached saturation from the student perspective. While this is a limitation to this study, it is also important to reiterate that experts in qualitative research claim that it only takes a single interview to establish whether or not something is possible (Baker and Edwards 2017).

As a result of the small sample size, the generalizability of the results may be restricted by the limited number and diversity of informants. Since some informants were connected to the same schools, there are fewer than 15 schools represented in this study. This is an issue because there are at least 25 Indian boarding schools across the United States, and each school occupies its own spatial, temporal, and historical boundaries. Despite whether or not the schools are under the governance of the BIE or are tribally controlled, each school is culturally, linguistically, and geographically diverse. Therefore, the generalizability of the findings to all Indian boarding schools are constrained by the small sample size.

In regards to issues with data collection, although the principal investigator aimed for 30 interviews, which is the ideal standard for reaching saturation, it was incredibly difficult to obtain the minimum of 15 interviews. This is due to four main reasons. The first reason is that there are not many Indian boarding schools in operation and there is

not a clear database of how many are still operating. According to the investigations of the principal researcher, there are at least 25 Indian boarding schools currently in operation across the United States. The second reason is that of those boarding schools that are in operation and have publicly available contact information for school administrators is that that contact information is often not up-to-date according to the BIE's website. The third reason concerns the sensitivity of the topic. When potential informants were contacted about participating in a study about Indian boarding schools, they had concerns about the types of questions that would be asked. Would they involve informants recounting episodes of abuse and mistreatment? Would they involve discussing the experiences of relatives and ancestors in boarding schools? The fourth reason is the historically valid mistrust of researchers (Pacheco et al. 2013). In the past, especially, but certainly even in the present day, researchers have taken advantage of and exploited the experiences of Indigenous peoples by using their information without permission, disregarding their customs, and violating their rights. As a result of widespread mistrust for researchers, it was difficult convincing informants to participate in this study.

Another limitation is who is included in the sample. Since there are Indian boarding schools located across the United States, including those located in Oklahoma, Arizona, South Dakota, New Mexico, Utah, Mississippi, California, and Washington, it would be ideal to have at least one representative from each state, if not each school. Given the resources available for this study, it was not possible to make contact with all schools and if contact was made with at least one school official, it was difficult gaining trust and garnering interest. The reasons why it was difficult contacting the schools is

because (1) the BIE does not keep up-to-date contact information for the schools, (2) many of the schools do not have websites, and (3) some forms of contact information were inadequate for appropriately communicating relevant information to potential key informants. Because of these issues, initial informants were recruited using the principal researcher's professional association and affiliation with tribal members and organizations. These initial key informants then provided contact information for peers who were interested in participating in this study. As a result of the snowball sampling used in this study, there is not representation from every school or every state, but there is considerable representation of perspectives from those associated with boarding schools. To clarify, the interview guide did not ask for the names of the schools or the states where they were located because revealing this information could put the informants at risk for exposure of their identities. The interview guide asked only for their relationship to a boarding school, how many years of association with the school, how many children attend the school, and the ages of the children who attend the school. Since the interview guide asked about the informants' relationship to the schools, it was clear to the researcher that many different perspectives were considered, including those of teachers, mental health professionals, former students, school administrators, school staff, and even community members. Future research considering this specific research question should aim to produce a more diverse sample, especially in terms of school and state selection.

Although the interview guide was created in such a way that questions were not particularly invasive or eliciting responses describing the negative aspects of attending boarding school, it is important to note that there are negative aspects of attending boarding school. Respondents were overwhelmingly positive in their assessments of

boarding school life, but this is certainly not representative of everyone's experience. The most prominent limitation in this sense is that there were only two former students who were interviewed. As a result, these findings do not fully speak to the experiences of all students, particularly when considering the variation across schools. Future research should consider whose experiences are most important for answering the research question. Likely, to get a more realistic perspective, it would be most beneficial to include equal numbers of former students and faculty, staff, and community members.

Despite these limitations, the data appeared to reach saturation and provided extensive insight into the ways in which Indian boarding schools are described like neighborhoods by individuals closely associated with Indian boarding schools. The impetus for this research project was to carve out a space in the existing literature on the effects of residential context for Indian boarding schools and allow for the operationalization of these institutions as neighborhoods for the purpose of evaluation of their effects on student outcomes beyond traditional evaluation criteria for typical public and private schools. Regardless of the limitations, the data provided ample information to adequately answer the research question and fulfill the ultimate goals of this project.

### **Recommendations and Future Directions**

Further research is needed to determine whether or not it is practical or reasonable to operationalize Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods. This can be achieved by first trying to specify and address the following: defining the scale of the neighborhood (e.g., neighborhood boundaries), identifying mechanisms of neighborhood effect (e.g., social norms, external stigma, exposure to violence, and social networks), measuring appropriate neighborhood characteristics (e.g., peer groups, role models, and

stereotypes), measuring exposure to the neighborhood (e.g., the duration of exposure to neighborhood processes and the impact of exposure to neighborhood processes), measuring appropriate individual characteristics (e.g., personal characteristics of students), and endogeneity (e.g., reasons for attending boarding school, family history, and history prior to attending boarding school) [from Galster 2008]. The purpose of operationalizing Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods is because it can provide a clearer framework for evaluation of their effect on student outcomes beyond traditional evaluation criteria for typical public and private schools. Ultimately, future studies should aim to produce an evaluation tool that can help guide programmatic efforts, based on the variables shown to be most impactful on student outcomes.

Future research concerning the research question guiding this study should attempt to produce a more diverse sample, especially with regard for greater variation of schools and geographic locations. Further research is needed to determine whether or not it is practical or reasonable to operationalize Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods. This can be achieved by first trying to specify and address the details of Galster's (2008) six themes of methodological challenges noted in neighborhood effects research. Ultimately, future studies should aim to produce an evaluation tool that can help guide programmatic efforts, based on the variables shown to be most impactful on student outcomes. In addition to these measures, future research must also grapple with issues of access to the population-of-interest and forging meaningful, trusting, and productive relationships with key stakeholders.

## **Conclusion**

Neighborhood effects is a well-developed area of literature within Sociology. One vein, in this area, focuses on moving away from a dichotomous perspective on neighborhoods and describing the various ways in which “neighborhood” can be defined. In neighborhood effects literature, there is no universal definition of neighborhood (Rossi 1972); instead, there has long been a focus on choosing between different definitions and methods of operationalizing neighborhoods (de Souza Briggs 1997; Tienda 1991). Recent discourse concerning neighborhood effects reflects the imminent expansion of what constitutes a ‘neighborhood’ by incorporating a variety of social, spatial, and temporal dimensions not yet explored by this area of research (Sharkey and Faber 2014). Extending the definition of ‘neighborhood’ beyond its traditional conceptualization to include diverse places and spaces where groups of people reside will enhance the literature on ‘neighborhood effects’ in both breadth and depth of erudition. A more encompassing definition of ‘neighborhood’ includes institutions serving as the residential context in which groups of people primarily occupy (Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley 2002). Indian boarding schools are examples of such social constructions that accommodate a great deal of residents for short and long periods of time; although, they are not just places to live, they are where residents call “home” for the school year.

The goal of this study was to present an argument for the conceptualization of Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods. The purpose of conceptualizing Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods is because it will provide a clearer framework for evaluation of their effect on student outcomes beyond traditional evaluation criteria for typical public and private schools. To answer the question: can Indian boarding schools

be described like neighborhoods, data were coded using themes established from the four general definitions of neighborhood provided by Chaskin (1997).

Following the three key themes of the study, the results suggest that informants described Indian boarding schools like neighborhoods. First, the results suggest that informants viewed their respective boarding schools, like neighborhoods, as long-standing, both geographical and social, integral segments of the larger communities within which they are nested. Second, the results suggest that informants viewed their respective boarding schools, like neighborhoods, as a primary unit of social solidarity and cohesion. Third, the results suggest that informants viewed their respective boarding schools, like neighborhoods, as promoting psychological unity among people.

In accordance with the results, Indian boarding schools can be described like neighborhoods. This means that future research can utilize the tools and techniques typically used to evaluate neighborhoods for the purpose of evaluating Indian boarding schools. This strategy can accommodate the most prominent features of Indian boarding schools, which make them unique from typical public and private schools. In addition, because these schools serve many functions beyond that of other educational institutions, operationalizing Indian boarding schools as neighborhoods acknowledges that it is primarily within these institutions where features of the social and spatial environment become salient in the lives of students, which traditional evaluation criteria for typical public and private schools does not adequately capture. As residential context often determines the contours of the human landscape (Paulsen 2004), we must seek to better understand how students experience space and how those experiences might inform their interaction with and navigation of other aspects of the social world. Ultimately, the goal

is to produce an evaluation tool that can help guide programmatic efforts, based on the variables shown to be most impactful on student outcomes.

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## APPENDICES



### Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: 08/25/2021  
Application Number: IRB-21-335  
Proposal Title: How Boarding Schools Are Like Neighborhoods  
  
Principal Investigator: Christine Thomas, PhD  
Co-Investigator(s):  
Faculty Adviser: Kelley Sittner  
Project Coordinator:  
Research Assistant(s):  
  
Processed as: Exempt  
Exempt Category:

#### **Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved**

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The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in 45CFR46.

**This study meets criteria in the Revised Common Rule, as well as, one or more of the circumstances for which continuing review is not required. As Principal Investigator of this research, you will be required to submit a status report to the IRB triennially.**

The final versions of any recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are available for download from IRBManager. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be approved by the IRB. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI, adviser, other research personnel, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any unanticipated and/or adverse events to the IRB Office promptly.
4. Notify the IRB office when your research project is complete or when you are no longer affiliated with Oklahoma State University.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact the IRB Office at 405-744-3377 or [irb@okstate.edu](mailto:irb@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,  
Oklahoma State University IRB

## VITA

Christine Elizabeth Thomas

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation: HOW INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOLS ARE LIKE NEIGHBORHOODS

Major Field: Sociology

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in July, 2022.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Public Health at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in 2017.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Philosophy at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in 2013.

Experience:

Graduate Teaching Assistant at Oklahoma State University from 2016 to 2017.  
Graduate Teaching Associate at Oklahoma State University from 2017 to 2022.  
Graduate Research Associate at Oklahoma State University from 2018 to 2020.

Professional Memberships:

American Psychological Association, American Public Health Association, American Sociological Association, Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists, and the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition.